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Pentecostalism among Czech and Slovak Roma: The religiosity of Roma and the practices of inclusion of the Roma in the brotherhood in salvation.

Autonomy and Conversions among Roma in Márov

PhD thesis

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Anotace

Cílem mé práce je diskutovat možnosti užití konceptu autonomie při studiu konverzí Romů k charismatickému/letničnímu křesťanství. V tomto poli se v poslední době prosazovaly koncepty empowermentu (zplnomocňování) či sociální inkluze, ale chyběla kritická reflexe otázek způsobů vládnutí a útlaku. Vycházím z teze Patricka Williamse (1987; 1991; 1993a), podle kterého francouzští Romové, kteří konvertovali k letničnímu hnutí, dosáhli autonomie (nebo alespoň pocitu autonomie), jež jim dovolovala přehlížet roli strukturálních faktorů a jiných lidí v jejich vlastním jednání. Na případové studii etnografického výzkumu romské charismatického sboru v Západních Čechách rozvíjím koncept autonomie skrze konverzi. Hlavní teoretická inovace mé práce pochází z morální filosofie, především z Christmanovy teorie autonomie (utlačovaných) (2014). Christman definuje autonomii jako reflexivní potvrzování zvolené praktické identity, života, který "stojí za to žít". Příběh, který misionáři v Márově, místě mého terénního výzkumu, dávali do popředí, byl o Romech, kteří se z pasáků a prodejců drog stali křesťany. Empirická realita a narativy změny však na takto jednoduchý popis radikální změny skrze náboženství vrhají stín pochybnosti. Na základě podrobného rozboru konverze muže závislého na drogách tvrdím, že konvertité přijali praktickou identitu konvertity během toho, kdy opouštěli byznys, anebo dokonce až po tom, co jej opustili. To jim umožnilo zůstat autonomními a získat možnost vykazovat se jako racionální aktéři. V biblické škole při sboru učitelé prosazovali pokoru jako božský princip a cestu ke spáse, a konvertité přijímali podřízenost. Jejich model autonomie skrze konverzi obsahoval možnost podřídit se, přičemž konvertité měli ze situace jiný prospěch. V tomto případě se učili nový řečový kód, který poté mohli používat i jinde. Ve dvou kapitolách také diskutuji otázky leadershipu a příbuzenství v souvislosti s konverzemi.

Annotation

The aim of my thesis is to discuss the possible uses of the concept of autonomy in the study of conversions of Roma to Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity. Focus on empowerment and social inclusion has been prevailing in the field, and critical reflection of questions of governance and oppression is lacking. I use the thesis by Patrick Williams (1987; 1991; 1993a), according to whom the French Gypsies who converted to Pentecostalism achieved autonomy or at least a sense of autonomy, which allowed them to downplay the role of structural factors and other people behind their actions. Through a case study from ethnographic fieldwork in a Romani Charismatic congregation in Western Bohemia I extend and refine the concept. The main theoretical innovations come from the contemporary moral philosophy, especially the theory of autonomy (of the oppressed) by Christman (2014) who defines autonomy as a reflexive affirmation of an assumed practical identity, a "life worth living". The story which missionaries in Márov, the place of my fieldwork, put forward, was that Roma converted from being pimps and drug dealers. The empirical realities and narratives about the change cast doubt on the easy account of radical change through the religion. Based on a detailed focus on conversion of one former drug addict I suggest that the converts took the practical identity of a convert while or even after leaving the business, which allowed them to remain autonomous and become seen as rational actors. In a Bible school, which was affiliated to the congregation, humbleness was promoted as a divine principle and possible road to salvation, and the converts seemed to have accepted the submission. Their model of autonomy through conversion contained the possibility of submission, while finding their own benefit in the situation – in this case learning a new speech code which they could then use elsewhere. In two chapters I also discuss questions of leadership and kinship with relation to conversions.

Keywords

Roma, Gypsies, Religion, Conversion, Mission, Autonomy, Empowerment, Pentecostalism, Charismatic Christianity, Marginality, Education, Authority, Charisma, Kinship, Faith based organizations, Development

Klíčová slova

Romové, náboženství, konverze, misie, autonomie, empowerment, zplnomocnění, letniční hnutí, charismatici, marginalita, vzdělání, autorita, charisma, rozvoj

Declaration (in Czech)

Prohlašuji, že jsem předkládanou práci zpracoval/a samostatně a použil/a jen uvedené prameny a literaturu, které řádně cituji v této práci. Současně dávám svolení k tomu, aby tato práce byla zpřístupněna v příslušné knihovně UK a prostřednictvím elektronické databáze vysokoškolských kvalifikačních prací v repozitáři Univerzity Karlovy a používána ke studijním účelům v souladu s autorským právem. Prohlašuji, že práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne 16. června 2014

Štěpán Ripka

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1. Introduction

The aim of my thesis is to discuss the possible uses of the concept of autonomy in the study of conversions of Roma to Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity. Focus on empowerment and social inclusion has been prevailing in the field, and critical reflection of questions of governance and oppression is lacking. I take as a reference point the thesis by French ethnographer Patrick Williams (1987; 1991; 1993a), according to whom the French Gypsies who converted to Pentecostalism then achieved autonomy or at least a sense of autonomy, which allowed them to downplay the role of structural factors behind their actions and placed the autonomous individual, master of his own actions, at the front. They would reproduce their own world while inevitably living among the non-Roma and being partially or fully dependent on them. Throughout the dissertation I extend the concept and refine it to suit the empirical realities of my fieldwork. The main theoretical innovations of the concept come from the contemporary moral philosophy. My work, however, lies at the intersection of Social Anthropology, Sociology of Religion and Romani Studies with a strong emphasis on the method and epistemology of Ethnography.

In the second chapter I start with the discussion of the conversion narratives. Conversions are typically accompanied by, and performed through, converts "witnessing" about their transformation where the narrator starts with an account of his life before the conversion, pointing out its negative moments, and then goes on to present his "new life in Christ". I review my own past work and ethnographies of others to find out that it is not sufficient to record, analyse and reproduce these stories, because the most we can learn from them is the face-values they present, and their structure. If we do so we are urged by our public and the academic community to report whether "they" really changed, or if they just say so? I leave this reasoning to missionaries and pastors, because there is nothing to verify – the testimony is inherently not a realistic phenomenon, but a performative act. In order to avoid the trap of questioning the veracity, I suggest using ethnographically-grounded arguments which are able to account for the most basic questions, such as what is happening, how and why, and what are the perspectives of different actors involved? This is why I chose to address the question of autonomy and

conversions through an argument based on long-term stationary fieldwork in one selected congregation, rather than on solicited interviews.

My original research design included becoming a student of a Bible school for Roma, which operated as part of larger Charismatic religious-developmental project at the Western end of the Czech Republic on the border with Germany. I was going to test the autonomy thesis in a classroom setting. My working hypothesis was that Roma have a concept of education that does not recognize the role of the teacher: the learning is shown as if it had happened suddenly, and only thanks to oneself, or to a miracle (Fosztó 2009; Williams 1987, p.4). I was interested in how the pupils of the school who have such an "egocentric" concept of identity and who oppose non-kinship authorities and hierarchies would be taught in the Bible school.

In the fourth chapter I present my findings from the Bible school. The pupils actually accepted even very frontal and hierarchical teaching approaches, and directive content as well. They would be, for example, taught to accept their marginal place in society without questioning it. The religious authorities claimed that the students were motivated for education only by their love for Jesus. My research shows that the Bible school was so successful because it was offering the Roma a general education which led to erudition conceptualized as language code. Knowledge of this language code could help the students to be able to pass as non-Roma or "decent" Roma. Their stance towards the Bible school education was independent from the intentions of its founders. I also found the idea that people who are not formally schooled do not learn is not empirically sustainable, and that the Roma in Márov were learning lot of new things in informal contexts, independent of any schooling system.

These findings and the course of events during my fieldwork when serious leadership issues appeared and an exchange of pastors occurred made me reconsider the research design and widen it. If I were to inquire about autonomies gained through conversion, I first needed to be able to place them in current and past autonomies, dependencies, oppressive structures, and subordinations in the lives of the local Roma before, or apart from, the Charismatic congregation. This required not only an extensive inquiry into the everyday practices, interactions and memories of the

members of the congregation, but also of their relatives and former members of the congregation. In the media and memory production of Charismatic revival, the extra-religious contexts of the lives of the converts (mainly past) are presented very selectively. Márov, the city where I did my fieldwork, was advertised in Christian missionary media as a pocket of sin, and the converts as the only ones who escape the legacy of wickedness, but the situation was much more complex. Only by stepping back from my direct focus on the congregation could I learn about the scope of the autonomies (and dependencies) gained through the conversion, and their potential distinctiveness from other contexts.

I am generally very reserved about calling the "other contexts" secular, because the congregation members had not been atheist prior to their conversion, or after their de-conversion. Furthermore many things which were happening in the congregation were not seen as religious even by the congregation members (i. e. humanitarian aid to the poor which they conceptualized as a faith-motivated activity, but not as a religious act). This research design where, I had to hold back from making any distinctions between the religious and the secular, sacred and profane, exceptional rite inside the church and the quotidian outside, is very much in line with the program of Lived religion (Hall 1997), also called Religion as quotidian practice (Woodhead 2011, p.133). According to Lived religion the "religion comes into being in an ongoing, dynamic relationship with the realities of everyday life" (Orsi 1997, p.8) and it cannot be neatly separated from them.

In the sixth chapter I discuss the autonomy in the everyday life of Roma. Its main occurrence is the respect for the decision of an individual. It is not an uncaring lack of interest by others, but respect, which would prevent Roma from convincing each other about issues over which they disagreed. Even in the uncomfortable situations which arose from poverty there would be subtle strategies to perform self-mastery or self-sufficiency, independence from external constraints, carefreeness, and personal detachment. Autonomous work, which Gypsies and Roma elsewhere seem to prefer (Stewart 1997; Okely 1983), was most often a result of unemployment rather than a personal choice for the Roma in Márov. They would prefer to work fixed hours with a secure contract and income. This did not apply,

however, to the sex and drug businesses which were very common in Márov. This would be the only market where an entrepreneurial spirit would develop.

The seventh chapter looks at the process of conversion from the proselytization and expectations connected to it, through the realization of the conversion to its capacities to deal with the burning problems and multiple oppressions that local Roma are facing. I focus especially on a story of one former drug addict and his interaction with the congregation and his healing.

One of the important moments to see the Pentecostal conversions of French Gypsies as continuation rather than transformation was that the conversions did not seem to intervene in the pre-conversion marital preferences of the Roma. In the ninth chapter I deal with the relation between kinship and conversion. Kinship was of very much interest for the missionaries in Márov. Missionaries tend to treat Roma as a pre-modern society where kinship obligations are so strong that they can superimpose one's religious beliefs. The missionaries in Márov thought they should liberate the Roma from kinship obligations and loyalties, however they were not radical enough to realize that kinship did matter, but operated in a very different way. Kinship could actually be the outcome of loyalty and non-kinship could be the result of disobedience in the local concept. The local Roma were aware of the principles of membership in a *fajta* (kin group of Roma) which was a combination of substance (not necessarily only blood ties, but also embodied practices) and a code of conduct, and they behaved according to this knowledge. They have never been a traditional society, as the missionaries invented. In the sense of the capacity to manipulate the kinship, the Roma were autonomous without conversion.

2. Born-again Christians Entrapped: Conversion Narratives in Social Research[1]

Introduction: Siete's witnessing

Conversions to Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity are typically accompanied by, and performed through, converts' "witnessing" or telling stories about their transformation. The narrator starts with an account of his/her life before the conversion, pointing out its negative moments, and then goes on to present his/her 'new life in Christ'. In addition, they may challenge the listener to change as well. I first encountered this exchange during my fieldwork when I was studying ethnic identity maintenance among Mexican Roma. I wanted to know if the oppositional theories of ethnicity formulated by European social anthropologists on different Roma groups in Europe also apply in the Mexican context. In contrast to the fields studied in Europe, Mexico was a multi-ethnic country, and the struggle against ethnicity-based marginalization and for self-determination was experienced not only by the Roma, but also, perhaps more strongly, by approximately fifty indigenous groups. Thus, I wondered how the Roma would act in a much less exclusive position when "no one really cared about them".

In the Mexican city of Kánchi, I found a Kalderash Roma community (*kumpánya*) of about 500 people. During my stay in the community, I witnessed the working of a Pentecostal church led (and largely financed) by a local *rom* who enjoyed good standing. I met the church members and regularly worshipped alongside them. While converted members of the Roma community talked to me, their non-converted relatives found me unremarkable or, worse, a threat to their business, their daughters' innocence, or even them personally. Although I routinely presented myself as a student with an interest in their culture, they found my story unconvincing. It took me nine months to get to know the non-converted better. However, the existence of a Pentecostal congregation in the Roma community

[1] A large part of this chapter was first published in Czech (Ripka 2013).

opened many doors for me, starting with the door of the church – I was even allowed to take part in church events.

After four months of fieldwork, I arranged for my first recorded interview – with Siete. He was an older man, probably in his early 50s, rather short, and for a *Rom* of his age, unusually slim. He had grey hair and a youngster's eyes. He usually dressed *al ranchero* (cowboy boots, a shirt and a hat). He had an old man's attitude and was respected, although he was not one of the congregation's elders. As a widower, he sometimes asked me jokingly to bring him a new wife from my country. Like most people in the local Roma community, he owned a small plot in a side street of one of Kánchi's forgotten neighbourhoods. The development of the neighbourhood started spontaneously in the late 1980s when villagers migrated to the dusty outskirts of the city to find work. Initially, none of the plots or houses were officially authorized, and a large part of the construction projects underway at the time of my fieldwork were illegal. Most households did not have running water, and power theft by direct tapping was a common practice. Siete's plot was about 8 x 10 metres, with a concrete floor and a toilet booth at the back. Inside Siete's tent, there was a comfortable living room suite, a cupboard containing china, and an old garden table with collapsible chairs.

I almost thought we wouldn't agree to the interview that day because Siete was sitting in front of the house with his nephew Manuel (whose arms were deformed, perhaps due to a childhood condition), his sons Papelote and Chiquilin, and their children. However, after a while, Papelote left and Chiquilin sat down at the garden table to do some Bible reading. Siete and I sat down at the same table and started talking. I encouraged him to tell me something about his life. Siete wanted to know what I was going to do with the interview and how I would publish it. What followed, however, was not a very promising start, at least from my perspective:

> Me: Well, I am going to publish this as my Master's thesis at my university.

S: I used to drink. I would get in the car, drive downtown and attack people. I would insult people. And I wouldn't even know I was driving. I wouldn't know if it was me or somebody else driving the car.

Me: Hmmm.

S: I used to be pretty drunk when driving. But now, thank God, thanks to Christ Jesus who showed us the way to live – we are living the way he taught – thank God he is now guiding us on his ways.

Me: We could start, not from the beginning but...

S: Oh yes, I used to smoke.

Me: Well, in order to start the interview, we could

S: I used to smoke cigarettes.

Me: You could introduce yourself, who you are, what family you Fortang to, and then continue with your life, some important memories, some stories from your life. If you want to tell me stories...

S: No, no, I was not a bad person. I would just drink, that was the problem. I would go play pool or billiard, go to the movies. Now I am free of all these things. All these things are left behind: cigarettes, booze, I quit them all. Now I spend my time running my business, my small business, so that we can make ends meet.

(Interview with Siete, 13 February 2007, *Kánchi,* Mexico).

Instead of telling me his life story, Siete started by witnessing about his conversion. As an interviewer, I ultimately submitted to his narrative and accepted his ways of framing my questions. Since witnessing was practiced frequently in the Kánchi congregation, other interviews started in similar ways, too. Once I started recording, people switched to their conversion narratives. Men's narratives most often involved abstinence (and tackling alcoholism-related problems, from marital discord to insults leading to violence). Women told me about their husbands' conversion. Different people witnessed in highly comparable ways.

After some time, I no longer started my interviews by asking respondents about their biographies. Instead, I expected converts to tell me their conversion narratives. It never occurred to me that the narratives I was recording were something I should verify through additional observations or fieldnotes. Neither did I doubt that the people witnessing to me believed in God sincerely. Unfortunately, this was not based on any well-prepared approach to witnessing – I think I was just being trustful.

Authenticity and ethnography

In a recent study on religious pathways to social inclusion among Slovak Roma (Podolinská & Hrustič 2010), the researchers asked people about the relationship between religious transformation, social change and social inclusion. They determined the success rate of such pathways to social inclusion to be at least 80%. In response to a presentation of their preliminary findings, sociologist Dušan Lužný identified a number of weaknesses in their study, especially with regard to data collection. He wrote: "It is implied by the logic of conversion narratives that life before conversion is evaluated negatively and life after conversion clearly positively. (...) The question is, did the researchers identify real, or 'just' alleged social change? Did the actual amount of money inserted into gambling machines decrease? Did school attendance actually improve?". He continued: "Let us assume that these are not just assertions, but reflections of real social change (one that we would love to see happening). Then we have to demonstrate that such a change really occurred as a result (was caused by) religious conversion" (Lužný 2011, p.202).

To defend their study, the authors point out that not only converts but other members of the community were interviewed. In their publication which came out after Lužný's critique they stated: "taking into account all target groups responding to the three types of questionnaires (including '*external observers*'), we are able to demonstrate a success rate of at least 80% for all 14 indicators measured by us"(Podolinská & Hrustič 2010, p.97). They will probably defend their argument because their data was triangulated from various (potentially antagonistic) sources.

I am, however, interested in one point, which was not in the focus of the debate but that I believe is a key characteristic. As Lužný argues, conversion narratives are an inherently uncertain source of evidence and "one must demonstrate that change actually occurred". On the one hand, I agree with Lužný that conversion narratives are inherently uncertain (like all discourses of interview-based sociology). On the other hand, I find it untenable to demand a proof of actual social change: analogously, one might want to prove that the witnessing converts were actual Christians, not just wannabes. Then again, the authors themselves asked for such a challenge by conducting this kind of study. Lužný's effort to determine the validity of conversions (or religious/social change) is, of course, not unique. Therefore, I will start the following section by examining the functions of questions about conversion and the veracity of witnessing in the everyday lives of converts and congregations. Then I will show how this challenge has been tackled by the anthropology of Christianity. Finally, I will offer alternative approaches to witnessing that I find much more adequate to the ways conversion narratives are used, the purposes they serve and the ways they are acted upon.

From veracity of conversion narrative to purity of conversion

Questions about the veracity of conversion narratives and the validity of changes undergone by converts – in essence, whether or not their (more or less ostentatious) witnessing corresponds with their actions in the world – are asked not only by anthropologists but by pastors, missionaries, fellow church members, family members and many others. For example, the congregation in Márov, where I did fieldwork for this thesis[2] is inspired by the Word of Faith Movement and believes that after conversion/acceptance, Jesus Christ (through the Holy Spirit) starts changing the convert by working directly in his/her heart. While such a transformation is monitored by the convert's entire social circle, it is especially the pastor who has the highly practical motivation to see the newly converted change (ideally in an accountable way). For example, they see a threat to their congregation in

[2] It is another charismatic Roma congregation, this time in Western Bohemia. I have been in touch with it since the summer of 2010. The most intensive part of the fieldwork was done between January 2011 and June 2012.

converts who are known to be using drugs despite their public declarations to the contrary. Fellow church members soon label them as hypocrites with pragmatic, rather than spiritual motivations for conversion[3]. Even if the pastor did not monitor or sanction the behaviours that contradict the member's proclaimed moral transformation, fellow church members would require them to do so. Just like parents (or only fathers) are responsible for a child's behaviour, the pastor is responsible for the actions of his church members.

The pastors also do not believe that some converts will never change. In a conversation with one of the congregation's elders (about a recently converted member who started attending church meetings), I was told not to believe that member. The elder argued that one must wait three years before one knowing if the change was real. In another conversation, the same elder mentioned the three-year period in the context of his own conversion narrative. His own wife did not believe him for the first three years after he decided to transform from a pimp/drug dealer to a Christian. Another pastor even acknowledged publicly that he only started working on himself when his wife criticized him for preaching God's Word and doing drugs at the same time.

I have obtained a valuable piece of personal experience with regard to hypocrisy. Trying to avoid being criticized as a hypocrite, I found out I had internalized the criticism and it was guiding my actions in the field. Before entering the field, I had decided not to accept Christ in my heart. My considerations were as follows: I had to be honest with my informants and myself; if I accepted Christ, I would be unable to discern my motivations (would it be because I myself wanted, in order to facilitate access to the field that I would have to adapt and become 'one of them'?). My concern was not only to preserve my own moral health, but also to maintain legibility, coherence and truthfulness vis-à-vis the members of the church. However, more than anything, this was an unfounded assumption and, in this case, also an illusion about the way legibility, coherence and truthfulness are constructed in the context of a charismatic congregation. At the same time, even if

[3] See (Hrustič 2007) for comparison with other churches and religious societies, and especially Jehovah's Witnesses.

I had for a long time disliked the assumption that Jesus died for my sins before I could even commit any, I knew I was not far from my personal conversion.

I reassessed my decision to avoid conversion during the first couple of months in the field: surrounded by people who were changing lives and letting others change theirs, I began to view the original argument "I wouldn't be sure about myself" as a mere excuse for not working on myself (or not letting others do the work). I came to recognize my sins and learned that I needed Christ to overcome them. I also came to believe that my dilemma about the veracity of my own motivations could be left to each person to assess; indeed, any other newly converted could be regarded with similar suspicion. As a researcher, I was in the same situation as someone trying to figure out whether he is drawn to Christ because he truly wants to change his life, or because he likes the praises sung during the services; wants to become part of a Roma family attending them; or is looking for an acceptable excuse not to get high with friends. And later, when I was talking about it to the congregation's elders, they agreed they had encountered quite a few people post-poning their conversion because of uncertain motivations. I will come back to the issue of my own acceptance of Jesus as my personal saviour later in this chapter, now I would like to proceed in the argument about the testimonies.

Anthropology of religion and conversion "validity"

Anthropology of religion has provided two different answers to the question of validity of conversions and conversion narratives. First, cultural relativism would argue that "indigenous" people convert in their own, non-Western ways. Peter Gow (2006) studied the issues of "validity" or "actuality" of conversions among the Amazonian Piro. He was faced with one fundamental question: why did his informants who had demonstrably undergone a religious conversion never tell their conversion narratives? He warned anthropologists that our concepts (and, of course, our ways of asking questions) often originate in Christianity, and should always be critically analyzed. Whether or not someone *actually* converted is not a question for an ethnographer, but one for an evangelist. Gow as an ethnographer wanted to know why exactly the Piro found the Christian mission interesting, and he identified the reason in education. While they converted to a religion white

people wanted them to, they never reflected any parallels between their cosmology and Christianity, and thus they never realized the evangelists were trying to bring a new religion to them (Gow 2006, p.237). In other words, they did not convert after all, at least the way the evangelists wanted them to, because they never replaced their cosmology.

Jean and John Comaroff concluded similar findings on a 19th century Christian mission among the African Tswana. Since the evangelists were probably aware of the problem, they tried to reform the entire Tswana culture through a "civilizing mission". They were taught a "lesson in cultural relativism" when the Tswana repeatedly presented their version of Christianity which could be reconciled peacefully with their prior religious beliefs. According to Christianity's main conversion model (the so-called Pauline model), the converting individual changes his/her primary religious identity; this was not the case for the Tswana. Their interaction with the evangelists (described by the Comaroffs as *conversation*, rather than conversion) "reshaped the 'heathen' world not by winning souls in spiritual or verbal battles but by inculcating the everyday forms of the colonizing culture." The evangelists – "despite their own ideology of religious transformation and their stated goal of gaining converts – were aware that they had to work on both planes at once: that to become cultivated Christians, the Southern Tswana had to be converted *and* reformed" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, p.251,).

The alternative way of answering the questions about conversion validity or veracity is presented by Joel Robbins' (2003; 2007) radical anthropology of Christianity. He argues that Christian influence on indigenous cultures has been downplayed or intentionally ignored in various studies and texts by anthropologists (especially those working outside Western countries). In order to avoid the issue, they planned their fieldwork in places and cultures that had not yet been "contaminated" by the gospel. Whenever they encountered any Christian institutions, beliefs or practices in indigenous societies, they tended to represent "Christianity there as inconsistently and lightly held or as merely a thin veneer overlying deeply meaningful traditional beliefs, a veneer that people often construct for purposes of economic or political gain" (Robbins 2007, p.6). As Schieffelin noted, anthropology has often studied evangelism and colonialism side by side (he proved the

point by using the term *colonial evangelism*) as "two powerful institutions (…) that share an explicit agenda of transforming persons and the social, economic, and spiritual lives of their communities" (Schieffelin 2007, p.2). Similarly, Barker sees the reason why anthropology has largely dismissed evangelism in the fact that "Christianity has tended to be strongly associated in anthropologists' minds with acculturation and colonial incorporation, our accounts have tended to be weighted toward documenting resistances, appropriations, and ironic but often creative misunderstandings" (Barker 2007, p.18). The above authors, among others, make this argument with reference to Comaroffs' famous work.

Robbins argues that cultural anthropology has, for the most part, studied the continuity of cultural practices *(continuity thinking*), assuming that "the things they study – symbols, meanings, logics, structures, power dynamics – have a fundamental and enduring quality and are not readily subject to change" (Robbins 2003, p.221). Based on this assumption, "the most common and satisfying anthropological arguments are those that find some enduring cultural structure that persists underneath all the surface changes" (ibid.). Robbins contends that "judgments of continuity tend to depend on underlying judgments of similarity: a belief or practice that looks new actually manifests a continuity with a past belief or practice" (ibid: 228). Anthropologists of continuity make a highly selective effort to identify similarities between old and new, while downplaying differences between them or ignoring instances where they are both similar to something else. They also fail to listen to actors, ignoring the fact that some of their acts and practices are devoted to rupture. Robin challenges fellow anthropologists to overcome this uneven distribution of research attention, and to start writing much more about discontinuity.

Should we take Robbins' challenge *ad absurdum*, we would no longer write about behaviours that are inconsistent with the things converts say about themselves. However, when someone claims not to be doing X while actually doing X, it is untenable to demand the anthropologist to look away and focus on the Y he "really" changed at. The continuity-discontinuity dilemma can be solved by understanding the language of discontinuity as complementary to that of continuity, as proposed by Engelke (Engelke 2004, p.106). Such complementarity, however,

requires us to regard agency as textual and language as performative. A conversion account is not a mere picture of reality. It is a much more complex phenomenon: a picture for reality, an action, a modality of faith, a currency. One need not check if what the converts say is what they do. The key to better understanding their situations lies in contextualizing their accounts, in examining the performative character of their witnessing, and in mapping what I am going to refer to as the *social life of their conversion accounts*.

My approach to witnessing (and in turn to Roma's chances of being or becoming Christian) can be understood in contrast to the structural determinism (continuity thinking) of Jakoubek and Budilová. Both authors argue that

> "at the level of the cultural system, the inhabitants of Roma settlements cannot be considered Christians, just like their culture cannot be characterized as a Christian culture. In this regard, their Christian identity and declared Christian affiliation are neither relevant nor decisive because such conscious accounts have no implications for the unconscious structures" (Jakoubek & Budilová 2003, p.104).

It can also be viewed in contrast to the realist empiricism proposed above by Lužný in response to Podolinská and Hrustič. In my approach, I strive to take conversion narratives seriously by paying detailed attention to witnessing.

Doing through words

Let me now return to the personal story Siete told me in Mexico. While I wanted to find out about his life, Siete mostly talked about how he used to be bad (drink alcohol, injure people in car accidents, beat up his wife etc.) and how he is now reformed.

Patrick Williams studied this type of talk among French Pentecostal Roma/Tsiganes, and wrote the following about it:

> "By presenting Tsigane Pentecostalism as a talk that allows one to present himself to others, we do not mean to imply that the Roma, Gitanos or Manus etc. did not have any talk about themselves before (or independently

> from) Pentecostalism. However, such a talk was intended for internal use within family groups and communities only. Stereotypes, roles and masks were used in contact with the non-Roma. Instead of, for example, exposing conflicts between church members or acts of exchange performed during religious ceremonies, one who declares conversion to the Pentecostal faith (and here we wish to refrain from commenting on the depth or sincerity of his faith) is able to witness about him/herself in the presence of non-Roma without feeling naked" (Williams 1987, p.7).

By telling a blurred account of their conversion, Williams argues, the Roma/Tsiganes make a compromise with the society's demand that they present an unambiguous public face. According to this proposition, Siete witnessed about himself in general terms in order to avoid being more personal with me. Nevertheless, in Mexico, witnessing was not an exclusively public practice. Some people told their narratives so often as if trying to become more determined in their conversion; and I saw recent converts (whose new identity was still fragile) spend more time witnessing than others. In this paper, I will draw a link between witnessing and Foucault's examination of the birth of the subject. In early Christianity, self-discipline was achieved through "dramatic recognition of one's status as a penitent" (Foucault 1990, p.41). I regard the practice of witnessing about one's conversion as an autobiography which does not (only) refer to the narrator's past but is (primarily) constitutive of his future action and identity (Bruner 1995). In other words, I see witnessing as an act of "doing" conversion. Finally, I am going to mention a similar study among Pentecostal Christian churches by Stromberg (1993). Most of these churches, he found, required their members to experience conversion and take a commitment to Christ. They need to account for their conversion (as a transformation of the soul which is hidden from the public eye) by presenting a conversion narrative. As Stromberg argued, "the central task of the believer in Evangelical Christianity is, through his or her interpretation of Scripture, to find a meaningful link between the symbol system (the Bible) and his or her experience. The conversion narrative is the creation of this link through language..." (Stromberg 1993, pp.5–6).

In Mexico, the most frequently told conversion narrative was that of abstinence from alcohol. The abstinence narrative lies at the heart of my argument and is the focus of my analysis in my Master's thesis. Since I did not want to limit my analysis to narrative methods, I also go on to describe various strategies of keeping the freshly converted away from alcohol. Each of them was assigned a tutor who was responsible for visiting them, checking how they were doing, and accompanying them at every step. The preachers believed that the fresh convert could not be left alone or else he would return to the bottle. Another strategy will be referred to as "counterpoint": at times of "worldly" fiestas when people would get together and drink, divine services were held more frequently to give the substance-free converts an excuse to ignore the occasion. Furthermore, the congregation gave them a range of new positive roles of "servants" and the opportunity to grow in the hierarchy. Prestige was no longer obtained for excessive drinking or aggressive behaviour, but deserved through work for the congregation. Finally, abstinence was facilitated through discontinuity rituals, such as the burning of music collections. This was because these "worldly" songs had the power to bring back old emotions and unlock the old patterns of intoxication and debauchery (Ripka 2008).

There was one more function of the Mexican conversion narratives: they supported evangelism. Susan Harding (2000; 1987) studied the narrative techniques and models used by American pastors when evangelizing others through witnessing about their personal conversion. They typically strived to involve the listener in the story; identify them with a lost soul; present an instructive case of conversion occurring to one of the characters; and challenge the listener to accept Christ in their heart (to convert) (Harding 2000, pp.33–60). I took a similar approach to analyze some of the conversion narratives I collected in Mexico. Each type of narrative strategy I identified was associated with some evangelistic potential. Witnessing is a powerful instrument for evangelizing born-again Christians who are not quite illiterate but definitely no more than beginners in Bible study.

It is not an accident that witnessing plays a central role in the practice of Pentecostal and charismatic churches. In her analysis, Harding regards it as a way to faith (and, of course, to a new identity): "...the Holy Spirit brings you under conviction by speaking to your heart. Once you are saved, the Holy Spirit assumes

your voice, speaks through you, and begins to rephrase your life. Listening to the gospel enables you to experience belief, as it were, vicariously. But generative belief, belief that indisputably transfigures you and your reality, belief that becomes you, comes only through speech: speaking is believing" (Harding 2000, p.60). Simon Coleman who studied the charismatic Word of Life Church in Sweden, goes even further to argue that "states of perfect health, happiness and prosperity are supposedly achieved through becoming an embodiment and physical representation of objectified language. The believer may therefore develop a specifically evangelical habitus in which the 'textualisation' of the self is manifested in bodily dispositions and experiences" (Coleman 2000, p.134).

Witnessing and politics of research

Witnessing is one of the central instruments of charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity. However, to verify whether converts are witnessing the truth by observing actual behavioural change would contradict the logic of witnessing – because witnessing is inherently not a realistic phenomenon. I find it more relevant to examine the regimes of acting upon conversion narratives and the contexts of witnessing – these things determine what exactly is told and to whom, and how it evolves once it has been formulated. Thanks to the flexibility of the ethnographic method, we can leave aside the simple "common sense" questions; instead, as an alternative perspective on witnessing that is more adequate to its ontological complexity, we intend to take conversion narratives and the practice of witnessing seriously.

Finally, there is an important political dimension to the study of witnessing and conversion narratives, one that is even more important in the case of marginalized Roma: not only for the ontology of the object of study but also specific government policies are politically relevant. No inquiry is innocent – it is always part of the world it is supposed to describe, shaping it at the same time. Our methods are performative – they have real effects on the world and may "help to make the realities they describe" (Law & Ury 2002, p.4). The question, then, is: Which realities do we want our investigation to make more real and which ones less real? "How do we want to interfere (because interfere we will, one way or another)?" (Law & Ury 2002, p.11). Witnessing is an attempt to reduce the complex picture

of one's life into a few biographical keywords or turning points. By taking the collected conversion narratives at face value in our analysis, we effectively side with this perspective on life, leaving less room for the complexity of Christian subjectivities, and we also effectively increase the gap between the ambiguous contexts and events of people's lives and the requirement of presenting them in a coherent way. As a result, we risk "exposing" any inconsistencies between the witnessing converts' words and actions. By insisting on such consistency (and ignoring that agency is textual and language performative) and reproducing the converts' radical narratives, we first help build a cul-de-sac and then drive our informants into it. An alternative is offered by such methods can help us reflect and elaborate on the complex circumstances and contexts of religious and social change. Instead of trying to prove that the conversion narratives are right or wrong (in line with positivist science) or arguing that no one can really change because culture is inescapable (in line with continuity thinking), I propose to conceptualize the telling of conversion narrative as a practice of religious change.

Scope of the inquiry

Charismatic and Pentecostal conversions create radical narrative ruptures with the past. The problem I saw in using the ethnographic method was that I would not be present to the lived reality of the non-converts, before they converted and so I would not be able to account from my own observation what the life had been like before the conversion, and what has objectively changed. From this point of view the preferable research design would be to always stick with people before their conversion, and try to follow them during the conversion. This would be almost impossible, given that the congregation was quite small compared to the local population of Roma – whom I should meet, who I should be with/turn to? What if they finally do not convert? This would totally thwart my research design.

Only later I learned that first, the everyday lives allow me to see also the unofficial life of the converts, and that besides being converts they also have many different identities in different contexts, so even participating with the converts gave me a lot of insights into the secular contexts of their lives. I learned that not all

household members are active members of the congregation, and there are many things going on under the surface.

Secondly, there were many people whom I met first through the congregation, but then they stopped attending the church, or they were coming and leaving. To give a very general picture, there were about 70 active members of the congregation by the time I started my fieldwork in summer 2010, and only 20 members in spring 2012 when I was finishing. While some of the ones who left the church remained "on the right way" trying to sustain legal employment and claimed they read the Bible. There were others who "returned to the old life", be it gambler habits, occasional criminal deeds etc.

Thirdly I was meeting relatives, friends and acquaintances of the congregation members who never were a part of the congregation, or who had been out of it for a long time now. I could learn what the "life before" could look like from people who were coming back from prison and were slumping into the illegal business again, and from people who were living on the edge and sometimes needed some form of help, e.g., interpretation with a German lawyer when a family member was arrested in Germany for smuggling drugs, recognizance which was collected for a family member, and mostly giving lift to someone.

I hardly ever initiated contact with Roma which were unknown to me, but let the networks of my friends and situations emerge. So I do have a very good overview of the whole family, but I hardly know other Roma families in Márov. I did this intentionally for two reasons: First, I preferred to stay under my "patron" – uncle – in order to keep protected. Secondly, I had also done several applied research tasks with Roma in the Czech Republic in the past, involving questionnaires and visiting unknown people in their households. When I knock the door, the Roma always invite me inside, offer coffee and meal, are very friendly. They sometimes show how clean their place is, and that they have food in the fridge. This really happened to me many times. Roma are very hospitable people compared to non-Roma, which I proved in the assignments of applied researches – the situation was always much more difficult with non-Roma. They would not be so fast in inviting an anonymous interviewer to their household to begin with. But there was a fur-

ther reason for the hospitality of Roma why they would invite non-Roma and show them their households.

I had some knowledge about the work of Czech socio-legal protection system towards the Roma from before, but only when I started to research the local archive in Márov I saw the local Roma had been visited, controlled, marked and punished for the uncleanness of their households since their arrival to Márov in 1950s. There were commissions of voluntary non-Roma workers who would look after the hygiene and moral standards of several Roma households and they would periodically report about them. There would also be survey done about the Roma households. Furthermore social workers from the municipal and regional government were coming to the households to inspect them without announcing. These officers have had the power to take children from the family and place them in the children home, and they would also have a say on the level of the social benefits given to the household. Mothers were constantly cleaning their households not only because of their purity and tradition, but also because of the threat that if their household were evaluated by some worker as not sufficiently hygienic for children, there was a threat that the children will be institutionalized. The social workers working for the Socio-legal protection system would inspect also whether the family has enough food in the fridge, or how the clothes of the children are stored. I learned that by visiting Roma households unknown to me I shall always be taken as the *Gadjo* who may be not directly working for the municipality and reporting, but will probably have a say in the two important things – children and the social benefits. This initial violence, actually a repetition of past and present coercion that the state exerts on the Roma, prevented me from making new acquaintances just by myself. In my research I was interested in developing long-term deep relations of trust and friendship where open dialogue could happen, and personal matters could be discussed. This is why I relied almost entirely on the contacts and situations that were provided to me by the families with whom I was already acquaintanted.

Finally, I did conduct some interviews, but a very limited number of them. Most of the talks I witnessed and had with the communication partners were not solicited. In the beginning of the research I was banned conducting interviews with the

congregation members by their pastor. Later on when the pastor left, it would be possible, but I already had a plentiful of data from direct participation/observation that I decided I shall supplement the field notes with interviews about the history of the congregation and several focused interviews with the pastor and preachers. I dared to ask about some things, and I found the courage to ask only when my fieldwork was over for some time. Until now we have regular conversations with several people from the field, both by phone and chat, I am keeping contact through the social media, and about bimonthly I visit Márov for a short time. People from Márov also approach me every now and then.

Converted anthropologist

My decision to accept Jesus as my personal saviour during the course of my fieldwork was also a methodological one. In framing my methodological thinking, I was inspired by the carnal sociology proposed by Loic Wacquant (2003) who studied urban marginality in a ghetto in Chicago, and "converted" to become a semi-professional boxer in a gym attended exclusively by young black men from the quarter. According to him:

> "there is nothing better than initiatory immersion and even moral and sensual conversion to the cosmos under investigation, construed as a technique of observation and analysis that, on the express condition that it be theoretically armed, makes it possible for the sociologist to appropriate in and through practice the cognitive, aesthetic, ethical, and conative schemata that those who inhabit that cosmos engage in their everyday deeds." (Wacquant 2003, p.VIII)

For Wacquant boxing was a pure bodily practice without a theory and without accounts, so bodily experience of learning the sport was inevitable in order to account how it is incorporated, and how the whole reality around it is constructed:

> "To understand the universe of boxing requires one to immerse oneself in it firsthand, to learn it and experience its constitutive moments from the inside. Native understanding of the object is here the necessary condition of an adequate knowledge of the object." (Wacquant 2003, p.59)

Immersion and practice of the sport could still be understood as very different from the conversion marked by acceptance of Jesus as personal saviour.

Blanes (2006) presents this tension as an interplay between scientific enterprise and personal experience. He did research in Gypsy Pentecostal churches in Portugal and Spain, and he looked for a true and honest way to position himself as an atheist without losing the access to the field. During the course of his fieldwork he learned how to behave so that he did not disturb the Pentecostals, so he would participate in the rituals in the church, clap his hands when the others did, or stand up and sit down when everyone did, but he would not reply "hallelujah" to the preacher when others did, or pray. He also learned to present himself not as an atheist, but as someone with a religious history who has long been friend with the Pentecostal churches, but he was not yet touched by the spirit of God to become a convert. He was gaining people's confidence by his ethical commitment to the community expressed by his commitment to dialogue (Blanes 2006, p.229).

In my fieldwork I learned that the converts with whom I was in everyday contact were before all working hard on themselves – in this regard I could conceptualize them as community of people who are changing themselves through constant effort. They were facing very similar situations as I did, and neither they were sure about the right solution, but they actively tried, many of them tried different thing, and among them the acceptance of Jesus and getting in the way of conversion. It seemed to me ethically correct to try as well, instead of just watching them trying. I became more open and honest than I would ever be if I did not try, and only "recorded" their practices in my field notes instead. In my power position of a university student from developed region with a stipend which exceeded their incomes, it was also a way to come in terms with my structurally preferential position[4].

[4] I had the option to attend instead the local Catholic Church, whose priest was a young educated liberal Catholic. His sermons were personally very attractive for me, because instead of pure moralist speech without a lot of content, which I sometimes heard in Catholic churches elsewhere, this priest was delivering very advanced ideas on an academic level with insights from social sciences. Nevertheless I decided to become a member of the Roma congregation, and to learn about Christianity in the way the Roma converts did. By accepting Jesus in the

The second issue was the meaning of the acceptance of Jesus. For me the implicit meaning was that through the acceptance of Jesus I also accept the community and symbolically enrol in it. I felt it as a big step which I was thinking over for a long time. On the other side I saw that many people do accept Jesus and after some time turn to do other things, perhaps come back later, or never come back again. I realized that I could do the same and become a part of the congregation as long as I felt comfortable about doing so, and that I could do other things when I wanted, such as the other members of the congregation. Perhaps this vast independence from the institutional constraint was also due to the fact that the congregation started to fall apart by the second half of my fieldwork, but even before that people used to convert and de-convert quite often. From the circa fifty people whom I saw accepting Jesus during a proselytization campaign in a near village, only about ten continued to visit the church and form a community around it. The acceptance of Jesus was the expression of willingness both to work on oneself, and to become part of the moral community of the converted[5].

Finally I would like to come back to conversion as a methodological question. The work of Robert Orsi (2006) will help me in this regard. Orsi did his fieldwork in South Chicago in a Church of Our Lady Guadalupe, who was known by its cult of Saint Jude. People with problems were coming and prayed to him openly and in a loud voice. The frequent result of such a prayer was the acceptance of a loss. Orsi was coming to the church making participant observation about the people who were coming and their stories. He thought of his approach as giving voice to the lived experience of religion of common people, instead of theorizing about the religion in contemporary times from an armchair. Once he was challenged by one of his informants when she asked him whether Orsi himself ever prayed to Saint

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Roma congregation I also acknowledged that the Roma converts and preachers are superior to me in spiritual terms, and I want to learn from them and from the community.

[5] I discussed this issue with my colleague Tomáš Hrustič who also accepted Jesus as his saviour during his fieldwork among Pentecostal Roma in Slovakia. His view was that it was a ritual used for the confirmation of belonging to a certain kind, group of people. He wanted to express that he belonged to them, although his acceptance of Jesus was rather a temporal issue as in my case or in the case of many of our informants.

Jude. His answer was that he did not, because although he was born to a Christian family, he did not believe that the Saints would give him anything. Her next question how, then, he wanted to understand what the people who prayed were doing when they prayed to the Saint Jude? Orsi then replied that he would inquire in it through talking to these people, asking them about their feelings toward the Saint Jude and the ways they engage with him in their everyday experience. He was also reading historical materials to contextualize the experiences of his informants. The lady interrupted him and asked him to pray to Saint Jude once he would be in problems, because the Saint would help him (Orsi 2006, p.148).

Two and half years after that, Orsi was in similar problems as the "devotees of Saint Jude" were when he did his research, and he remembered the advice the lady had given him. He did not pray to Saint Jude, because he did not believe in it, but he started looking for an analogy in his own emotional and behavioural repertoire to the practices of praying to saint Jude. He knew the women devotees were making explicit their desires in a form of petition – what would be the best solution of their dilemma. When he tried to do this he learned it was extremely difficult articulate loudly his desire if he knows it will not be fulfilled (as the devotees claimed to know as well that the desires they express will not be fulfilled). His second lesson was that it was a big relief to admit to himself what he actually wanted. When he said it, it was as if this possibility "had more substantial presence just for having been spoken and acknowledged" (ibid 172). The next step was to say that he would accept any solution no matter whether Saint Jude wants to fulfil his desires or not. He underwent a way of the devotees that he understood for the first time, "from despair to acknowledgement to resignation and hope" (ibid). When he tried himself he understood much better what the devotees were doing when praying to Saint Jude.

The shift Orsi did was one towards the recognition that he and his informant were alike in their needs, vulnerability, and risk – they had shared human fate. He was also able to appreciate the shared experience on a level which was not religious. Orsi realized that participant observation is far from the identification with the other culture: it is a dialogue with it. His proposal is to "acknowledge the common human project, within the framework of different histories and different ways of

being in the world" (ibid: 174). He describes his methodology of researching the religion as follows:

> "(T)entative, interpersonal examination of particular religious idioms within a carefully described social field that includes both the researcher and the person he or she talks with, in which the conversation they have are both what is being studied and how it is being studied – resembles the nature of many kinds of praying and religious acting, too." (Orsi 2006, p.174)

In other words, according to Orsi, the first dichotomy which the researcher should abandon and dismantle in the inquiry in the lived religion is the "Us and Them" opposition.

Wacquant suggests immersion in bodily practices, while Blanes and Orsi rely on an open dialogue. Blanes keeps the position of the "atheist anthropologist", but Orsi shows us that in order to understand it makes sense to experiment in our own ways. My experiment with accepting Jesus as my personal saviour brought me the local understanding and use of this ritual. I learned about the theology which allows the "yet unconverted" people get involved in the conversion process, without any preparation, performatively opening their hearts to the Holy Spirit to clean them. It allows overcoming moral dilemmas about motivations to conversion, because Jesus is supposed to work in the hearts of all people who accept him.

I need to add that after all I do not consider the acceptance of Jesus in my heart on a different level, than other acts of establishing proximities and distances in the negotiation of the position of the researcher in the field. Friendships or incorporation into a family or household (which I discuss at length in the chapter nine) may be other examples of establishment of proximities. In this regard I was inspired by Philippe Bourgois in the establishment of friendships with my informants and more generally long-term relationships based on mutual trust which allowed me to pose personal questions and expect my informants to give me well-thought and serious answers (Bourgois 2002, p.22). During the fieldwork and even more during the write-up, ethnography became much more than a method for me; I started to understand it as epistemology. Throughout my dissertation I intended to follow

the logic of the field I was researching and from the practice, rather than from the logic of the academic field or the logic of scientific theories (Bourdieu 2003; Gille 2001). This approach can be best seen working in the fourth chapter where I give the account of the breakdown (Agar 1982) which I encountered in the Bible school for Roma with regard to my original research question and how I solved that empirical challenge.

3. “Je me suis mis dans le Seigneur”: Autonomy and Empowerment through the Conversion?

The first ethnographer who focused systematically on the spread of the Charismatic and Pentecostal movement among Gypsies was Patrick Williams in France, who followed the conversions of his Manus and Kalderash friends to Pentecostalism (Williams 1984; Williams 1987; Williams 1991; Williams 1993a; Williams 1993b; Williams 2003). The research agenda on Gypsy Pentecostalism and the questions he opened and partly addressed are the following: To what extent is the growth of the Pentecostal movement among Gypsies a response to the trauma from genocide during the Second World War? How does it correlate with the efforts of the Catholic Church to evangelize among Gypsies, and is it a counteraction to the Catholic mission? To what extent does it relate to general processes of urbanization in France? Is it an instance of assimilation or of acquiring autonomy, and is Pentecostalism more than a mediation of more general social change in a manner that would be acceptable to Gypsy communities? Does it mean transformation or rather continuation?

Pentecostalism among Gypsies is, according to Williams, ingenious in its ability to provide the born-again Christians with a narrative structure, through which they are able to present the change of their behaviour as their individual decision, and thus downplay the interpretation that the conversion is an outcome of structural constrains (Williams 1991). He documented this moment on the life-story of his Manus informant Tchirklo, who married into a Gypsy Pentecostal family and then put in accord the life of his parents and siblings, that of his in-laws, and the new world of Pentecostal Gypsies he started to meet. The changes in the life trajectory of Tchirklo, and his conversion, could be interpreted as a part of the process of urbanization which the Gypsies in France have gone through since 1960s. However, Tchirklo had an exclusively religious reading. According to him, the change in his life was due to baptism.

> “In the way how Tchirklo was presenting himself in his personal trajectory: ‘Je me suis mis dans le Seigneur’ (‘I am mine in the Lord’), there is only himself (the decision) and the Lord (the election). Enlightened by the

> Lord, it is him and only him who initiate his transformation. Likely to the Manuss and Roma who became "Gypsies" thanks to the divine grace, while keeping or conquering the power to decide who they are, Tchirklo seems to master his destiny." (Williams 1991, p.90, own translation)

The conversion to Pentecostalism brings autonomy, or at least a subjective sense of autonomy, which makes Pentecostalism attractive for the Roma/Gypsies.

> The success of the Pentecostalism (…) means also the mastery, or, at least a sense of a mastery, of everyone over his proper existence"(ibid)

In the case of Tchirklo, it is autonomy deliberately ignoring the context – the possible sociological explanations of his conversion[6]. The following rhetorical devices are used to underline one's initiative in the conversion process: "I was baptised", "I decided to receive the baptism", "I submitted myself to the Lord", Williams cites the Romani converts. Through these means, the Pentecostal Gypsies are able to sustain themselves as autonomous subjects, masters of their own lives. It is only them and the Lord who holds their lives in hands since their conversion. Only they and the Lord are in control of their lives following conversion. The claim "Je me suis mis dans le Seigneur", this retrieval of (self)-mastery through the conversion is a central thesis that inspires my ethnography.

To Williams it seemed that Pentecostalism was chosen in a given historical moment by the Gypsies to maintain their distinct world. (Williams 1991, p.94) Throughout the process of conversion to Pentecostalism, the Gypsies appropriated a value system which is conform with the dominant value system of *Gadje*: "love towards the others, respect for the family, honesty, and the desire to work" (Williams 1993a, p.6). This adoption of the values of *Gadje* could, however, be seen as a threat to the autonomy of the Gypsy world. Williams notes that this is another

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[6] Pentecostalism among French Gypsies was understood by Williams as an outcome of the process of urbanization, in this sense on a same level as alcoholism, drug addictions, violence, or crisis of the traditional authority, but it was also presented as a response to all of these, a remedy. (Williams 1991, p.91)

ingenuity of Pentecostalism that it allowed for an appropriation of these values in a manner that makes it different from the *Gadje:*

> "The decision to consider these qualities as spiritual, or religious qualities, helps to differentiate the way, in which the converts abandoned all the oppositions between the values and actions of the Gypsies and *Gadje.* In order not to be blamed for being *Gadje* or like *Gadje,* they deliberately mediated their change through the religion; the result is the same, but they maintained their morality" as Gypsies (Williams 1993a, p.6).

Pentecostal Gypsies also reinvent their commonness (or ethnicity) through the Pentecostalism apart from the world of *Gadje.* The Pentecostal Gypsies in France started using the term Gypsy people (people Tsigane) and conceptualize Gypsies as people or nation, a move quite new to Gypsies in France. It was only during the Nazi rule that the Gypsies started to be seen as a more or less coherent ethnic group (and started to be counted, grouped, secluded and exterminated). The activists who came with a minority agenda after the Second World War legitimated the demands to self-determination on the basis of shared holocaust suffering. The Pentecostal Gypsies escaped this agenda and invented new ways to define themselves as people vis-à-vis the *Gadje.* One example could be the invention of the myth of biblical origin of Roma – that they are a lost tribe of Israelites – which was common among the Pentecostal Gypsies. Again, the Pentecostal Gypsies adopt a position which is conforming to the dominant concept of ethnicity, but they appropriate it, according to Williams, in their own way. Pentecostal conversions are a new expression of the autonomy of Gypsies. This outline of a theory of conversion has the ideal of autonomy as a common denominator.

The "world of Manus", a" 'whole' around the notion of Rom, the opposition to the *Gadje (*non-Roma) allow(s) them to construct a closed, invisible world of their own in the midst of another world." (Stewart 2009) Central to this world is that it has no outside for the *Gadje,* the most important things are neither displayed or told, and the Gypsies seek invisibility in the midst of the *Gadje* (Williams 2003; Williams 1982). The world of Gypsies is autonomous in the sense that it does not allow for contamination by the world of *Gadje*:

> "Manus live 'in the world of the (*Gadje)*, but not 'in the same world as the (*Gadje)'* (…) But while co-existing with the (*Gadje)* the *Manus* detach 'themselves from them, … put […] themselves at a distance, which precisely cause them to become *Manus* and the (*Gadje)* to become (*Gadje).'* " (Williams 2003, p.29).

Manus populate the world of *Gadjos* with their own meanings, appropriate it. Williams shows the appropriation on the example of the construction of space, but also in work and other domains:

> "The universe in which the Manus travel is entirely filled with markers. (*Gadje)* are already everywhere the Manus can go. The roads and paths they are traveling on have been built by (*Gadje)*; the places where they are camping have been delimited by (*Gadje)* (…) the fields and woods they are exploring have been fenced, planted, cultivated by the (*Gadje)* who guard them. But the Manus have the ability to appropriate all of this. Not as competitors of the (*Gadjo)* conquest, exploitation, and transformation of nature, but in the ways and modes specific to them and which (*Gadje)* do not understand. (Williams 2003, pp.29–30)

In the account of Patrick Williams Manus form a collectivity, which is defined and reproduced by establishing a radical difference from the *Gadje*. As I shall show later, this radical difference does not apply to the Roma in the Czech Republic. Interestingly it was an outcome of the Pentecostal Gypsy mission I was researching, that the image of a radical Other was enhanced, both in the cultural and socio-economic realms. However the question of autonomy through the conversion is still very valid.

Research question

One of the principal acts of autonomy which can be found in the literature on the conversions of Roma, is the moment, when a miracle happened and the convert learned something just by himself without the help or tuition of others. In *Ritual revitalization after socialism* Fosztó (2009) presents a life story of Dani, a preacher of Romani Pentecostal church near Cluj, Romania. In Dani's narrative (testi-

mony) his intention to present himself as a completely autonomous person, even at the expense of the coherence of his narrative, is present at many occasions. Involved in a murder he was sent to prison, where he promised to God that he would serve him until the end of his life. He really managed to shorten his imprisonment to one fourth of the original length, but when he got out he would turn to excessive drinking again and start beating his wife. At the same time he would be visiting a Pentecostal assembly, but he would not admit that someone invited him to assist, or that he would learn something of what the pastor was saying. His account is that he came on his own and did not even listen to what the pastor said, because it was not addressed directly to him. He could never read, but so much he wanted to read the Bible, he was asking God and one day he eventually could read. It was also the John's Gospel which Dani first read (new converts are actually advised to start reading the Bible from this gospel). He insisted that without any help he could learn to read just by himself (Fosztó 2009).

This extreme version of the narrative of autonomy through conversion, where the convert learns to read just by himself (and the God) was recorded by Williams too. Williams reads the following testimony in the journal of French Pentecostal Gypsies called *Vie et Lumiere*:

> "I asked the Lord to help me, because I never went to school, I told him help me, so I am able to preach your gospel. One night I was able to read the text of John's Gospel, and today it is the songs of the Lord which sound in my caravan." (Williams 1987, p.4)

Based on my readings and preliminary fieldwork, the working title of my dissertation was "Learning without submission: How evangelical Roma become religious leaders". I was interested in how the Bible school, which I wanted to research, would tutor people with a very "egocentric" concept of identity and opposed to non-kinship authorities and hierarchy. Only later I found out that through the Bible school the Roma were taught to accept their marginal place in society without questioning it. I inquire into this question in chapter four and ask what sense, then, were Roma making of the Bible school, and of the Christian mission in general?

The finding that the Bible school did not enhance autonomy in the Kantian sense (see below), but rather submission, and the fact that I was not allowed to visit the school during my fieldwork made me restate my research question: What autonomies do the Roma in Márov gain in their everyday lives, what is their concept of autonomy, and how the conversions change these? I look at these issues in the chapters six and seven. Then I turn to review two issues that emerged during my fieldwork: the construction of ethnic leadership and the possibilities of exercising authority over the Roma in Márov, and the relationship between kinship and conversions, which was once seen by Williams as the marker of ethnic-religious change.

In this chapter I advance with a literature review on the topic of autonomy, in three fields which concern my study: first, I am interested in the general use of the concept of autonomy in social science, especially in moral philosophy. Secondly I go back to the literature on the conversion of Roma and review whether and how autonomy through the conversion is accounted for. Thirdly, autonomy is sometimes referred to as a (cultural) preference of Roma, it is why I turn to the usage of the concept of autonomy in the anthropology of Roma (Stewart 2013). I limit my inquiry mostly to the economic practices and autonomy within them. While the literature on autonomy through conversion is very limited, there is a vast interest in use of the concept of empowerment, especially in the context of the evangelization of (potentially) marginal populations. The marginals are referred to as being empowered by the conversion to deal with their situation. Empowerment through the conversion along with the identity issues are also the most frequented concepts in the accounts of the conversions of Roma (Thurfjell & Marsh 2014, p.11). The notion of empowerment through the conversion is largely used in the context of development through Faith-based organizations. This is also the case of Roma and we have accounts of proliferation of Faith-based organizations and development policies of governments which favour these organizations from Slovakia (Podolinská & Hrustič 2010), Spain (Cantón 2013), and Hungary (MPAJH 2011). Often, however, the term empowerment is used as a buzzword, and supports a hegemonic explanation of poverty and marginalization. This is why I am adding the theoretical discussion of the term and its connections to development and mission at the second part of this chapter.

3. Autonomy and Empowerment through the Conversion?

Autonomy, self, morality and subjectivation

Autonomy according to the etymology of the word, means self-legislation or self-rule (*auto* and *nomos*), and the common understanding of the term is freedom in the sense of self-determination and independence from external constraint (ability to shape our own lives), and the capacity for self-government which allows us to live authentically. Most authors and concepts agree that autonomy is the base for the definition of free moral agents, authentic selves (Mackenzie & Stoljar 2000, p.5). The opposite of autonomy – being governed by forces external to the self usually marks oppression (Christman 2011). While it is widely discussed in political philosophy, the term is missing both in the major anthropological and sociological dictionaries. When it appears, it is not theorized as such, but referenced in the context of the agency-structure debate, the enlightenment debate, around the ethic of development, durkheimian autonomy of the individual believer, morality, work, and relative autonomy of the capitalist state.

The concept of autonomy comes from the moral and political philosophy and ethics. Machiavelli used the term to refer to independence and self-legislation, Rousseau talks about the politically autonomous societies where people are bounded by rules, which they themselves legislated (Bunnin & Jiyuan 2004, p.63). For Kant "autonomy is the ability to know what morality requires of us, and functions not as freedom to pursue our ends, but as the power of an agent to act on objective and universally valid rules of conduct, certified by reason alone" (Blackburn 1996, p.31). Man wilfully constructs the moral rules and constraints, and imposes them on himself. According to Kant the moral autonomy is the fundamental organizing principle of all morality (Christman 2011). Opposite to the autonomy is heteronomy, which designates action based on desires or factors and motivations external to the individual reason.

According to Irvin and Devine, "the discourse of personal autonomy, has legitimised even as it rejects, the categorisation and surveillance, the internalisation of norms, and the individualised vehicle for power relations that maintains the modern global 'machine'" (Dewine & Irwin 2005, p.318).

Foucault's notion of governmentality is perhaps the most influential critique of the ideology of autonomy. Foucault deploys this term when linking the technologies of the self with technologies of domination. He proposes that the technologies of power are studied together with the political rationality that underpins them. He defines government as "conduct, or, more precisely, as 'the conduct of conduct' and thus as a term which ranges from 'governing the self' to 'governing others'" (Lemke 2000, p.2). Only recently has the word "government" been reserved to political domain, Foucault shows that it was used to denote "problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul" (ibid). The emergence of the sovereign modern state, then, is parallel with the emergence of the autonomous individual. Foucault conceptualizes power as guidance, which governs the forms of self-government through the structuration of the field of possible actions of subjects. Governmentality, then, is the conceptual framework for the study of "'autonomous' individual's capacity for self-control and how this is linked to forms of political rule and economic exploitation" (ibid: 4) In other words, Foucault looks at how the field, where the "autonomous individual" acts is pre-structured.

> "(One) has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. (…) Governing people (…) is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself" (Foucault 1993, pp.203–204)

One strong Foucauldian critique of the use of the concept of autonomy comes from the educational researchers when it comes to curricular reforms, which officially should give more autonomy of choice to students. The curricular reform in Australia argued that consumers of education know more than the providers, and thus the students should be allowed to freely choose their education according to their individual needs and interests, and the qualities of the programmes offered.

Mashall (1996) defines the individual that these reforms suppose an "autonomous chooser". He draws on Foucault's notion of technologies of domination and the technologies of self; for Foucault the autonomous chooser, as opposed to heteronomous self, driven only by passions and external forces, is pure fiction serving governmentality:

> "The particular falsehood to which Foucault objects most is that such a conception implies the possibility of freedom. For him it doesn't because, stripped of its political connotations, it masks the fact that the constitution of such persons is a major political act. Consequently, whilst we believe ourselves to be free, to be acting autonomously, in general, we are not. Instead, we have become governed." (Marshall 1996, p.93)

Thus the autonomous chooser is absolutely not autonomous, because the very election is imposed on him in order to be governed upon. To account for this creation of "autonomous chooser" and consumer, Marshall deployed a term busno-power: "By busno-power we mean a form of power directed at individuals to turn them into autonomous choosers and consumers." (Marshall, 1994) cited in (Dewine & Irwin 2005, p.324). The notion of an autonomous chooser as such is nonsense, because "he has to choose and cannot choose not to choose" (ibid).

The second critique of the concept of autonomy comes from feminist authors who see it as fundamentally bound with a masculine, individualist and rationalist character central to liberal politics. According to Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000), feminists have regularly criticized an exemplary caricature of a male individualist, who is self-sufficient and who maximizes his profit through rational choices, but failed to reclaim and reconceptualise the concept of individual autonomy. The very idea of autonomy, according to the early feminist critique, should be reconfigured in order to become "more sensitive to relations of care, interdependence, and mutual support that define our lives and which have traditionally marked the realm of the feminine" (Christman 2004, p.143). For Mackenzie and Stoljar autonomy still remains important in order to account for the oppression, subordination, and agency. Relational autonomy, which they propose, intends to "analyse the implications of the intersubjective and social dimensions of selfhood and identity for conceptions of individual autonomy and moral and political agency."

(Mackenzie & Stoljar 2000, p.4) In short, relational autonomy works with an agent that is socially constituted in relations with others, and whose identity reflects personal relations and mutual dependencies.

One thing that emerged from the following debate (Christman 2004; Baumann 2008; Mackenzie 2008; Westlund 2009) is, in my view, the position towards actors who decide to subordinate. The question is whether they are autonomous, or not? Christman (2004, p.152) especially argues that the fact that one accepts subordination does not necessarily mean that she is not autonomous. Westlund stresses that what counts is the responsiveness to critical perspectives of others, the preparedness to engage in a critical dialogue with others (Westlund 2009, p.30). For example, according to her it is quite difficult to consider highly responsive converts as autonomous. What makes the difference is whether

> "the agent positions herself as one practical reasoned among many (…) how she is disposed to respond to the normative pressures placed on her by *other agents* who may call her to account for the commitments that guide her choices and actions" (ibid: 33).

To summarize the position of Westlund, an autonomous agent should be able to answer external critical perspectives and guide his or her actions by this principle. Such an agent is responsible for him- or her-self. The problem with self-subordination is thus resolved, because surely not all people who subordinate would act responsibly towards themselves, but the self-responsibility and self-subordination is not contradictory (Westlund 2009, pp.42–43).

Autonomy of the oppressed

The debate resulted in the publication of a collective volume on autonomy, oppression, and gender in 2014 (Veltman & Piper 2014). The volume discusses issues of autonomy related to independence, normative commitments, reason and care, oppression and adaptive preferences and autonomies in different social contexts. Regarding the possibilities of autonomy in situations of oppression the editors agree with Meyers that "oppression impedes autonomy without stripping women of that autonomy which they have managed to wrest from a patriarchal,

racist, heterosexist, ageist, class-stratified world" (Meyers 2002, p.16). The oppression makes autonomy more difficult to achieve, but it is not absolute.

Oppression threatens autonomy in two ways: first by limiting the options for the person to act according to his values and commitments. Secondly, the oppressive socialization of an individual can damage his concern for herself, (the foucauldian care for self which I already discussed), and prevent the development of cognitive capacities needed for self-reflection and critical thinking (Veltman & Piper 2014, p.2). Oppressed people adopt values and desires which are not their own, and think about themselves as being inferior, which is in opposition to the self-respect which is formative to some conceptions of autonomy.

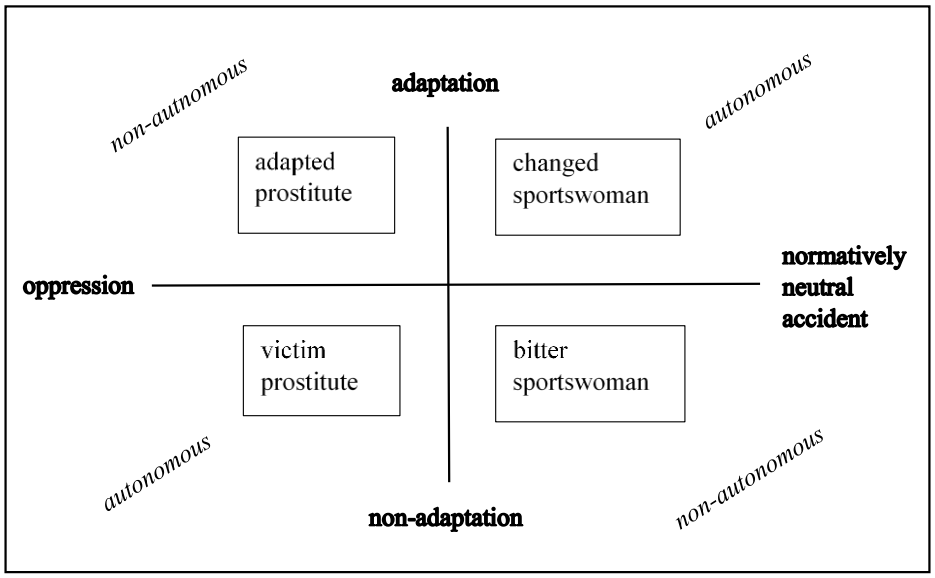
There exists a paradigmatic tension between structural approaches to autonomy and oppression on the one hand and, and the proceduralist (or processual) approaches on the other hand. The structuralist would claim that there are certain preconditions of structural nature, such as economic situation of the person, needed for the development of autonomy. According to Natalie Stoljar "agents in conditions of severe deprivation in the developing world are members of a group that is subject to economic oppression" (2014, p.230). Stoljar is interested in the desires of people who are oppressed, and whether these desires are autonomous or not. Oppression, according to her, is "systematic injustice due to institutional structures or background social practices" (ibid 228). The socialization in oppressive circumstances, or adaptation to them due to reconciliation, manipulation and indoctrination, may form deformed desires which then constitute impairments of autonomy. Legitimate desires come from personal preferences. Deformed desires are, according to her, adaptive preferences, which are by definition non-autonomous. The fact that people tend to align their desires with the possibilities oppressive situations present to them, leads them towards non-autonomy. Stoljar uses the example of fox and grapes: the fox desires to eat grapes, but once he learns he is not able to reach them, he decides he is not interested in the grapes after all. "The unconscious accommodation of desires to feasible options often occurs in conditions of oppression." (ibid. 230). The fact that one adapts to the oppressive circumstances makes him non-autonomous by the definition for Stoljar, while this does not necessarily mean that the actor lacks agency.

Christman specifically addresses the problem of coping with oppression and adaptation in relation to autonomy. There are people who under the circumstances of extreme oppression maintain at least a minimum autonomy, because they maintain a practical identity, which is continuous with the selves they were before or apart from the oppression. It is important whether the person kept his priorities of values despite the oppression (Christman 2014, p.210). John Christman defines his position in the debate on autonomy as proceduralist in contrast with what he calls structuralist accounts, thus he is interested in the competencies and the processes of creation of such desires and values, which end up being autonomous (Christman 2014, p.216). His main question is whether an actor who accepts oppression can be autonomous and what is the procedure of evaluation of his autonomy? What divides the adaptation to oppression which undermines agency from the adaptation to oppression which still enables self-government? What social change allows for the maintenance of autonomy, and which does not? The core conditions of autonomy for him are reflexivity, competence, and self-acceptance. He presents four examples of reaction to oppressive circumstances which can be put along two axis. The first axis marks whether the person adapts to the change or not. Adaptation for him means "fundamental shifts in key aspects of person's practical identity where they are forced by circumstances to renegotiate their sense of themselves, their value priorities and projects" (ibid 206). The second axis is the type of the source of constraint which started the change. Was it rather an accident or directed oppression?

Christman considers four examples of change, out of which two would be autonomous, and two heteronomous. These are the examples of four women who once were relatively autonomous, but they underwent a radical change in their lives. The first is a woman who migrated to another country with the prospect of a new job which allowing her to maintain her family. The job turned out to be a coerced prostitution, and she became a slave in a brothel for four years. After this time she could choose to leave, but she decided to stay and became an associate in the business. She adapted to the oppressive circumstances and reproduced them. The second example is a prostitute, who never escaped from the slavery, but she always maintained a sense of internal dissent – her identity was that of a victim; she still recognized the oppression and did not adapt her values and sense of herself to

it. Within this category Christman also acknowledges examples of people who lived in slavery for their whole lives, and never actually escaped it, but they were autonomous, because they had plans, for example to run away, or to buy out from the slavery. They did not adapt in the sense of aligning their priorities and plans for the life according to their situation of being oppressed. The prostitute who considered herself a victim would be considered autonomous. The third and fourth examples are two sportswomen, who both suffered an accident and they turned immobile. After some time one of them accepted her physical state and found a new sense in her life and became a poet – she regained her autonomy. The other did not come in terms with her situation, suffered of not being able to do sports again, and was constrained in her other actions by it. She lost her autonomy. Christman presents two interesting observations, which can be found out from the diagram: First, in the case of the people who adapted to a change we evaluate their autonomy according to the way through which they got into their situation: whether it was an accident, or a directed oppression. Second, in the case of people who are being oppressed we evaluate their capacity for self-government according to whether they did or did not adapt to the oppression (Christman 2014, p.205).

Figure 1: Social change, adaptation, and autonomy according to Christman (2014, p. 205)



Christman uses a model of an agent, who constructs himself as intentional if he reflectively affirms the values which support his action and which are based in his practical identity. One acts as a person of certain type – he assumes an identity. If

one considers that identity as a life worth living, then he has a good basis to consider himself a worthy person (this can be, of course self-fulfilling), which is one of the prerequisites of autonomy. One does not necessarily need the affirmation from others for doing this evaluation. If a person acts according to an identity, he knows how he should act, so his actions are understood as intentional (in accordance with the practical identity). If he decides to use an identity and he affirms himself through this identity, he is an autonomous person.

There exists the problem of alienation. One "is alienated when one's practical identity fails to provide motivations that carry with them reflexive self-affirmation of a sort that issue in further solidification of that identity and subsequent decisions of the same sort" (Christman 2014, p.222). If our actions cannot be explained by our identity (that we consider worth living) which would be fostered by the actions, we are alienated. The non-alienated person acts in a way that can be accounted for as coming from, and in the end also fostering his practical identity. For Christman the basic condition for retaining at least a minimal autonomy in situations when people adapt to the constraints is that the people are able "to reflexively affirm their practical identity (under a relevant description) that provides reasons for actions, plans, and ongoing projects" (ibid 224). To summarize this approach, the basic procedure of becoming autonomous is a reflexive affirmation, a process through which one puts in accordance his own actions and practical identities in a way that both are fostered. This procedure of becoming autonomous can be facilitated by "helpful interlocutors", such as carers, therapists, aid workers and friends[7].

It seems clear that when Patrick Williams wrote about the autonomy of Gypsies, he used it in the Kantian sense, as the self-government, independence on the ex-

[7] The way to autonomy might be also facilitated through the kind of social science, which intends to restore the meaning of behavior to people who suffer oppression and who might seem from outside point of view to be heteronomous. I rely on Bourdieu who defines one of the vocations of anthropology in postcolonial context: "to restore to other people the meaning of their behaviors, of which the colonial system has, among other things, dispossessed them" (Bourdieu et al. 1963, p.259) cited in (Wacquant 2004, p.294) or "the task of restoring those people the meaning of their actions" (Bourdieu 2002, p.128) cited in (Wacquant 2004, p.294)

ternal world of the *Gadje.* On the other hand in his writings, he is clearly reserved to the scope of such autonomy, in particular when he stresses that the conversion could be the mastery or a sense of mastery: "The success of the Pentecostalism (…) means also the mastery, or, at least a sense of a mastery, of everyone over his proper existence" (Williams 1991, p.90) The point for Williams, however, is not whether the Roma become autonomous through conversion, or whether they think they are becoming autonomous, but the fact that Pentecostal conversion offers a language that allows Roma to downplay the external forces (i. g. urbanization), and act as if they were autonomous – only them and the God.

Autonomy in the ethnographies of Romani Pentecostalism

There has been a recent growth of interest among scholars of religion and of Romani studies in the topic, marked by a 2014 publication of a collective volume Romani Pentecostalism (Thurfjell & Marsh 2014). The book is an overview of the movement in various countries, and there was a small space left for theoretically grounded arguments, which are thus missing in most of the chapters; this also concerns an in-depth overview of the existing literature.

Williams' central thesis on autonomy through conversion is not addressed in the book, but some accounts of autonomy are present. According to Tatiana Podolinská there exists a specific form of Romani religiosity in Eastern Slovakia, which is a privatized and individualized form of religion. Some important religious activities of Roma are taking place outside the church. The converts with whom Podolinská spoke viewed their way to Pentecostalism also as a way towards a greater participation in the activities mediated bythe church. Thus she partly interprets the growth of Pentecostalism among the Roma in Slovakia as a "creative and endogenous way of establishing a new Romani religious identity" (Podolinská 2014, pp.96–100). It remains to be seen on different occasions to what extent the non-participation of Roma/Gypsies in the activities of the Catholic church was rather an outcome of racist rejection, than of free choice, but it does not undermine the argument by Podolinská: some Roma converts are attracted by the possibility to participate in an egalitarian manner in the life of the institution. Ries (2014) theorizes on conversion and baptism as rites of passage which "give

birth to a new family member" (ibid: 121) and introduces individual converts with a group that balances individualism and equality. Ries sees this characteristic of Pentecostal congregations in Romania as the fact that makes them attractive to Roma. The individual is included both in the local family (congregation) and in the global project of people of God.

How does Pentecostalism deal with the individualism in Roma communities? In the Slovak case there predominates a doctrine, but still a large space remains for individual interpretations of the Bible (Podolinská 2014, p.94). Thurfjell (2014) emphasizes the Pentecostal therapeutic model which individuals can use for their own ends. The Pentecostal worldview helps to construct a problem , there is a language through which the problem can be articulated, and social constraints individual create by making the problem public (Thurfjell 2014, p.153). Even in telling the testimony, the converts do not run into situations which would discredit them in the eyes of the community – instead of telling the "whole truth" they would pack the conversion narrative in blurred words: "With a twinkle in his eye, he insinuated that the things he used to do were of such nature that it was not appropriate to even mention them ." (Strand 2014, p.108)

While individual autonomy has not been dealt with very much in the literature on the conversions of Roma, the autonomy of Roma as a (ethnic) group and its connections to Pentecostalism is a subject of vivid inquiry. Ries (2007; 2014) differentiated between Romani/Gypsy church argument and trans-ethnic congregation argument. The Romani/Gypsy church argument is found mostly in the works of scholars in Western Europe, where Roma congregations and churches seem to be preferably mono-ethnic, some of them even ethnically exclusive, while from many accounts from Eastern Europe it seems that Roma (but only some of them) prefer to form trans-ethnic churches together with Gadje; this helps them to better integrate in the non-Gypsy society.

The Gypsy/Roma church argument expands what has already been presented in the work of Williams. In Spain, Teresa San Román identified a need among Gypsies to construct structures which would represent them vis-à-vis the formal institutions of the state and the public, and which will be able to promote a positive side of Gypsy culture to counter racism and prejudices. Such organizations are

needed to overcome kinship structures, *razas*, which had been the principle of the political arrangement before. Out of this need two types of new institutions emerged: non-governmental organizations representing the Gypsies, and the Pentecostal church of Gypsies (San Román 1999, pp.38–39) in (Cantón 2014, p.80)[8]. Membership in the Spanish *Iglesia Filadelfia* extends the bonds of solidarity from patrilineal groups of Gypsies to all "brothers" and "sisters". However, the concept that Gitanos form the moral centre of the world vis-a-vis Gadje is sustained – in the view of Gitanos of Jarana among whom Gay y Blůasco carried fieldwork, they are different from and superior to non-Gypsies (Gay y Blasco 2000, p.19), whereas the bigger picture of Gitanos of Andalucia seems to suggest that Gypsy churches are separated to the extent to which there still exists the separation of Gypsies and non-Gypsies in the non-religious contexts (Cantón 2004, p.370). In the countries of the former Soviet Union the conversions do not seem to bring any kind of new unity to Gypsies: most of the Gypsy churches repeat the distinctions between Gypsy groups (Marushiakova & Popov 2014).

Finally there are the ethnically mixed churches. Some of them gave rise to separate Romani churches, as in Bulgaria, where the Romani churches were part of protestant denominations created by non-Gypsies, and only later became independent (Slavkova 2014, p.59). This seems to be the case elsewhere as well. However, the separation from ethnically mixed churches and the creation of new Romani churches does not necessarily mean ethnic polarisation. Johannes Ries analyses such a process with the help of Turner's term *communitas*, a lively community of equals who directly relate each to the other. Face-to-face relationships of the community members are crucial for the maintenance of the egalitarian anti-structure; when the *communitas* grows too much it needs to become hierarchized and formalized. There is a way out – the division of the *communitas* into two smaller units. Ries observed that this happened in a case of ethnically mixed congregation in Romania – it was too big to be egalitarian, and it divided into two. The key for the division was ethnicity, and thus separate Roma and non-Roma congregations were established. However, their members still identified them-

[8] These were followed by Faith-based organizations affiliated to the Gypsy Pentecostal churches, especially FACCA. For reference see Cantón (2013).

selves as being global Christian, and took all other Christians as brothers and sisters (Ries 2014, pp.123–124)

There also exists the question whether Pentecostalism is a continuation of traditional forms of Gypsy religiosity (and "culture" more generally), or whether it is rather a break with the past, a completely new life, and religion. This is part of a more general issue about the continuity and the change (see the discussion in the first chapter), I will now, however, limit myself only to this discussion in the current debate on the Pentecostalism of Roma/Gypsies. Pentecostal Gypsies themselves reinvent their traditions and legitimise them through fitting biblical examples, for instance comparing Roma traditions with the laws of Old Testament. Solidarity within the group is encouraged, but reinterpreted not as solidarity among patrigroup members or solidarity among Gypsies, but as solidarity between brothers and sisters in Salvation. Traditional mobility of Gitanos is maintained by the constant rotation of pastors (Cantón 2014, p.75). Some authors speak of traditional Gypsy culture and practices, of which some remained, and others were dropped. Some would then evaluate the change as to how much was dropped – for example in Ukraine the fortune-telling is "still" spread among the Gypsy Pentecostals (though it was supposed to vanish) (Marushiakova & Popov 2014, p.57). Some authors claim that Romani Pentecostalism is a continuation of the traditional Roma culture, and others, that it is a breach of it. In this regard I agree with Cantón (2014) who states that:

> "The Gypsy Pentecostal movement contradicts the essentialism that considers Gypsies as the heirs of a legacy marked by resistance to acculturation, assimilation and integration only. The fact is that their identities continue to be constructed as a result of a long and complex process in which there is space for many dialogues: between Gypsies and the state, with the various administrations and associations, with the churches and between the Gypsies themselves." (Cantón 2014, p.82)

For Cantón Gypsy Pentecostalism is *ethnogenesis*, a process through which the ethnicity is reaffirmed through cultural reinvention "with the production of discourses and practices that combine the self-attributed traditional heritage and its re-signification, driven by new codes and new objectives" (Cantón 2014, p.77).

The autonomy of Romani converts is clearly not the only account of the preference of autonomy in the studies of Roma and in the studies of conversion. These readings invite us to extend the scope of the research to other instances of autonomy.

Autonomous work and Roma

The longing for autonomy at work is the most referred trait in the anthropology of Roma/Gypsies. Judith Okely claims that Gypsies have been one of very few groups in Britain who did not become proletarianised, because they have never engaged in wage-labour on a larger scale. It is due to their strong preference for self-employment. "Travellers proudly announce 'I've always worked for myself" (Okely 1983, p.54). If they were to be employed it would make them too dependent on the world of *gorgios*. Williams makes the same observation about the Kalderash Roma in Paris:

> "Of the Kalderash of suburban Paris we see that liberal-industrial society does not reduce them to alienated labourers. On the contrary, the Kalderash offer their services on their own terms, not according to conditions established by their non-Gypsy clients. The Kalderash remain masters of the organization of their work. In that, they refer to values common to Rom society, not those common in French society." (Williams 1982, p.339)

According to both it is the preference of autonomous work which prevented the Roma/Gypsies from becoming labourers. Okely lists the following characteristics for the self-employment of Gypsies: the occupations are diversified; the skills required are of a wide range; the family is often involved in the work and some work at home, the border between work and leisure time is blurred, but it becomes a personal choice; the orders and decisions are self-imposed, and the routine is self-structured. Such work require family-based training and education; the prices and profits from the business are individually negotiable, the social security is lacking for these types of occupations; there are no unemployment or sick benefits; it is possible to be self-employed in old age, but there is no pension; the work allows for and often requires geographical mobility; and there is no guarantee of accommodation at the place of work. (Okely 1983, p.57).

Michael Stewart claims that Roma in Harangos, Hungary, resisted paid work, because "this would make it possible for *gadjos* to become Gypsy, and vice versa" (Horváth 2005, p.33). However they were forced by the regime to work for salary, but this part of the life they would not consider being Roma. Instead they would create alternative spaces in order to gain autonomy in the economic exchange. Both non-Roma peasants and the Roma were striving for autonomy: "They lived in a society in which status as a full human being was based on the achievement of autonomy, independence, and self-mastery, but both lacked the means to do so." (Stewart 1997, p.164) While the peasants would see autonomy in avoiding any exchange (preferring self-sufficiency), this was not practically possible, the Gypsies were thriving to gain independence only through trade and exchange. The Gypsies were pushed by the socialist regime to work in factories, but it was a sacrifice to them, a world aside, that was inevitable, but had no value.

Stewart reviews the case of horse-trading. There was the problem that the Gypsies had to deal in goods, which were coming from the world of *Gadje* – thus they were dependent on them. There were two ways to reconcile and achieve autonomy: first, there was a category of Gypsy horses, which were raised by Gypsies, and they would remain with Gypsies. It was rather a wish, however, to possess such a horse, such horses were very rare. The second approach was use of the concept of *baxt* (luck) in the exchange with *Gadje – baxt* was able to make *Gadjo* sell under the price. Through "lucky" exchange one could achieve autonomy, because he could stand against the dominant ethic of work and underplay or deny the labour involved in the deal – as if the deal just came without any preparation. On the other side *baxt* supposed conscious action: "the Rom became lucky only by maintaining proper relations with their wives and thereby keeping themselves pure." (Stewart 1997, p.165) Thirdly, there was an autonomous horse-trade, independent of the Gypsies-*Gadje* trade. The Roma decided, according to Stewart, to live from the Gypsy work (*butji*) which assumed luck. Autonomy is central to Stewart's work: his accounts of brotherhood, egalitarianism and denial of any external authority are about autonomy as well. Also children were raised in a way that they would become autonomous moral agents as soon as possible.

3. Autonomy and Empowerment through the Conversion?

Kata Horváth (2005) revisited the sharp distinction between Gypsy work (autonomous, self-employment) and Gadjo work (paid work, employment). Hungarian Gypsy men with whom she did fieldwork had permanent jobs, such as garbagemen, sewer-cleaners, or park-tenders or mason-assistants, but during or after the working hours they performed many off-job works. Through the paid work they always found opportunities for other economic activities – take useful waste home, or do some job for the people around the road using the tools provided by the employer, but getting paid aside (Horváth 2005, p.43). Through these and other activities, Horváth argues, they domesticate "the originally gadjo environment—transforming it into a Gypsy environment— and create the image of a Gypsy world within it, their participation in paid work does not mean the decline of the Gypsy way of making a living." (Horváth 2005, p.48). What matters, according to Horváth, is the domestication of the work, not the fact it is paid or not.

Autonomy is also in the core of the analysis of "marginal people who live for the moment", by which Stewart followed the topic, together with Day and Papataxiarchis (1998). They brought together case studies of communities of equal and autonomous individuals, which are created through rituals, such as gambling to free oneself from mundane world, or drinking and singing into brotherhood to become equals. These groups "invert their socially marginal positions and claim a significant personal autonomy" (ibid 7) and live in the opposition to mainstream lifestyles. Living in the present is a way to turn the power balance upside down,, and transform dependence into autonomy. Living in the present is a way to deal with the fact that continuation is "inscribed by more powerful people into the building blocks and institutions of their societies" (ibid 33). Living in the present allows them to remain to some extent self-conscious, but, the authors conclude, "the constructed, liberating present offers no escape from the present others have the means to impose." (ibid 35)

Sophie Day in the same volume remarks upon the role of the ideology of autonomy with the ideas of free market and success in business in the conservative politics of Margaret Thatcher. The prostitutes with whom she first carried out her fieldwork saw themselves as entrepreneurs, who exploit the opportunities of the market, and by doing so, they do what good citizens in UK should be doing. Day

concludes that the prostitutes counter their stigma in this way. The interesting point is that "it is the very regulatory role of the state in their lives that makes this rhetoric so convincing." (Day 1998, pp.191–182)[9]

The main alternative to the study of autonomy is the investigation of empowerment through the conversion, classical in the account of Pentecostalism in Latin America by David Martin (1993). The concept of empowerment was once created as a tool of liberation of the oppressed by recognizing coercive structures, self-organization and fight against these structure. However, throughout the decades the term has been overtaken by development agencies and, importantly for the study of religion, state funding agencies and Faith-based organizations, which resulted in its use in ways almost opposite to the original intention. Empowerment has been lately an ideology which accompanies the neoliberal economic cuts and

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[9] Apart from the autonomous work we can find three more autonomies studied by Okely: autonomy in political organization, autonomy in kinship arrangements and in residential arrangements. On the level of political organization, Okely did not observe any system of individual leadership, neither a system of hereditary power, or a system, that would concentrate power in one person. The traveling patterns and economic practices of the Gypsies could do without the concentration of power or stable leaders. Elders were respected, and consulted on important matters or when there were disputes, but there was no guarantee of authority in the seniority itself. The political leaders were the ones who possessed "charismatic authority based on abilities like bargaining or fighting" (Okely 1983, p.171). The voluntary association of the followers with the leader was of upmost importance. There were no sanctions, and if someone started to coerce others, they could always leave him.

The Gypsy/Travellers studied by Okely had a cognatic kinship. The residential arrangement is not given, and allows for wider autonomy: "Each family may camp alongside the husband's parents and members of his kindred, then later alongside the wife's parents and/or members of her kindred. At other times, the family may camp alone or alongside other Travellers where there are neither cognatic nor affinal connections. A Gypsy couple do not have to make a once and for all decision." (ibid: 172) There are political clusters with a history of travelling and camping together, but the actual membership in the cluster does not necessarily require kinship relations: "Sometimes the cluster includes affines and cousins and excludes some siblings. (…) A cluster of families may be formed therefore by individual choices which do not necessarily reflect the proximity of kindred to ego." (ibid: 173) There seemed to be flexibility and space left for the preference of the couple in deciding which cluster they would join.

puts the burden of the fault on the impoverished people, rather than being able to expose the structures of oppression.

Empowerment through churches and Faith-based organizations?

Social sciences, "civil society", funding agencies, and governments are quickly becoming interested in the work of churches and Faith-based organizations with Roma minorities in the CEE. This has already led to a multiplicity of TV shows and documents about a spawning "miracle in the ghettoes", a surge of reports on the effectiveness of social inclusion of Roma through Religious organizations (Slovakia), as well as a dearth of government policies speaking to the correlative societal inclusion rates of Roma through churches (Hungary). In this part I connect these ideas to a larger discussion on "mediating structures" and Faith-based organizations, which began in the U.S. in the 1970s and was linked to the dismantling of the welfare state. Ideologies of empowerment for the poor and the promotion of self-help and entrepreneurship are a part of this strand of motivations. I am looking at how the idea of empowerment and development through religion entered the area of public policy and international development and how the concept of empowerment has been used both by individuals and groups to counter hegemony, as well as by dominant structures to reproduce and foster hegemony.

Politics of empowerment

Empowerment as concept entered the field of social work, community psychology and international development during the 1970s after the publication of Paolo Freire's seminal text *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Miraftab 2004; Sharma 2008; Bacqué & Biewener 2013). Freire does not discuss empowerment, but about oppression: revolution through dialogue and transformative liberation. In order to liberate oneself, people need to build their own theory of action (give meaning to their acts[10]), and working against the oppressor's theories of oppression. These

[10] The task of sociologist, according to Bourdieu, has a lot to do with meaningful action of the oppressed (in Bourdieu's case by colonialism): of restoring to those people the meaning of their actions' (Bourdieu, 1962, 2002: 128; cited in (Wacquant 2004, p.394).

liberating theories can be built only "in the encounter of the people with their revolutionary leaders – in their communion, in their praxis" (Freire 2000, p.183) by dialogic conscientization methods.

In social work, the term 'empowerment' was established in 1976 by Barbara Solomon for the social workers working with stigmatized and powerless communities. The endeavour was to start coming to terms with clients' problems which were due to their stigmatization as of members of some subaltern collectivity. The basic principle of this radical social work was the establishment of an equal and dialogical relationship between the provider and the client of social work. While initially, the idea was for the social worker to understand that she cannot solve the problems of her stigmatized clients individually. Consequentially, soon the empowerment strand in social work lost its "character of social critique to become above all an individualized clinical approach". (Bacqué & Biewener 2013, p.4)

Empowerment entered the field of international development through the work of a number of feminist groups and was scaled up to a more global usage when brought into the discussion of gender-equality promotion and just development strategies (Sharma 2008, p.2). During the 1970s, it started to become more and more apparent that "modernization had not only ignored, but actually harmed women in Asia and Africa" (ibid 4). First the welfare-based approach to development was the norm, which conceptualized women as dependent and vulnerable subjects and kept the division and hierarchy between productive and reproductive work. Additionally, the approach Women in development (WID) emerged, which was based on liberal feminism and "argued that women were efficient and rational economic actors whose full potential must be tapped for growth" (ibid: 5). While comparatively, for the welfare approach, women were vulnerable beneficiaries, and for the WID approach they were unused potential who had to be supported by education and training to become more productive. However, the WID feminist approach did not ask what the productive mechanisms and progression would be for, which only the Gender in Development approach attempted to instantiate in the mid-1980s. The way out of the initial two approaches, the welfare and WID stances, was supposed to be the empowerment approach. "Empowerment required critically analysing (...) multiple oppressions, raising consciousness, building soli-

darity from the ground up, organizing challenges to entrenched systems and modes of power" (ibid: 7). Here Freire's ideas about conscientization came into play in turning the women against the oppressive gender and liberal ideologies, which were setting their agenda in development, and letting them restate goals of the development themselves, while challenging the discourse of productivity.

It was Peter Berger's and Richard Neuhaus' essay "*To Empower People. The role of mediating structures in Public Policy"* in 1977, which would become the entry point for the term empowerment into public policy discourse, especially neoliberal poverty relief programmes. In this book, the authors criticized the welfare state and top-down approaches and, instead, Berger and Neuhaus prioritize freedom of choice and individual responsibility. The three main propositions were that "(1) Mediating structures are essential for a vital democratic society; (2) Public policy should protect and foster mediating structures; (3) Wherever possible, public policy should utilize mediating structures for the realization of social purposes" (Berger and Neuhaus 1977: 163) cited in (Bacqué & Biewener 2013, p.5)

Berger's and Neuhaus' work inspired both Republicans and Democrats, since the early 1980s, to begin proposing poverty-relief policies. The main focus was to allow the impoverished the spaces and educational tools to develop (but also govern and police) their communities themselves.

Republican congressman Jack Kemp was a prominent member of several conservative think tanks, who promoted empowerment in in a number of urban policies put forth by the Reagan administration during the 1980s, such as school choice instead of bussing the children to achieve social and ethnic mix in schools, management of public housing by residents, homeownership initiatives where possible, and deregulation and tax breaks which were supposed to "encourage businesses and job creation in poor inner cities" (ibid: 6) In 1990, Kemp became the head of a so called Economic Empowerment task force pushed by the George Bush administration, which was supposed to develop anti-poverty policies, yet instead suggested enterprise (urban) zones. (ibid: 8) Empowerment soon became a new conservative paradigm and a way to realize the American dream:

> "But empowerment really means no control over others, freedom to control one's own affairs. The poor don't want paternalism. They want opportunity. They don't want the servitude of welfare. They want to get jobs and private property. They don't want dependency. They want a new declaration of independence." (Kemp, 1990: 5 cited in Bacqué and Biewener 2012: 8)

And later president Bush:

> 'We must empower the poor with the pride that comes from owning a house, getting a job, being part of things' (cited by Horowitz 1992 ibid: 8).

Obviously Freire's conscientization of the poor is reduced here to the desire to become a part of consumer culture, an "independent consumer actor". The "Third way" administration of President Clinton was the first to introduce large-scale empowerment programs, called "empowerment zones" (similar to enterprise zones). Self-help versus 'big government' state paternalism is the crux of this programming. "[E]mpowerment is associated with reinventing government, social capital, communities, equal opportunity, responsibility, employment, inclusion, and citizenship." (ibid: 9)

While the conservative and Republican Party's uses of the term could slightly differ, they share the common trait that by empowering they do not address the power structures. Their empowerment strategies are premised upon problem-solving mechanisms within an already unequal system. An important conceptual shift occurred here, which took the foundational critical premises of participation, empowerment and collective action and "extended it to the terrain of the self" (Cruikshank 1993:331 cited in Goldstein 2001, p.239). At this juncture, empowerment meets neoliberalism, because the ideology of empowerment, self-esteem and ownership moves hand in hand with the dismantling of the welfare state. Empowerment emerges as a new form of neoliberal governance mechanism that places responsibility and emphasis on the individual through self-disciplination. In a profound sense, this is a process of creating a new citizen (actor) in a neoliberal order: "In the current climate of advanced liberalism, poverty is represented not as a social problem but as a new possibility for poor individuals to experience 'em-

powerment' through the actualization of self-management." (Hyatt 1997, p.168) Individual empowerment, self-esteem and the discourse of entrepreneurship became very interesting tools for both policy makers and the poor ideologically, which, according to Goldstein is why they became so popular. In her evaluation of one microenterprise poverty/relief program, Donna Goldstein argues that the programs, which were initially meant as poverty-relief programs, actually increased the self-exploitation of their participants, but did not tackle their economic vulnerability. The participants themselves did not care about their vulnerability, because it has been hidden and obfuscated by the discourses of self-esteem and individual responsibility. The poor were encouraged to take responsibility for both the successes and failures of their enterprise, and thus for their poverty. Their self-esteem might have risen, but their structural poverty remained unchanged. (Goldstein 2001, p.267)

Counterhegemonic and hegemonic discourses of empowerment

The critique of the use of the term empowerment by Miraftab (2004) goes along similar lines as Goldstein. According to him, empowerment, together with participation and the accruing of social capital are among the concepts and practices that were first developed as emancipatory tools of activists. Subsequently, these concepts and tools were re-appropriated by neoliberal governments and the development industry for the reproduction of unequal distribution of power relations. Those new actors who appropriated the terms first *depoliticized* them by stripping away their implications for unmasking the dominance while using them in in tandem with neoliberal logics of governance:

> "The officials' appropriation of the empowerment discourse has facilitated those processes (i. e. internal capitalism and extending patriarchal constraints to public spaces) by masking social hierarchies and by eliminating the political and social limbs of progressive concepts, leaving only their economic and individualized trunks, which pose limited threat to the existing relations of dominance and power." (Miraftab 2004, p.254)

Urban poor in South Africa were encouraged by the state to self-organize to clean the streets for free or very little renumeration as a part of supposedly empowering

community-based projects. While Miraftab agrees that the "empowerment" programs organized by the neoliberal state are intended to mask the structures of power from the sights of the poor and underprivileged, some of the projects could actually prove to be empowerring in the original Marxian meaning of the term:

> "Women and men who organize to clean up their neighborhoods for free, or for little remuneration, in the process discover the litter of the system itself, which perhaps prompts their long-term process of empowerment and emancipation." (Miraftab 2004, p.254)

The symbolical hegemonic subsuming of the term can be seen in the 2002 World Bank (WB) publication *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook*, which was meant to delimit new ways of poverty-relief policies for international development programming. While the strategies of development could have changed, the goal of the WB in development is still concerned with rapid economic growth. Empowerment, especially of women, is seen as a means to foster advancement in the underdeveloped economies. From a grassroots perspective, the World Bank intends to develop the empowerment policies mainly in cooperation with governments and bureaucrats. The "statistics on women's literacy, labor force and informal sector participation, share of earned income, participation in governance institutions, and so on, become "proxy" indicators of empowerment (…), but this use of the term "negates one of the basic premises of counterhegemonic frames that empowerment is not a fixed point of arrival but on-going processes of struggle for liberation, equality, truth, and justice." (Sharma 2008, p.27)

While the hegemonic discourse views the subjects of empowerment as *powerless* people, the counterhegemonic strand conceptualizes them as *disempowered*. They emphasize that the impoverished subjects have been stripped of access to political, social, and economic resources by the dominant classes. The counterhegemonic discourse allows for political claims as to the structural inequalities and economic, political and social orders, while under the hegemonic discourse, empowerment is a means of socialization into "modern" society. The hegemonic discourse suggests that the *powerless* are incomplete actors without subjectivity: "neoliberalism paints a naturalized picture of poverty and powerlessness, where certain people lack the requisite attitudes and means to become rational, economic agents; the

solution, therefore, is to supply them with those means and outlooks so that they can contribute to economic growth by helping themselves out of poverty" (ibid: 27) Thus empowerment is presented by the hegemonic discourse as a double relief of powerlessness and poverty.

Empowerment is a very uncertain and politically contested terrain. In line with Sharma's (2008) thinking I understand it as a layered trans-local assemblage, which, in some of its forms, "act[s] upon others by getting them to act in their own interest" (Cruikshank 1999, 68 cited in Sharma).

Empowerment, development and mission

The empowerment development and poverty relief policies present an ideological shift from collective empowerment as a liberation strategy to the colonization of the term by governments and development agencies to become a technology of self-governance. The enactment of these policies needs strong "mediating structures" capable of realizing the government's new development and poverty-relief programs. Among these mediating structures, churches and Faith-based organizations are supposed to play a major role, because apart (or instead) of addressing the big issues such as inequality, injustice, poverty, pandemics, or lack of drinking water, what was the focus of NGOs in development, it also (and sometimes instead) changes the subjectivities of people.

In a recent volume on development and religion in Africa, Freeman (2012) wrote about how the unprecedented growth of Pentecostal churches in Africa came in the times of austerity, the spread of poverty, famine and other crises of governance. The loans for large infrastructural projects that African countries had taken from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank during the1970s spiralled and attacked the economies of African countries during the 1980s. Structural adjustment programmes (roll-back of the state) were imposed by the creditors, which meant drastic cuts in social spending and the abolition of the welfare state. "Prices of essential goods skyrocketed, incomes dwindled, jobs disappeared, services were cut and many people struggled to make ends meet" (ibid: 4)

The international development donors thought that NGOs were more poised to fight against poverty than states themselves, because they offered a sense of a bottom-up approach: through empowerment and participation. "It was believed that NGOs, as grassroots organisations, would be able to stimulate the participation of local people in their own development and empower them to take up new activities that would increase their wellbeing and lead to economic growth." (ibid: 6) However, the NGOs work demonstrated to be rather inefficient, because the type of empowerment they delivered in Africa would rely primarily on education, skills and access to resources, but elucidated very little in terms of individual subjective empowerment. (ibid: 8)

Development and religion in Africa since the 1980s has been marked by blurred lines between NGOs, the churches and the introduction of FBOs. The picture becomes substantially more opaque when viewed through the lens of Pentecostal theology of development, which sees underdevelopment, poverty and suffering as works of demonic apprehensions which must be opposed. This theology has been far more catchy and efficient in involving and transforming persons and communities, than the call for a "war on poverty" put forth by development NGOs. According to Freeman, Pentecostalism in Africa presents an alternative to both development and post-development techniques, because

> "[w]hile they embrace the mainstream capitalist 'spirit of development' with its desire for wealth and commodity consumption, they maintain a magico-religious worldview in sharp contrast to mainstream development's rational secularism. And while they acknowledge the existence of traditional practices and values, they seek to break away from them, in stark contrast to the post-development theorists who seek to base new models of the future in these traditional pasts." (ibid: 9).

Pentecostal churches are more efficient in development and social change, because they bring personal transformation and empowerment and they provide

> "the moral legitimacy for a set of behaviour changes that would otherwise clash with local values, and they radically reconstruct families and communities to support these new values and new behaviours" (ibid: 3)

3. Autonomy and Empowerment through the Conversion?

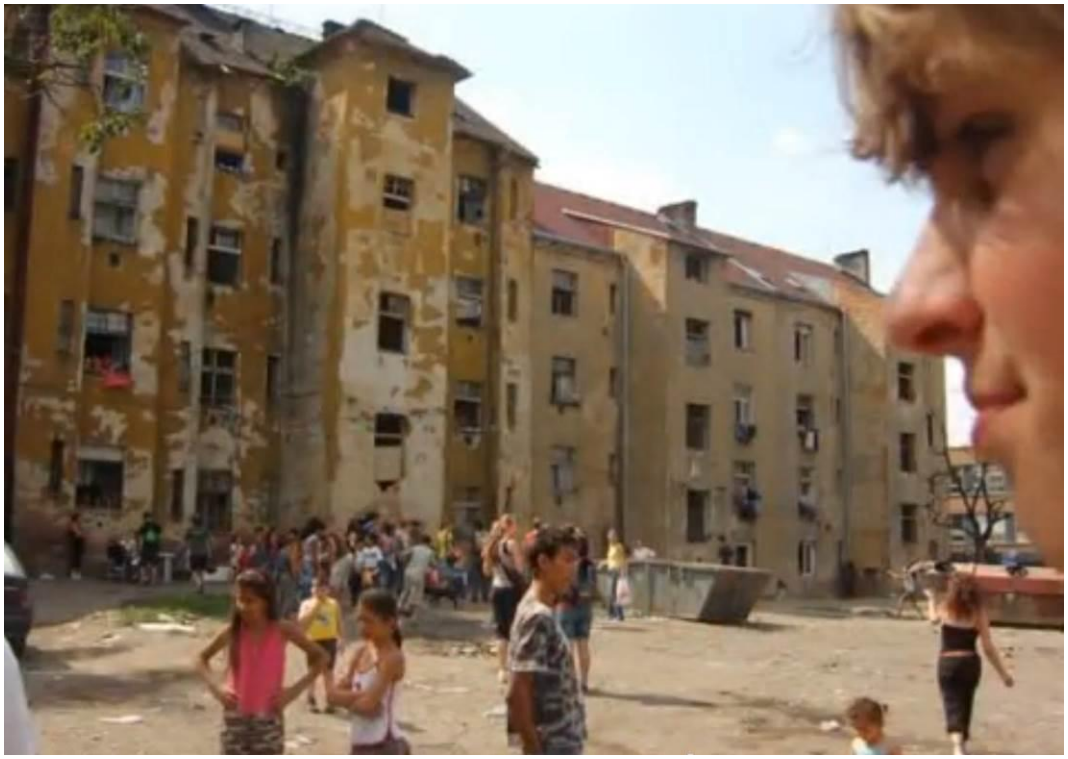
The new Pentecostal churches in Africa are not only receivers of missionary and development resources from other countries, but they are gradually becoming huge economic institutions with their own markets, parallel to the states and independent of them. Ukah (2003) reports the case of The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Nigeria, which already on the turn of millennium was among the biggest entrepreneurs in Nigeria, with very important community of potential consumers. Being spiritual and religion-economic community at the same time, the church has been "deeply involved in the diverse practices of production, distribution and consumption of an array of goods and services" (Ukah 2003, p.247). The new Pentecostal churches have firm-like organization, their leaders are university-educated managers, who are able to run huge media production within the church; but also banks, insurance companies, or business schools are run as a part of the ministry (Ukah 2007, pp.17–17). While this economic model of the Pentecostal churches is not unknown in the Czech Republic, it is still very isolated (for an account of CFaN events see chapter seven).

Pentecostalism seems to be so interesting for the state, because it is capable of bringing about this transformation of values to align either with capitalist system (as in the case of Africa) or workfare (Wacquant 2010) system as in the case of the Czech Republic. It is able to empower people in the hegemonic use of the term.

4. “Not all are to be blamed”: Mission among Roma, Poverty and Deservingness in Márov

Mission

Figure 2 Missionaries in the Márov ghetto



Welcome to Eastern Europe’s most wicked land with the highest rate of atheists. If you would like to start your mission here, we can offer you some good spots. Missionize with us and the impact of your mission will be guaranteed. Come to Márov!

> “The city centre was built in medieval times; it now has renewed facades and a lot of cosy restaurants that serve good Czech beer. (…) However, the city has a bad reputation! Brothels, casinos, drug traffic, alcoholism, car thieves everywhere.
>
> Besides Czech people many different nationalities are represented in Márov, in particular, Vietnamese, Roma, Ukrainian, and Slovakian. (…) The Czechs often have major difficulties in accepting the Roma. Often Roma

> have not only one but several wives who are forced into prostitution. Many of the Roma deal with drugs, some of them are in jail. (…) Since the Roma families used to have many kids the amount of Roma among the population of Márov grew and grew so that now they make about 10 % of the inhabitants in the region of Márov."[11]

It is summer. A group of three teenage girls in vests and two boys are walking towards a deteriorated block of buildings. These are not houses, but ruins, a ghetto. They reach a backyard, where more than a dozen dark kids are gathered; the smallest ones in the front are naked or half-naked. Pictures of the children and of a container follow. The kids are very nice, their smiles are innocent, and they are friendly towards each other and the visitors. More people are coming, some of them still remaining apart. Two white girls start to show acrobatics to the kids. Some of the parents are observing the yard from their windows, which are totally destroyed. The kids start snuggling the visitors (and one another) and taking photos with them. Then they play a game with the visitors. The white male visitors tend to observe more at the beginning. Some of the kids have dirt around their mouths and on their clothes (the yard is very dusty). Some dark adults appear, but they do not get involved: some of them are sitting outside, some of them leaning from their windows. Then one or two mothers approach the company, but do not interfere. Some of the children appear to be very clean, which is in radical contrast to the buildings and the backyard. The visitors approach the ruins and take pictures from the communal areas of the houses. There is garbage everywhere. Then the visitors say something on microphones, and the kids are given sweets and balloons. The camera turns to show pictures of individual children, but many times the picture is contextualized by a global view of the scene – children gathered at a dusty backyard with waste bins and lots of garbage, in front of totally devastated buildings.

Then a text appears:

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[11] Missionary material

> "Love the Lord, serve God with the whole heart and with the whole soul, and with all the power! --- And love your neighbour as yourself! --- Open your eyes! Look at the fields: they are ready for the harvest. --- You are the light of the world. --- Take down the load, burn for Jesus! --- Start a new life! Live 'Action Christianity' --- See, what is possible! --- Young kids are full of talents!"

Later on the dark children show their incredible physical abilities in acrobatics and breakdance, and finally they beatbox with one of the visitors. The video[12] story named "The love of Jesus brought in the middle of hopelessness" closes with an appeal:

> "The talent is inside YOU! Start to discover! And go to the heaven with your God! Until the end of the world…"

What did the author of the video want to convey about the Roma?

> "Blatant setting. What would you do if you no one wants .... the Roma [who] are not welcome anywhere; they are the outsiders of the society, do not get good jobs. They are so poor. It is very natural that in the absence of any assistance they respond to poverty by committing crime. Accept the Roma as people, not for what they do! God loves the sinner but hates the sin. Yes, they must be thieves to survive, because NOBODY wants to have them. Not all of them are criminals. I have talked to adults there ... one man told me in detail about his situation, he works honestly to feed eight of his own and four neighbors' children. He is hardly able to pay the rent. But he is honest.
>
> Not all are to be blamed. And not only the Roma. The house is very old, right? They do not go to school, partly because they are ridiculed there. You do not get a good job because no one wants you. I spoke with a man

[12] The video was a personal testimony of a Christian youth who came to find out that the Eastern Europe starts right after the German border. And it was a firsthand testimony, accompanied by local knowledge, directed at German public in order to promote the mission among the Roma, to portray prejudice, and to activate German youth to get involved in the "holy work".

> who lives there. He is really poor! The owner of the house regularly cuts the water and electricity off because some families cannot pay the rent ... 7000 crowns per month! = € 300 – that's exploitative!"[13]

Next year the same group came to support an evangelization event at the same place, in cooperation with the local Roma missionaries and a Gypsy[14] missionary from Germany. The kids accepted Jesus as their Lord and saviour after an afternoon full of games.

There started quite a lively discussion below the cited video posted on YouTube. Comments by a German appeared who claimed he knew the place, and he was thankful that the missionaries reached it. There were also lot of comments in Czech. Their authors claimed the Germans knew nothing about the local situation, and that someone should explain it to them. One of them stated that the situation was in fact partly caused by the Germans themselves, because they are customers of sex work in the city:

> "I would almost believe that … unless I lived in Márov. And you Germans, who come to fuck those Gypsy whores, are only supporting them in doing nothing."

> "Let the author of this video move these Gypsies to his home in Reich – son of a bitch – I am sure he fucked at least one Gypsy child right at the spot. The Gypsies are the plague of Márov, and the Germans only support this plague" I am not a racist, but this is too much for me!!!"

Another user, German-speaking one, underlined that Roma themselves caused their social exclusion, and that all they know is how to plight the government. The poverty and social exclusion is their own choice, because they do nothing against it, according to her. It was here when the important turn occurred. The author of the video replied:

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[13] Comments to the missionary video by its author.

[14] He was not Roma, but of other Gypsy group who do not consider themselves Roma, this is why I use the term Gypsy here.

> "You are totally right! They do very little or nothing with their situation! But that does not change the fact that the children cannot help it! In addition, our concern is that these people come to know Jesus. We did not come with millions of crowns to rebuild their house, but with a message that should encourage them to take their new life in their hands! The problem is that they do nothing against the situation, [and] we want to tackle [it]!
>
> That's why we go out there, play with the kids and preach the gospel. For the kids who cannot go against this situation – they are born there – to have some relief we bring games and clothes. What is documented by this video should encourage others to become active in order to change this world with God's help."

He changed his rhetoric to state that the children are not responsible for the misery and poverty of their parents, who could change their own situation, but are inactive, and thus they should be offered a different prospect in life. There followed several more comments on the undeservingness of the Gypsies, such as:

> A: "So this is really embarrassing, pity I do not speak German. Someone explain to these assholes how it really works here. The sentence that they live without water is funny as well whoever does not pay the bills for water he will be cut of it without regard to the colour of his skin, religion or nationality."
>
> B: "I would deport them all out of civilization and let them take care of themselves without social benefits. We make money for these parasites, go away!!
>
> C: "Men, can you see just a one working person? These people do not work, they do not clean, they do not learn, they do not wash. They shout, they annoy the others who have to go to work every day. They throw trash out of the windows. They steal, they prostitute because they do not like working. Especially these ones from ghettos. I know many gypsies who live honestly and I give them my respect. But they are not from ghettoes."

> D: "I hate those fuckers!!! They steal, they do not have any courage individually, only in a group, and they have advantages as if the Czech were afraid of them!!! I'd let them die! They just make our nice Czech nation dirty."
>
> E: "I am so pissed off again … Come here and try it among them, I would be interested if you made the same video after that … we are grinding and count every penny and then one sees how they are living it up on the welfare, one would cry."

The strong resentment towards the Roma was, of course, magnified by the fact this was an anonymous internet discussion below a video on YouTube. On the other side, the discussion itself had an impact on the argument of the main author of the video. In accusing Czech people and state of discrimination towards the Roma and their poverty, he finally accepted that the adults do not deserve any attention, because they are already lost, but the children are innocent. His whole story was put upside down.

Most of the negative comments revolved around the issues of employment, social benefits, and debts. According to them, Roma don't pay their bills, do not work, get too much social benefits, and are too loud. The point is that they do not deserve attention or help from anyone.

Purpose

Socially excluded Roma in the Czech Republic were found and promoted as a field to be harvested by the missionaries. But why should the mission focus on them? In a search for purpose, the British evangelist Dennis Bavister prophesized about the Czech Gypsies. He accounted for a spontaneous movement of the Holy Spirit, which made about one hundred Gypsies in Děčín, Czech Republic, accept Jesus. Bavister thought this might be a part of God's plan for the Gypsies:

> "What if the Holy Spirit is opening streams of salvation in the nation and it is starting with the gypsy [sic] people? Just think of the problems that could solve! Could it be that all our best efforts in the social dilemma the gypsy nation poses in much of Eastern Europe can only be solved by God?

> Certainly no politician seems to have a solution that has any chance of working. When I asked the KS congregation in Decin, 'how are you coping; two races and two cultures in the same congregation?'. The answer was an inspiration – 'It's great, because we love each other!'" (Bavister n.d.)[15]

Love is a very powerful device here. The "social dilemma of the Gypsy nation in Eastern Europe" is presented as a lack of love between Roma and non-Roma, so once there is God, love should come with him and all the problems should be resolved. Nobody is blamed for being the source of the problem, because the problem has been rephrased – but only on paper. Patrick Williams made an observation about the discourse on Pentecostalism of both converts and scholars. They agree that Pentecostalism is presented not only as an outcome of urbanization, but also as a cure to all the negative impacts of urbanization, such as alcohol and drug abuse, violence, weak family ties, deterioration of shared moral values, and lack of authority: "a transformation that would prove true as a response to all transformations" (Williams 1991, p.91).

However, this loving without blaming, a way that Bavister offered never became a mainstream discourse of the Pentecostals nor of the public about the conversions of Roma in the Czech Republic. The need for a story with a bad beginning and a happy ending through conversion also provoked the need of the radical wicked Other, an exemplary immoral past and immoral present, upon which the ontology of newly born Christians and the reality of the radical change and purpose would be built. Building on the report on the revival in Márov, the author, who has shown Márov as a nice city with a Roma problem, continues:

> "Doesn't our God want to turn a curse into a blessing? Doesn't he want to change Márov, a city so difficult? Doesn't he want to pour out his mercy on the poorest, the Roma (as they are often thought of)? Yes, he does! We can testify that He is already doing it right before our eyes.
>
> (…)

[15] It should be noted that all Roma left the congregation in Děčín in 2013.

4. Mission among Roma, Poverty and Deservingness in Márov

> It wasn't easy to accompany the Roma on their first steps with Jesus as they struggled with giving up drugs, prostitution, gambling, and unrighteous relationships. But they loved Jesus with a child-like heart, they stood focused – and got through!
>
> (…)
>
> Unholy traditions are falling one after the other. The Roma remain Roma – and they ought to for they are going to reach the other Roma in Márov and all around the city! We want to serve them and show them the way to maturity, support and protect them. We are amazed by what God is doing! Because where sin increased, grace increased all the more!"[16]

In order to fulfil God's plan for Roma in Márov, there needed to be a major rupture with the "old life", and as we have already seen, this rupture was built around the notions of social exclusion, poverty, ghettos, and criminal behaviour. In order to be credible it also needed concrete people, stories, experiences, and testimonies. One such testimony, although an indirect one, was offered by a Czech evangelical preacher in a report about the Roma converts in Márov from 2011:

> "When I first visited the Roma community in Márov, it was a strong experience for me. I saw how the Roma lived in the Márov ghetto in uninhabitable houses without water or heat. Anyone who was looking for a good example of the abstract term *social exclusion* would get one. Most of our fellow citizens have their own explanation for this situation of poverty and moral decline. In large part, they formed their opinion based on their negative experiences, and it is authentic.
>
> But in Márov I also met different Roma families. My visits to their households were accompanied by a sincere joy and reception. I would be offered food everywhere, they would present me to their relatives, and they would express their goodwill. In one household there were four families living together. The flat was big enough for them, and they would share the liv-

[16] Excerpt from a missionary material.

ing room, bathroom and the kitchen. Three young families and their parents. Today in the era of individualism, that was itself a singular experience. They would cook Sunday lunch (and not only Sunday's) together. The mother of the big family would be preparing a Vienna schnitzel with happiness in her face. The father, once a pimp of eight prostitutes, was smiling at me with a peaceful look. He went through a sincere conversion and now he is an elder of the Roma congregation.

Another brother in Christ joyfully presented me to his wife, because she came back to him again. They were to separate. He, a giant of a man, formerly a rowdy and a bouncer, converted, and his life changed. Now he has been studying the Bible for several years and has been visiting the Roma Bible School in Márov, where I met him.

Another Rom, a joyful Christian and a excellent musician, introduced me his to family. Then he pointed to a man who was struggling with the hopelessness of an incurable disease. A difficult destiny. The congregation prayed intensely for him, after which he was healed by a miracle.

One story is followed by another. There was a small celebration during the religious service. The Roma welcomed one older non-Roma couple, who could meet, thanks to the Roma congregation. They were living separated, he in the Czech Republic, and she in Britain. She could not afford to buy a flight ticket to come back. The Roma Christians organized a collection and bought the ticket for her. Huge joy, tears of gratefulness and the prayers of thanks. This is the way how the community of Roma in Márov lives. Its aim is to develop educational activities and enlightenment that can prevent the youth from the defective way of life, especially from dependency on drugs and gambling. They are preparing their youth for an independent Christian life according to the Bible and following Christ." [17]

The report starts with a sharp contrast between immoral and poor people who live in ghettoes in opposition to the inside of a household of a family of converts.

[17] Report from a missionary from visit to Márov, 2011

Hospitality and joy are underlined, and the dark past of the protagonists shown in order to account for such a major change. Once they were the guys from ghetto, but since then they have become Christians and are living an "independent life according to the Bible and following Christ". This is the group of people who changed, and who should be known, because they are moral now.

The sharp difference between the past and the present of the converts is constructed upon generalizing accounts of poverty, ethnicity and social exclusion in the city. Márov was in this regard also perfectly suitable – it was not only the city of sin with visible sex and drug businesses, but it also had its monument of materialized social exclusion: a ghetto. This made an ideal backdrop for the mission, which aims to radically change individuals and nations. The interested missionaries were welcome to experience the religious and moral revival in the pocket of sin, and to support the mission. What expectation could the Czech public opinion have towards the Pentecostal and Charismatic mission among Roma?

Expectations

In 2008, anti-Roma campaigns were launched and marches through Roma ghettoes were started on a regular basis by newly emerging extreme-right wing "Worker's party" in the Czech Republic. Their goals were clear: through these political campaigns, held prior to the 2009 European parliament elections and 2010 local government elections, they wanted to informally activate local electorates in structurally disadvantaged areas with high populations of Roma. While they obviously had no chance to enter European parliament (the Worker's party won 1% of 5% needed), they received nearly 30 000 EUR for the 2009 votes, and more importantly showed they were a political actor that could not be taken lightly. As a response to these anti-Roma resentments, various policies and debates were initiated. Clearly, the Czech government must protect their citizens who are threatened by violence, but there was not an agreement on the origins and on the possible solutions to the problem of extreme right politics. Following the marches and attacks on Roma, the government started a criminality prevention program targeting Roma. The program itself was supposed to "increase the security in so-

cially excluded localities (...) and lower the influence of extreme populism on Czech public".[18]

Paradoxically, this strand of argumentation stressed that the problem is not the extreme right in particular, but the current state of Roma communities, who are being attacked. It is the Roma who should initiate the change. The way would be their integration, or empowerment, as a prominent Czech catholic priest and public intellectual Tomáš Halík phrased it:

> "All the people who care about the correct moral atmosphere in this society must express their solidarity with the Roma who are the main targets of the attacks. On the contrary, however, the Roma question is very specific and I think it is necessary to realize that the main solution lies in the Roma community itself. I think it is crucial that educated elite who would be able to represent this ethnic group emerges from the Roma community so that the majority society takes them seriously. Until now we have seen the negative phenomenon that the educated Roma distance themselves from their community and they want to melt into the majority society. We do not have anybody as Martin Luther King, who would show them that they should also do something for it, not only wait that the state will give them benefits and it will take care of them. But that they also have to change their values and the way how they participate in this society. So I think if a very active and educated Roma elite flourishes, this is a question of generation change, it would be possible to change the attitude of the majority society towards Roma and as a result the extremists would not have such an easy job – they would have to look for some other object" (Halík 2009)

The call for Martin Luther King for Roma echoed by Halík is consistent with the expectations that non-Roma institutions and public, but also churches, have towards Roma Pentecostals. Pentecostalism is greeted if it "empowers" them to

[18] The measures included Roma police assistants, installation of a video-surveillance systems at a Roma housing estates, sociological research of security, mentoring services by Roma and anti-indebtedness counselling services. (MoI 2009)

"change their values" and "participate in this society". It should not be used for "empowering" the Roma to fight the oppression.

Exaggerating the poverty of the Roma

Another way of legitimation of the missionary projects among Roma in the Central and Eastern Europe was to present them as a group in the need of humanitarian aid, comparable to the populations of the third world. They are in such a difficult situation, that they must be assisted. This was done by exaggerating the poverty and the social isolation of the Roma.

The following picture is a snapshot from the webpage of the missionary organization of Gypsy pastor Waleri who was the main missionary in Márov. First I shall present it as a whole, and then I will focus more on the textual section on page two and three.

Figure 3 Snapshot of the webpages of the German missionary organization

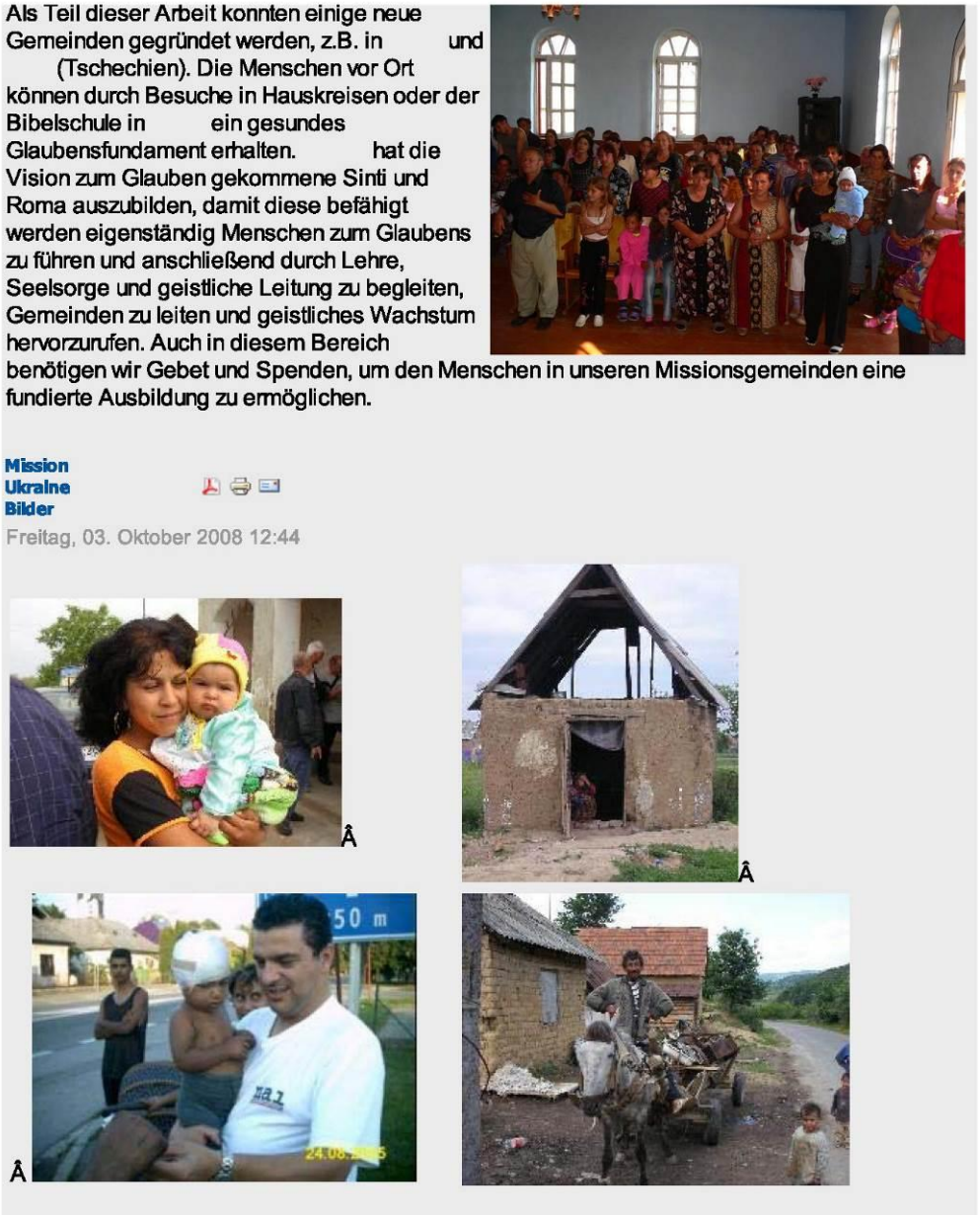
On the first page pictures of missionaries are shown together with pictures of poverty and decline. The disorder represented by the garbage in front of the poor houses is balanced by the orderly congregation. The children who are left outside at the fires, can now have access to modern education inside the church.

Figure 4 Snapshot of the webpages of the German missionary organization

The mission statement is surrounded by poverty, especially child poverty – it is said that a normal Roma village in Ukraine looks like this. There follows a statement that the organization supports humanitarian aid to Roma and Sinti in four CEE countries, where they are lacking basic care and services, such as potable water, medical help, and shelter. "Therefore, we need concrete prayer and donations in kind and cash donations" ends the first paragraph. The second paragraph, which speaks of "spreading the gospel and strengthening of faith through in-depth

training," promotes proselytizing activities among the Roma in four CEE countries.

Figure 5 Snapshot of the webpages of the German missionary organization



The document follows: New congregations were founded as an outcome of these activities, and the local Roma developed the healthy foundations of their faith through Bible school. The aim is to train local leaders who would lead their communities and promote spiritual growth. "Also in this area we need prayer and donations to enable the people of our mission churches in-depth training," ends this

section. There appear several more pictures of poverty and disease, as well as caring, clean missionaries who are friendly to the local Roma.

To begin with, none of these pictures was taken in the Czech Republic, or in Márov, where the principal activity took place, and where most of the donations were to be targeted. They are selections from missionary trips of the pastor, which he did once or twice a year. In this regard, the image of poor Roma on the edge of the society is not accurate.

The use of the schema of poor people in need of humanitarian aid sometimes clashed with reality. In summer 2011, after Waleri left the congregation, there was a critical group evaluation of his work, and it appeared that women, who were working in a charitable secondhand shop for Waleri, felt humiliated by the fact that they were promoted as poor in need of help:

> Renata: One German came, I don't know, I saw him for the first time, and he was speaking in German with him. He did not know I could speak German. And the German was taking pictures of us. And we were standing all the time and they were speaking. And now he speaks and he says about me that I am poor, that I have nothing to eat=
>
> (people express compassion)
>
> Míša: =and I, "WALERI!" I say, "well", I say "you are maligning me this way?" He says: "You understand?" and I say: "No, I don't understand."

Renata referred to a situation when she was humiliated by being identified as the object of help. Mirka added to it:

> "And you know what hit me as well? When he said that he is taking pictures of poor people so that the rich, when they see the photos, so that they help them! But perhaps they are not poor those people. He says that their children don't have anything to eat. It is the same with others; they are not in such a bad situation."

Waleri used to portray the Czech society as ethnically divided, with the Roma on the bottom, living only in segregated neighbourhoods, and all of them being poor.

He withheld the facts that two-thirds of the Roma in the Czech Republic do not live in social exclusion, that there is a significant Roma middle class, and even that the lives of the poorest Roma are always intertwined with the lives of some non-Roma. But the image of a divided, segregated society was powerful enough to bring money for the operation of the mission.

The way to overcome the problem of undeservingness that Waleri used was to recast the situation of the Roma in the Czech Republic in terms of radical social exclusion and severe poverty that required humanitarian aid. Czech Roma became deserving because their living situation was depicted much worse than it was in actuality. They were shown as people, about whom the state does not care at all, the victims being mostly children and women.

The problem of deservingness

The view on the Roma as on undeserving poor is quite widely shared in the Czech Republic. According to a recent survey, the Czech population evaluates the living together with Roma worse every year. In 2014 it was 84% of respondents who claimed that living together was bad, and only 12% who saw it as good (CVVM 2014, p.2). The evaluation depends neither on the stratum of the respondent, nor on his or her political affiliation. While Roma are generally seen as having worse access to the labour market (7% better; 61% worse), the most pronounced demand towards them is that they should work more (26%). They are also seen as having better access to housing than the non-Roma. However, in another survey conducted in 2009, 13% of Roma reported being discriminated against in the housing market by private landlords in the previous 12 months and 20% of Roma during the previous five years; 64% reported generally the experience of discrimination during the previous year (CVVM 2009).

According to public opinion, the Czech state cares about the Roma more than it should, and in this regard the Roma are the least needy among the vulnerable groups in the society. A 1998 survey on the legitimacy of social security found out that the groups, such as young families, handicapped people, families with multiple children, retirees, and solitary mothers were generally seen as under-

served by the state, whereas Roma and drug users were considered parasites of the social security system who did not deserve the attention of the state.

Table 1: What do you think, how does the government care about some citizens? Concretely

The state cares about:	More than it should	sufficiently	Insufficiently and not at all
Roma	56,1	37,5	6,3
Drug users	43,8	39,7	16,6
People with AIDS	25,9	55,9	18,2
Unemployed	17,5	51,1	31,4
Solitary mothers	3,2	40,3	56,5
Retired	2,6	54,1	43,2
Families with multiple children	1,6	20,7	77,7
Handicapped	1,5	29,9	68,6
Young families	0,6	13,7	85,7

Source: Legitimita sociálního zabezpečení, 1998

Kepková and Víšek state that the Roma are not a good target of charity from the wealthy Czechs:

> "The donors would not gain a good reputation of a donor and a sponsor (…); on the contrary their act would be denounced by the majority. (…)The part of Roma who live on a very low social level, and in poverty, perhaps with the exception of Roma children, do not arouse the compassion that inspires charity. (…) It is assumed that Roma themselves are responsible for their situation, even if they are reconciled with their situation. The public differentiates strongly between the ones who are poor despite their effort, and those who are poor because of an accepted, unchanging standard of life." (Kepková & Víšek 1999, p.386)

The problems between Roma and non-Roma are attributed as follows: 92% of the public claims they are due to the unwillingness of Roma to work and abuse of social welfare, 91% to their different culture, 81% to their racial difference, and 81% to the fact that people are scared of them. Only 33% of the population agreed that there could be a problem of racism towards the Roma, and only 29% agreed

the problems were an outcome of unemployment and poverty. The same number thought that substandard education might be one of the factors (Gabal et al. 2008, p.22).

In comparison with other European countries, laziness and lack of will are seen as the most prominent reasons given to explain the poverty of Roma, and Roma themselves are to blame for their own impoverished condition (Pakosta & Rabušic 2010). Roma are not seen as deserving poor in the Czech Republic, but rather, they are regarded as abusers of social welfare. These classifications reveal a dominant moral community that sustains itself through the constant imposition and transformation of its borders. This dominant community draws a demarcation line between decent people and the rest, which was once described by Leo Howe as the following:

> "In relation to unemployment and poverty, deservingness is defined by a set of moral and evaluative criteria. The deserving unemployed are considered to be those out of work through no fault of their own, keen to return to work, and on the whole willing to accept any reasonable offer of a job; they are thus truly eligible for state support. Moreover, they are deemed to be like those in employment since they share with the latter the high values placed on work, independence, individual responsibility, and the family. In this sense they are admitted into the same 'moral community' as those in employment. The undeserving unemployed are defined by an opposite set of criteria and, because they are deemed to espouse a contrary and despised set of values, they are seen as being more or less outside the moral pale." (Howe 1990, p.1)

It is important to note that un/deservingness is not a universal principle applied to the poor. In Europe it was not until 14th century that this classification came about; before, the poor were seen as an object of personal charity and there was no equation between destitution and moral inadequacy. It was only the 14th to 18th century "poor laws" that introduced the idea that the state should care about the poor, and that deemed that the able-bodied poor unemployed should be given work so that they do not receive welfare without giving back. The poor laws were very much connected bans on vagrancy and work mobility as well. Finally, Eliza-

bethan Poor law distinguished between the impotent (who were provided with money), the able-bodied (who were given work), and the idle (who were corrected). It was the Poor laws that gave rise to the un/deserving classification (Howe 1990, pp.4–6).

Undeserving, but converted

Deservingness of some of the unemployed is defined through the high values placed on work, independence, individual responsibility, and family. All these domains were contested for the Roma with whom I did my fieldwork. This can be shown through the following example of an exemplary testimony of one Roma convert named Parno which was published on internet:

> Parno: "I was one of the truants at school. I was going to smoke with friends and then steal as well, so I was put in the youth custody centre when I was 14."

In the custody centre there was a cruel educator, but Parno managed to escape from him. He returned to his home at the age of 18, and soon thereafter, got married and had a baby. Suddenly, he was called to the army, but he did not like the aggressiveness there, so he escaped. Upon his return home, he got into problems with his relatives and finally was imprisoned for two years. When Parno got out he tried to find a job, but he was not qualified. He tried to work in factories, but never stayed for long, and soon returned prison after another quarrel. Then he started with drugs:

> Parno: "I started to take drugs, first the softer ones, then crack. I learned to cook it myself and I was selling it in Northern Bohemia. I ended up consuming it all myself. When I did not have money for preparation of the drug I took the maternity benefits from my wife, so she did not have anything to buy food for the children, and they were crying of hunger. When she defended herself I beat her, and the children were shocked. I did not care, I was interested only in the drug. My wife was borrowing money, but after a while no one would lend to her. Finally they kicked us out of our

> flat. For a while we were living with our relatives. At my sisters, who has seven children, and us with six more.
>
> During this time I met with one Christian. He told me about the God, about the Bible, and about rescue in Jesus Christ. He helped us; we were living at his place. But under the influence of the drug I started to become jealous of him, and I beat him. He called the police and we had to run away. It was summer and we were sleeping in the forest with the children. The Police tried to chase us out of the forest. I did not know what to do. I was walking in the forest and prayed to the God the Christian told me about. We had to put our children into the children's home. They were crying a lot, my wife did as well."

The story ends on a more positive note, as Parno becomes a very active preacher in his community and makes other drug addicts convert. But this is not the point now. I am interested how the "old life", the wicked personal history, upon which one makes the contrast with the "good" present, is constructed, and how it opposes the basic qualities upon which deservingness is constructed. The comparison can be seen in the following table:

Table 2: Deservingness and old life of a convert

Deserving poor	Old life of a convert
Working	Tried to work in factories, but never stayed for long, soon was sent back to prison, then earned living through criminal activities and abusing welfare.
Independent	Spent whole life in institutional care or addicted to drugs. Once he had an enterprise (although illegal), but he consumed all the drugs himself.
Responsible	His own irresponsible behaviour led to all his problems – first institutionalizations, fights, denying army, fighting with a person who was helping him.
Family-oriented	Did not mention his parents, was sent to prison when he had children, abused maternity benefits and left children cry from hunger, beat wife in view of the children, overcrowded the flat of sister, and caused the institutionalization of his children.

It seems that the categories of "old life" for the Roma converts, and the categories which define the undeservingness overlap to a high degree. When it comes to the reputation of the Roma, they would be seen as not willing to work and placing other things, such as parties connected to ceremonies (marriages, burials, and birthdays) above their work duties. They would be seen as dependent on the welfare system, substances, and gambling. They would be classified as irresponsible because they were not able to handle their money properly, and they were interested only in short-term satisfaction compared to planning and postponed consumption. Clichés about Gypsies who spend their whole income shopping during the first day after the social benefits payments, and who go home by taxi, would be exemplary of this attitude. Fourth, they were seen as irresponsible towards the family, especially in the question of the institutionalization of their children – the stories of Gypsy mothers who left their children institutionalized, without taking care of them, are widespread.

The old life is depicted in the same colours as the undeservingness is. And it is through the recursions to the sinful past when the undeservingness of some is reproduced.

Testimony

Charismatic and Pentecostal congregations elsewhere use the personal testimonies of the converts, who would testify the radical change through their own example, for proselytization ends, and for public relations. The testimonies give visibility and credibility of the organizations towards their donors and the public (they have many more functions which I discussed in the first chapter). There is a big difference between an anonymous testimony by a stranger that comes through a channel one cannot trust and a personal testimony channelled through trusted media. The difference could be as large as between an anonymous beggar who asks for help on the street and tells his story, and a brother in Christ, who is backed by his community and pastor and an organization to which the congregation pertains.

In Márov, however, the missionaries never got this type of testimony, where the bad past is depicted in the liveliest details. What the Roma in Márov would put forward would be either a story of the organization: about the Roma congregation

as a whole, or a personal statement of faith, such as the following given to me by a Roma preacher:

> "I remember my baptism as if it was yesterday. I remember I was a very happy man. I was really born again. I felt peace and love and happiness. That I have the right thing in my heart which I cannot lose, unless I give it up. And I do not want to give up. I want to go further and I want to bear good fruit, be a new man, not the old one." [19]

Most of the local Roma converts dared to talk about their bad "past" in detail: the ones with criminal personal histories, or histories that could be seen as immoral, did not want to "sell" their story most of the time. Once a missionary came to a convert who used to be a pimp and multimillionaire, but then converted to become poor factory worker. A missionary came to his place and asked him to tell his testimony; when the convert asked what the use of the recording was, the missionary replied he would travel with it in Germany and raise funds for the mission among Roma. The convert understood that the mission is only about money, he got very angry with the missionary and stopped coming to the church at all. In the seventh chapter I present more testimonies of the congregation members, but as a rule it can be said that they were not interested in sharing their histories of conversion with the public. The webpages of the congregation contained a dedicated section for testimonies, but this was never filled with content.

The Site, Roma and religion

Let me now introduce the city of Márov, the local Roma and the religious situation in the city. Márov is a mid-sized town in the Western Bohemian borderlands with Germany. The area was historically populated mainly by Germans. During the Second World War it became part of Third Reich. After the war, the German population was forcibly expelled out of the country, and the local population changed dramatically. Several waves of directed migration brought Czechs from inland areas, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians to the region. Together with

[19] Excerpt from an interview with Míša, 14. 9. 2011 Márov

them, a large population of Roma was recruited and moved in, and today they form up to 8% of the local population.

The region was mainly agricultural, but from the 1950s to the 1980s, it deepened its specialization in the textile industry, general engineering, mining and heavy industry, and forestry, which became the main employers. During the transformation in the 1990s and 2000s, most of the heavy industry perished, which left large groups of unskilled and immobile labour in the region without work (among them most of the local Roma). The largest decline happened in the textile industry, followed by forestry, the food industry, and mining/heavy industry. The German entrepreneurs came back during the transformation, and today there is almost the same numbers of German and Czech employers.

The opening of Czech-German borders and lower prices of goods and services encouraged large numbers of Germans to cross the border regularly and spend their money abroad. They were attracted not only by huge Vietnamese marketplaces selling cheap goods, which grew in the region in the 1990s, but also by many restaurants, barber shops, nail studios, etc. German customers also started to come in search of drugs and prostitution. Prostitution has always been present in the city, but it grew substantially after the opening of the border to become one of the main industries and also one of the main topics of public discussion in the city. During the 1990s, local Roma started to meet this demand more and more, and to provide illegal drugs and prostitutes. Some of my informants used to "sustain" several prostitutes, and profited from them. No one talks about who these workers were; however, the successful ones managed to marry Germans and move across the border, where they would live German lower-middle class or low-class lives. To this day, one can easily find prostitutes and drug dealers throughout the town, and the business is still partly operated by Roma. The general narrative of conversion of my Roma informants is one of well-off pimps and drug dealers who converted to become either poor welfare beneficiaries or factory workers on precarious contracts. However, this is the testimony which was put forward and promoted most frequently, but not the most accurate one. In fact, a large proportion of the converts had not previously been involved in criminal activities.

As for the religious situation, while the Czech Republic as a whole is often said to be the flagship of atheism in Europe, the rate of believers in Márov is still well below the average for the Czech Republic: while for the whole country the rate of faith, as declared in the census, was 20,7% in 2011, in Márov it was only 12,7 % , most of them Roman Catholics (3,1%).

The Roma have been coming to the local Catholic and Protestant churches since their arrival to Márov during the period from the 1950s to the 1980s. Most often they would come with a request for baptisms and burials, and also many times with a request for material help – especially from single mothers with children. Roma, according to the Evangelical priest, often understood the baptism more in terms of magic, as something that would protect children from bad influences. Generally, he regarded Roma religiosity as popular religiosity with Oriental origins connected with many Pagan elements. He interpreted baptism as an open gate to the community who respected and fulfilled God's commands. Roma were not supposed to become involved in religious matters beyond baptisms and burials.

One Romani woman explained me that when one wanted to have her children baptized, the only thing to be done was to agree with the priest on the date, and bring the birth certificates of the godparents. She would then come to the priest afterwards to talk during the week, but she would not appear at Sunday mass.

Roma in Márov as unintended beneficiaries of the Czech-German reconciliation process

The conversions of Roma in Márov to Pentecostalism, which gave rise to the current congregation, can be traced back to the Czech-German reconciliation process, which was started by the churches. Some common activities had been taking place since the beginning of 1990s, but the first major church reconciliation event happened in 1995 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the end of the war. German church representatives came to the Czech Republic with the desire to beg pardon for the war. The Czech priest prayed for the sins connected to the expulsion of Germans after the war. According to the bishop, There was a risk that the Germans would outnumber the Czechs: because the evangelical congregation in Márov was quite small, if the Germans were too numerous, it could be seen as

some kind of occupation again. There were 4 000 people present during this event, which began an ongoing cross-border cooperation between the two churches.

The bishop saw the congregation as both small and old in terms of age, so in 1999 he initiated a five-year project to bring youth to the evangelical church in Márov and to Czech-German youth gatherings. A Czech employee, John, was responsible for the project. He organized a gathering for the youth, but instead of the general youth, Roma children and teenagers showed up. John recalled during an interview that Roma children once came to the parish garden to pick cherries, and he invited them to come through the door to enjoy them. He then started to organize activities for them. Three times a week they would gather for leisure activities and singing. The children were 8-12 years old. The aim of this work with Roma children was to prevent drug abuse and delinquent way of life among them, and to bring them to the Christian faith. John had a very different approach to the faith than the pastor: he was charismatic, and while the pastor would rather work in Bible classes and teach, John saw transformative possibilities in music, sports, film, and theatre.

The priest of the church was not very open to the idea that a group of Roma youth should be formed in the church, but the Germans convinced him otherwise. Their argument was that the pastoral care for the Roma was not just a question of a mission, but also of providing help to one's neighbour. In the context of poverty and stories about child prostitution among Roma, this was a convincing strategy. However, the preacher John does not recall the approach of the Czech congregation as very sympathetic towards the new Roma group. According to him, since the beginning there was a conflict between the congregation at the United Protestant Church and the group of Roma:

> "The congregation did not work properly, right? The people came there once a week on Sunday. Five old ladies were the elders of the church, and the priest would always lead it and talk, [but] they never said anything. Nobody decided anything; the congregation was in a tragic state. Totally, how to put it, such a … I do not have a word for this … well, something like spending the rest of their lives. No one was interested in anything. On-

> ly the services were held, some people would come once a week and nothing happened. And then we came up with these activities, right? And of course the congregation, when they realized that there appeared some alien people, some group, in their building, paradoxically, they suddenly woke up. And instead of doing something useful, they started to fight against us. So we became an unwanted element. (…) Who would waste his time with some Gypsies? They are all uneducable anyway. We had a supposed expert for this, and the rest had the same opinion. (…) For us such an approach was unacceptable, so we carried on."

Then the idea of a youth centre emerged, which was to be built in the garden of the church. The construction was financed by the Czech-German reconciliation fund, and a large part of the financing was raised through collections in churches in Bavaria. The donations would be used to finance cross-border cooperation, as well as a mission in Tanzania or Brasil; the mission among Roma was just a small part of their donations. The donors were not only Germans, but also included a network of Czech donors, mainly relatives and acquaintances of John. Roma were employed in the construction of the centre, but the construction was mismanaged, and it was never finished. The Czech members of the church were convinced that this was because the Roma worked on the construction were lazy, whereas the Roma thought John misappropriated the money meant for the construction for other purposes. However, it seems it was rather a problem of mismanagement. The effort from the side of German Evangelical churches to support the reconciliation process through a support of youth activities in the Czech Republic, and gatherings with German youth, brought an unexpected result: a project team that coalesced to serve the Roma children in Márov.

The congregation in Márov

After some time of operation of the Christian club for children, John thought to involve the families of the children, as well. He intended to influence also the family background of the children:

> "They were school-age kids. It was the age when we could catch them and give them some direction, but the problem was that we tried to influence

> them here in the club; then, when they came back home they still fell into the things that were typical in this social group. It could be that the reality of the family was that the father was imprisoned, and the mother was making her living on prostitution. So the families were quite problematic. The children did not have any education."[20]

After an evangelization campaign organized by John where he invited the local Roma several members of one Romani *fajta* (extended Roma family) spontaneously started to come, as well, using the place for preacher gatherings. Since then, the congregation underwent several phases:

First they were taught about the theology of Faith movement, especially Benny Hinn and Reinhardt Bonnke, by a non-Roma preacher. The fact that the congregation was Romani was more an outcome of the conversions than a programme in this period. The general narrative about the conversions from that time was of Roma criminals, drug dealers, pimps, and debt collectors who profited from the proximity of the border with Germany, and who then converted to poverty and living on social benefits after having left the business.

Secondly, in 2005 the group left the United Protestant Church and they split. A smaller part of them was visiting a new church formed around Jan, but most of the converts gradually stopped coming.

Thirdly, in 2007, after two years without a functioning congregation, the Roma converts met with a Gypsy missionary named Waleri (whom they already knew) and invited him to church them. Waleri was born in Germany to parents of Sinti origin who were originally from the Czech Republic, but he never learned Czech. Most of his family perished in concentration camps. When he was young his parents were itinerant traders, and he attended school for only a handful of months. As an adult, he married a Sinti woman and had a daughter, and in his mid-30s he converted to Charismatic Christianity. Soon after, he translated the Wycliffe Bible to the Sinti language, and he became a dubbing actor of Christian movies in Sinti. He also enrolled in a Charismatic Bible school and after several years of training

[20] Interview with preacher John, 8. 5. 2011, Márov, Czech Republic

became a missionary for the Roma and Sinti populations in his region. For some years, he worked for German missionary organizations among Manus Gypsies in France and elsewhere. Until finally, he founded and directed his own missionary organization with a board from different Free and Mainline Protestant churches in Germany. Fronted by his missionary organization, he came to Márov in 2007.

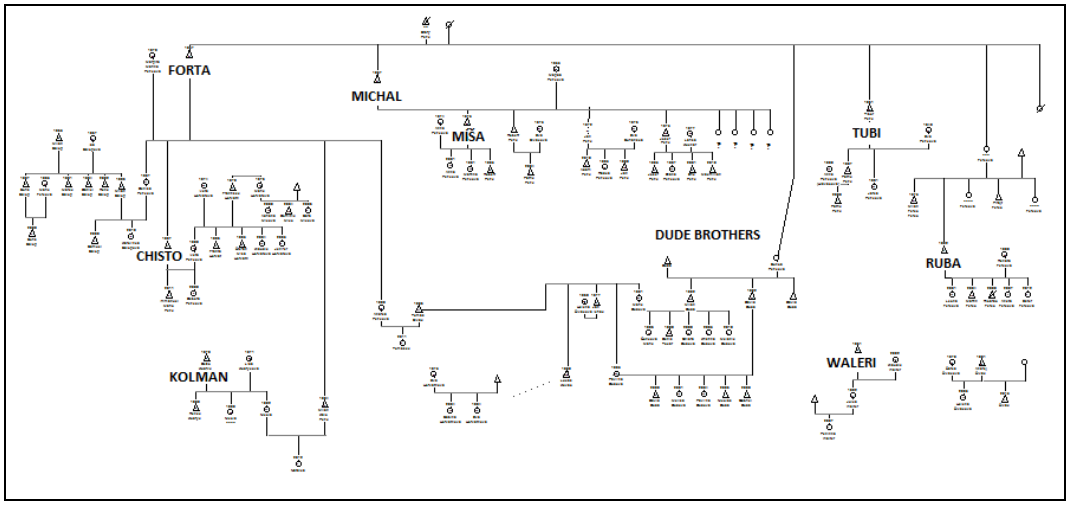
It should be noted that this pastor was not related to anyone from the congregation, and also that he was Sinto, representing a different group of Roma. The new pastor claimed it was necessary that a Sinto work with the Roma, because he understood them better, and he developed an autonomous congregation by Roma for Roma. He started a Bible school and many more activities, including missions to Roma in Eastern Europe, which was entirely paid for using German missionary money. During a period of about five years he was able to sustain a high level of authority and charisma over the congregation members. Then, suddenly, in summer 2011 he left after a conflict with the senior preacher, Míša. Following his departure, the congregation underwent a deep crisis, as the number of people coming to services decreased from 50-70 in 2010-2011 to about 15 in 2012. In 2014 the congregation seemed to be stable again with about 30 members.

Most of the Roma converts were second and third generation immigrants from Eastern Slovakia. To a large extent, they kept the kinship model of Eastern Slovakian villages and settlements: they were members of one larger *fajta* (extended family). *Fajta* in the main sense I will be using the term in this text is a group of Eastern Slovakian Roma organized through the relations of cognatic descendency, but that also includes special criteria for membership.[21] It involves partners "who

[21] I am indebted to Tomáš Kobes who reminded me of the multiple meanings and uses the term has. In Slovak language *fajta* means race, kind, and sort – of anything from fruit to people. "One of the criteria which determine the kind of people is the orientation to shared ancestors. This establishes the second widely spread meaning of the term *fajta* as a lineage" (Kobes 2014). It has the aspect after the family name shared in the patrilineage. On the other hand ego includes both descendency groups – after the mother, and after the father – and also all his four grandparents symmetrically. There are certain limitations which reduce the descendency group created in this way to a shared ancestor. One important factor for the membership in the descendency group is the post-marital residence, which allows ego to participate on a certain

are in everyday interaction with these relatives and participate in a certain way of life" (Kobes 2010, p.254), and excludes others who do not. This organization was enacted especially on occasions such as marriages or burials. People would not talk most of the time about *fajta*, but it would come up, for example, in conversations when someone needed to identify a third person who was not present in the conversation. The name or nickname would not be sufficient for identification, because there would usually be several Roma of the same names and nicknames. The next step would be to say that they were talking about *amari* Bunča or *amaro* Štefan, for example, meaning "ours". This ours (a*mari/amaro*) would refer to membership in the fajta.

Figure 6: Overview of kinship relations among the congregation members. Snapshot of congregation members in 2011.



What follows is a brief overview of the kinship relations of the congregation members. The main *fajta* of the congregation can be divided into five families of five siblings. First, Michal's family participation in the congregation consisted of his sons, their spouses, and their children. The sons held important positions: one was a preacher and another musician in the church band. The third brother did not hold a position in the church, and the fourth one stopped participating. The daughters from Michal's family never participated, and I did not even get to know them.

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kind of life. There are number of other factors that come into play, such as procreation, residence, or physical attributes, which, at the end, cause that the cognatic descendency groups overlap. Every ego can be potentially part of multiple *fajty* which overlap. (Kobes 2014)

To my knowledge, some of them were married to Germans, but I am not sure. The second family was Forta's family, whose participation was quite different. Apart from Forta's sons, Forta's daughters participated as well. What is interesting is that in-laws – the parents of their spouses – also converted, following their children, and participated as well. Forta was a church elder, and his son Chisto was a preacher. Their household was always very lively, as many people lived there. Forta himself was at home on disability pension and everyone visited him. The third part of the congregation was the family of Ruba, the son of Forta and Michal's sister. Ruba was also a preacher, but his siblings did not participate in the congregation. The fourth part was the Dude family: of three brothers two played in the church band, the third one did not participate. Their mother and sister also participated most of the time. The fifth part consisted of another sibling of Michal and Forta – Tubi – together with his wife, the family of his son and a daughter. Apart from these there were other members of the congregation, not directly related by cognatic descendency to the *fajta,* but many of them were in-laws, especially the parents and relatives of the partners of children of Forta. Only one couple of the congregation members was unrelated to the fajta, but there were also newcomers – in-laws, new and newly touched partners of the current members, people brought to the congregation from the street, or by other Faith movement missionaries operating in the town who would bring Roma to the Roma congregation services. And there was the German Gypsy pastor Waleri with his family. Most of the congregation members had common ancestors, and recognized themselves as a part of one *fajta*, related by blood.

Summary

In the beginning of this chapter I have shown how the city of Márov is presented in the national and foreign missionary media – as a pocket of sin in the middle of atheist country, which awaits its revival. Roma population of the city is the neediest because apart from living here they are disregarded and discriminated by the majority population. The determination and lack of prejudices of young missionaries who once came to the city to missionize among the Roma in ghetto, was exemplary. They stood on the side of the Roma, accusing the majority society for their difficulties. However, when they were faced with the public opinion, they

were very fast in restating that it is actually not the society, but the Roma themselves, who are behind their situation. However, the children at least should not suffer the bad decisions of their parents. The question of deservingness and undeservingness was raised.

The mission among Roma had to find a purpose. A possible one was a restating of the theology of the oppressed and marginalized, that the marginals once they convert they will become a moral centre of the society and start a religious revival in the atheist nation. On the other hand there is the expectation of the majority society that the conversions will only change the values and conduct of the Roma, but not the society as a whole. It should "empower" the Roma to change, but in a manner which does not pose a threat to the values of the society – empower in the hegemonic sense of the word.

Another way of legitimation of the missionary projects among Roma in the Central and Eastern Europe was to present them as a group in the need of humanitarian-an aid. This was done by exaggerating the poverty and the social isolation of the Roma. Disorder in the Roma communities was shown to be replaced by the order brought by the mission. The organization whose main mission was in Márov was showing on their webpages photos from extremely poor and segregated Roma settlements in South-Eastern Europe, but this was not the reality of Márov. The congregation members did not agree to be presented as poor and socially excluded.

This type of presentation of the local Roma converts in Márov proved, however to be efficient in overcoming the problem of deservingness. Unfortunately the undeservingness as such was not challenged by the mission, but rather reproduced, for example in testimonies of the converts, who constructed their personality of the convert in opposition to the category of the undeserving Roma.

At the end of this chapter the city of Márov was presented and a short overview of the history of the Roma congregation and their members was done. After this introduction I will go directly to my research question: How was the autonomy of Roma converts sustained and fostered in the Bible school for Roma in Márov?

5. Learning to Talk: Autonomous Education of Roma in the Bible School

The Bible school for Roma, which was based in Márov, was promoted as a source of education and development for the Roma converts, a lighthouse for Roma in Central and Easter Europe. Through autonomous education autonomous communities could be built. But why were the Roma interested in attending it? How come their attainments were so good there? What was their motivation? The missionaries said it was a miracle that the Roma completely changed and became motivated to learn because of their love for Jesus. I found out the issue was much more complex; Roma were learning informally in many instances of their everyday lives. At the end of the day Roma were using the school for their own purposes – namely for learning new language code which could be used also in extra-religious contexts. The fact that a preservation and fostering of autonomy was not taking place in the school can be partly explained by the fact Roma did their own use of the school, and also by the fact that the program of becoming a new man actually requires submission to the Holy Spirit, which is among the Born-again Christians seen as a way to freedom.

Uneducable or uneducated?

Figure 7 Image from the campaign "I should have learnt better". Source: Internet

The motivation and lack of motivation are the most pronounced words when it comes to the education of Roma in the Czech Republic. The lack of motivation is generally taken as a primordial quality of Roma parents which is further reproduced in the upbringing of their children. This was clearly show in 2009, when an advertising agency launched a low-cost campaign for webpages on education. During one day of work in the centre of the capital, a group of Roma road workers was wearing yellow

T-shirts saying "I should have studied better". The T-shirts produced a media controversy and even the Czech minister for Human Rights commented on the case negatively. However, most of the public actually liked the advertisement, considered it funny, that the people who caused their own misery acknowledge it themselves.

My reading of the success of this advertisement is that a) the agency found a channel through which a small controversy would be extended to public discourse, and b) the advertisement played with tropes which appear in upbringing white children. It was referring to an instructive saying: "If you don't study, you will end up digging", one of the means for socializing the white children to the ideal of meritocratic society. In the same time it was drawing on the hegemonic explanation of social inequalities, which underplay the structural foundations of inequalities at the expense of individual responsibility. The individual lack of motivation (be it in education or on labour market) is therefore seen a steady source of social position of the person. Children are not motivated, so when they grow up they do not motivate their own children. During this process the lack of motivation is created as a primordial quality of Roma, and the hegemonic view is self-explained. To further strengthen it the adult Roma who already underwent the process and became part of the precarious proletariat, are used in advertisement of which they would have no profit, saying "I should have learnt better."

Are the Roma motivated for education? There seems to be a vicious circle in the debate on education and Roma – the activists claiming Roma children are discriminated, and the conservationists who claim Roma children are uneducable. As a transformation of all transformations, the mission in Márov brought also a response to this question, without going in detail about the sources of the problem. By the time of my first visit to the congregation in spring 2010 the pastor reported miraculous developments: more than a dozen of Roma, who had previously gone only through the primary education designed for mentally handicapped children, were then regularly studying and making huge progresses in his Bible school: according to him the school attendants would concentrate for five hours in the classes, learn to preach and develop leadership competences.

When I initially explained my research interest in the Bible school teaching techniques to him, he maintained my research made no sense. According to him the motivation of the students for education in the Bible school was coming directly from the love to Jesus and the will to learn more about him and his teachings. There were no special teaching techniques; the individual religious enthusiasm was behind all the success. Jan, the other pastor who had been with the same congregation before, described to me the theology of Charismatic Christian pedagogics in action:

> "It is about the relation. Lot of people have false image of Christianity, as a set of rules and orders, which have to be kept, but the essence is different. Yes, that he is here; how we believe it there is someone who understands this life better than we do. (…) And because he died for us, that he showed his love towards us, that he died, there is no greater love, than if someone dies for the other. So we are trying to repay this love by building a relationship with him and strive to learn about him. And the source to get to know him is the Bible." (Interview with Jan, 13. 8. 2011)

While the fact that the religious education of adult Roma in the Bible school worked well was very exceptional, in this chapter I am going to claim that there is much more in the passion for learning which Roma converts showed. I will try to sketch why I think the Bible school was quite a successful enterprise. I will describe the Roma congregation and the Bible school and ask what the uses of the knowledge acquired there were. In the next section I will try to understand why there is no educational offer for adult Roma, and the I will turn to the value Roma in Márov were giving to education and schooling, both in the context of everyday life, and in the education system. I conclude that my informants valued very high the education which would bring them language competencies in very broad sense, including learned talk and the lawyer's talk of the language of laws and institutions. The Bible school was so successful, because it was offering the Roma general education which led to erudition which was conceptualized as language code.

Ethnography of the Bible school

My original research question was how the conflict is overcome between the ideology of personal autonomy of Roma and the need of the congregation for local leaders who use standardized theology and pastoral techniques. I knew there was Bible school running in the congregation which I chose for my fieldwork, and I was interested in how the education in this school and other contexts of learning are organized in relation to the ideology of autonomy. I supposed the school would deploy perhaps some special teaching techniques, which could grasp the problem of teacher – student power setting in favour of more autonomous student.

My plan for the research was to attend the school throughout my fieldwork and research its teaching methods. Nevertheless I did not succeed to negotiate a standard approach to the school during its operation until 2011, and I was allowed to the classes only once not in the role of student, but of a (very suspicious) visitant. Waleri justified the denial of access by the fact I had not received Jesus in my heart as my lord and saviour. During my research Waleri left the congregation and the Bible school stopped its operation, so in the moment when I already had a clear and recognized social position in my fieldwork, and I would be possibly allowed to the school, it was not operating anymore. I could assist then at one more Bible school class when Waleri moved the school to another city. Therefore I base my knowledge of the original Bible school which operated in Márov between 2006 – 2011 primarily on 1) solicited and unsolicited interviews and accounts about the school with its students, 2) recordings of five classes of the school (which make in total 18 hours) which were made available to me by one church member and which were originally made with the plan to put the on the congregation web pages, 3) textbook and hand-outs from the school and 4) other documentation about the school from the congregation archive.

The privileged position of childhood education and education as an instrument for inclusion

Riemer's research on adult learning programs which are not explicitly religious makes an important link between education, morality and personhood. Government of Botswana has been organizing adult literacy classes since 1980s with tens

of thousands of students over the course of the years. The tropes of moving to the light through the literacy were appearing both in the narratives of the students and in the official discourse as reflected in the primers (textbooks) used in this program. The second primer was "Give us the light of education; then we can see and live" (Riemer 2008, p.448). The literacy skills were actually not used very much – most of the students would report reading road signs, or text in the shops, but in no way it was crucial to be literate in Botswana at that time. Through the literacy programs, the students were undergoing a recognizable path to become "a person among persons, of being humane, courteous, and highly disciplined" , and upholding ones part of the social contract" (Riemer 2008, p.459). This path to become human, was promoted by foreign missionaries in Botswana since the mid-19th century, and it was highly disciplining and pacifying: the newly literate Botswanians would not use the knowledge to challenge the existing inequality and social order, but rather to get included in it, although in the most marginal positions. Gifford (1993) also reminds us of the crucial role formal education organized by churches and religious organizations had in deteriorated Liberia.

The adult education as such has been overlooked in the Czech policies and practices of social inclusion of Roma. These policies in their education chapters have targeted exclusively the children at pre-school, primary and secondary education levels. If some kind of education for adults is mentioned, it is requalification courses for unemployed, but I have not known anyone who would be visiting one in Márov. Roma who are not registered in the labour office, Roma who do not work on official contract, or who are on maternity leave, or disabled, are not addressed neither by the educational, nor by the labour activation policies. Another, but also quite marginal area of adult education in the actual or proposed policies is the reproduction control and early childhood which should start even before the child is born with his adult mother. Third area is the "pedagogization of the family", a concept that assumes that children learn better if their parents are included in the process. However none of these measures is interested in the education of the parents as a separate goal. While it is supposed that the education of children is a social inclusion instrument apart from being a means to access labour market, adults are left behind.

The main reason for this is the legacy of re-education policies which have been looking at the children as re-educable, while their parents were already lost in their Gypsyness, culture of poverty, or criminality. Large portions of Romani children have been removed from their families to the state care and re-educated. Several projects of boarding schools were also developed to minimize the possibility of the parents to influence or educate their children. The extreme version of this approach can be seen in the criminology theory of criminal infection, which details how the criminal behaviour is transferred from grandparents and parents to the children and between the children (Večerka 2000). This theory is still nowadays a reason for removal of many Romani kids from their families. In some of the state policies the Romani family has been seen as non-healthy environment and the only way of integration of Roma to the Czech society was through the separated education of Romani children.[22]

The economists who planned government policies[23] used the human capital approach, which is not favourable to the education of adults either. The distribution of rates of return to human development investment across ages presented by Carneiro and Heckman (2003) have been widely used in the Czech republic for advocating the investments in early-childhood education of marginalized Roma. According to this paper the educational investments have high return to early interventions and a low return to remedial or compensatory interventions later in the life cycle. The paper assumes that the educational policy should be based on the logic of highest returns to one invested dollar. The higher return rate for younger students is not thanks to their better learning abilities. The logic is that "early investments are harvested over a longer horizon than those made later in the life cycle. In addition, because early investments raise the productivity (lower the

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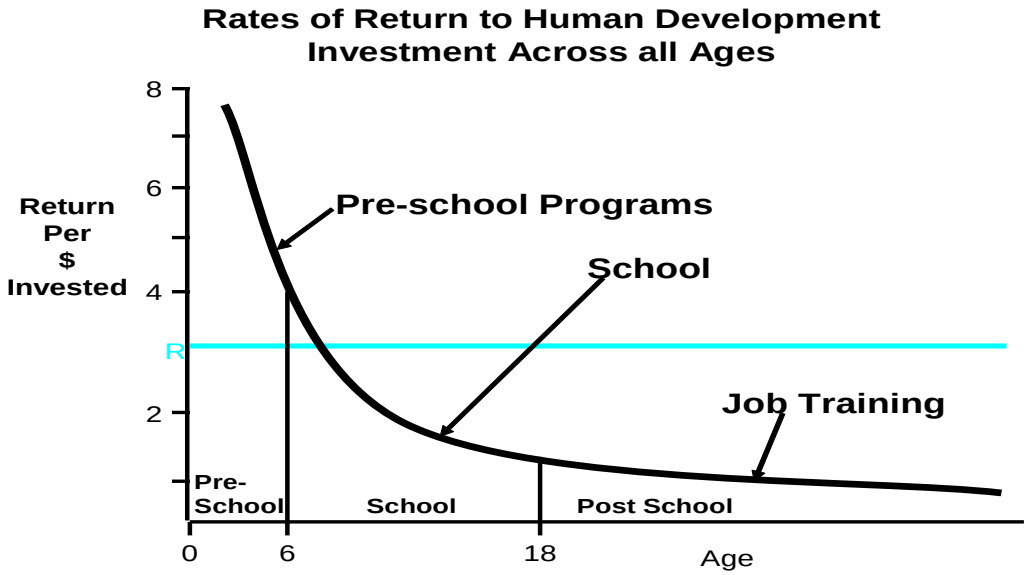
[22] I. e. the government concept by Jiří Čunek: http://www.mmr.cz/getmedia/04812348-7541-43e1-8a80-606dd15d2cd9/NAVRH_KONCEPCE_PRISTUPU_STATU_K_RESENI_PROBLEMU_DE.pdf

[23] See for example "Závěrečná zpráva podskupin Národní ekonomické rady vlády pro konkurenceschopnost a podporu podnikání" at http://www.vlada.cz/assets/media-centrum/aktualne/NERV_kap03.pdf (accessed 3. 12. 2012)

costs) of later investments, human capital is synergistic" (Carneiro & Heckman 2003, p.7).

Figure 8: Early childhood interventions are high return investments



Source: Carneiro and Heckman (2003) cited in (Bodewig & Hromádková 2009)

The positives of the investments in the early-childhood education of Roma were summarized by the World Bank as following: "improvements for children in health, cognitive ability, academic performance, and attainment and, later in life, higher incomes, and lower risk of welfare dependency" (World Bank 2010, p.25). The human capital approach has been criticized in Latin America for being used as a universal formula for development without taking into account the local circumstances. A 1994 World Bank study on poverty and indigeneity in Latin America (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos 1994) based on human capital theory promoted the education of Latin American indigenous populations as a means of overcoming their poverty. The implicit assumptions have been used here: that "(1) the target group depends on wage labour; (2) there are sufficient "better-paid jobs" available; and (3) the labour market under consideration is free and transparent" (van den Berg 2003, p.4). None of these was fulfilled. Van den Berg goes on arguing that the World Bank and subsequently other development agencies in the region missed the major source of poverty of the rural indigenous populations, which is the unequal distribution of lands, and disrespect to the indigenous peo-

ple's rights to (use) land. Whereas they proposed affirmative action in education of the indigenous populations (human capital), they failed to consider the affirmative action in more equitable access to land (natural capital), a land reform or at least the enforcement of the right to land (van den Berg 2003, p.9).[24] In this case the human capital approach and the view that "more and better education leads to better paid jobs–hence, to higher income levels" (van den Berg 2003, p.5) failed, because it was not taking into account the structural inequalities.

The human capital approach takes the education as a linear process, where every further step connects to the previous one and additively increases its value. It is not ready to take into account complex nature of the educational trajectories, both in terms of continuity and additional value. What I have seen in the education histories of my informants are rather discontinuities, periods of very intensive education which are followed by less intensive ones. In their life stories some of them have mentioned the time of their adolescence as "hard times" when they left the vocational schools and went with the group of youngsters who were getting into drugs. Then the conversion to Charismatic Christianity was a relief from the drugs, street, etc., and stabilization of their lives – they would seek more stable relations, have family, start to work. However they would never again have the practical possibility to go back to school, be it vocational training, high school, or higher education. The Bible school was the only possible education for most of the adults. The Human capital approach suggests that subsequent educational steps have added value and are synergic. However it does not deal with non-formal education.

Among my informants a structured formal education was followed by non-formal learning, which was much more intense. Roma in Márov were not enrolled in an educational programme, but this does not mean they would not learn. I learned about the Romani congregation only thanks to its presence on the World Wide Web. It was a junior preacher aged 22 who spent numerous days and nights learn-

[24] It should be noted that in doing this the authors of the World Bank report did not follow World Bank's own indigenous people policy, which does recognize the necessity of enforcing the right to land (use) and possibility of land reforms.

ing the html language and experimenting with it just by himself. Later on I got to know more young, but also older, men who were dedicating enormous portions of time to learn something. Ruba, a 29-years old father of four children, started to attend music school courses, because he wanted to learn jazz composition to improve his piano play. He could play everything by imitation, but he did not know the charts and he said it was limiting him in his musical performance. Ruba's older brother who worked in a factory in Germany in the mornings, and in the evenings or weekends sometimes played guitar at events or on the street in Germany, would spend several hours a day polishing his guitar technique with the youtube recordings of the best jazz guitar gigs. My friend who was in his early 40s and unemployed wanted to read my whole home library, so I would keep bringing him boxes full of classical and modern novels, textbooks from social sciences or books on Roma, and we would have quite a lot of discussions on them. He would be eager to learn the art of ethnography and writing. He was the only one who would actually read books.

Human capital approach is not ready to take into account non-formal learning. It assumes when people are not schooled they do not learn. This is actually very similar to the assumption that if people are not officially employed, they do not work, which seems already overcome by wider acceptance of the fact there are *informal economies* and people work despite their legal status as unemployed.[25] By not taking into account the informal learning and education, adult Roma have been portrayed as uneducable, unmotivated and uninterested individuals.

[25] Informal economy is a term coined in 70s by social anthropologist Keith Hart, which became accepted by economists and development agencies to the extent, that we can find nowadays studies of informal economy made by World Bank. While some economists supposed it was a temporary phenomenon which would be overcome by "modernization" or "development" of the economies of "underdeveloped" countries, informal economies continue are actually on rise. "the nonagricultural employment share of the informal workforce is 78% in Africa, 57% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 45–85% In Asia." (Becker 2004)

The Bible school as a development project

The general development plan of the Gypsy pastor Waleri was to start a community Christian centre, filled with extra congregational activities. Apart from the weekly general services, particular gatherings of men, women and youth, the Bible classes for children and Bible school for adults, the centre was to be filled by "mundane" activities such as self-entrepreneurship courses, conferences, leisure time activities, humanitarian help for poor Roma, social work, and music classes and education of Romani traditions. The vision was to allow local Roma become independent on the state aid. This vision was based in the ideology of autonomy (especially in work) of Roma and Sinti and also in the ideals of autonomous congregation, which are independent on the "mundane" politics, be it state or church.

The school students were recruited from the members of the congregation. In 2006 ten Romani men started to study the Bible school. Eight of them were previously segregated in special schools with curricula for children with light mental disabilities. Most of them were men before reaching the age of 20 who did not have children yet; there were also several recent fathers and three middle-aged Roma. All but one were coming from one extended family. The first woman to join (and only one during the first round of the bible school) was a daughter of a preacher. Also one young Roma from another family joined and he was followed by his brothers and father. Since 2008 the school had 16 students, out of which 8 ended the three-year study cycle with a diploma and other seven without it.

Figure 9: Graduates of the 2006 – 2009 Bible school course;
Source: web pages of the congregation

The number of students was copying the number of the members of congregation, reaching its peak with 26 students in 2010 and diminishing since 2011 following disagreements within the congregation which finally led to its split and leave of the pastor. During the first three years two students left the school for two semesters, but then joined the school again. In the second round which began in 2009 already 24 students were attending the school, in 2010 it was 26 students, out of which four were women.

The session were held on Saturday every two weeks, in the same room as the religious services. They combined Charismatic theology in lessons named "Gods intention, The propagation of the gospel, Liberty in Jesus," with detailed Bible study in lessons especially dedicated to the individual gospels, followed by seminars on partner relations, family budgeting, and courses in pastoral and preaching techniques or work with children. The school run in winter and summer semesters, and during the summer holiday, practices were organized where the students for example learned to evangelize – sometimes during trips abroad, such as evangelizing trips to Roma settlements in Slovakia, Poland or Ukraine. In the course of the year the students worked in the congregation and little by little they would start to be more involved in the organization of the home Bible groups and reli-

gious services in the surrounding towns. If they wished, they could spend almost every day of the week with the congregational activities.

How did the Bible school lessons look like? The one I was admitted to was very similar to a normal service with an invited speaker. There were about ten students sitting on chairs and a lecturer in front, frontally teaching and sometimes drawing on flip-chart. The other lessons I had the chance to listen to seem to have had the same setting, with the pastor Waleri or an invited speaker in the front. The discussions during the lessons quite often related to some current developments, but the lectures were following the prescribed curriculum.

How were the student encouraged in learning? During one of the lecture of the Bible school a teacher started with a prayer for the students:

> "Thank you that you have only good gifts to us. Even this Bible school is a good facility from you. And it is you wish that we learn your Word. It is your wish that we get to know the Lord, Jesus Christ, through your word. Therefore animate our spirit through your spirit. Let us understand what we need and what is necessary for our life. We pray to you and we give thanks to you in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (Bible school 24. 10. 2009)

He would motivate the students through religious references, similar to the ones already presented: that they should get to know Jesus. But he would also add that it is the God's will that they learn about him.

Learning to humble – a breakdown of the theory of autonomy

In my research I was interested in how the school coped with the topic of autonomy. Based on my readings and preliminary fieldwork, the working title of my dissertation had been "Learning without submission: How evangelical Roma become religious leaders". The focus was on how the Bible school, which I wanted to research, would teach people who would have a very "egocentric" concept of identity and who would oppose non-kinship authorities and hierarchy. I think I had good reasons to do so, based on my readings of anthropology of Roma, and their conversions. I also expected the Bible school would strive for empowering

the Roma, as I thought happened in Pentecostal and Charismatic missions elsewhere. It shocked me when I was listening to the recordings of the Bible school and I heard the most important teacher, who was a founder of the mission promoted the idea, that the marginalization of the students, is a test of faith, so they should perhaps reconcile with the destiny. He drew an analogy between the situation of early Christians in Asia Minor and the recent situation of Roma in the Czech Republic:

> "Practically they were like homeless. They would not profit from human rights. They were discriminated against, socially humiliated. They were not protected by laws. (…) And now my question to you. The discrimination you are suffering in your country, do you rejoice about it? Do you understand it as a test of your faith? Because it is not a thing of two or three weeks, it might go through all your life." ((some of the attendants responded "possibly yes", but in a quite unconvincing way)) "Maybe you are all fine. But where you feel you don't have the same rights as the others, you don't have advantages: can you then say it is a test of faith? I accept it. What do you say?"

In terms of empowerment, the preacher did just the opposite to what Freire had in mind when he wrote Pedagogy of the oppressed (2000). Instead of learning about the oppressive structures in order to liberate, the oppression was to be, according to the preacher, accepted without questioning, because it was the will of God.

This sense of being chosen for the lowest place in the society was fostered by the framing of humbleness as being a divine principle, which was done by another teacher:

> "Humbleness is a divine principle. Unfortunately men have lived this principle badly for hundreds of years. To be humble does not mean your disintegration. And not only women should be humble in relation to their men, but every human being, and Christian in advance of all other things, must be humble. He must be humble towards his employer, you have to be humble towards your pastor and elders, you have to humble before the state authorities, and it is exactly the divine order. Because if you don't do

> so, then the chaos arises. Who would work if we all were directors? To humble means to stand at the place which is designated for you."

Instead of becoming masters of their lives, as the thesis by Williams suggested, the Roma converts were supposed to reconcile with their position in the society, and give up all their individual ambitions in the name of a divine principle of humbleness. The social hierarchy, where the Roma were most of the time at the bottom, was remade as just, because this was the way how the world is organized, and God loves both the directors and the subordinates. If they were born and raised as subordinate within the Czech society, it was because it was the plan of God for them, and they were supposed to accept it.

They partly did. Some of them would be deeply convinced that their misery had a meaning. Six months later Kolman had a first regular employment in his 40s: he toiled on a three-shift basis in a metal-processing factory working with heavy angle grinder removing rests from bronze castings. He would come home absolutely exhausted with particles of bronze itching and burning in his arms and face. His female boss was bullying him (and what was more the boss was female which he felt humiliating), and his work had no economic rationality, because he would get paid almost the same amount if he was on social benefits. Despite all that he would bear it, together with two of his fellow "brothers" with whom he worked, claiming that this was a divine test on him, and he must hold on.

During another lesson the teacher inculcated the students with a hierarchical thinking, placing on the top the pastor of the congregation, and the rest subordinate to him. He supported the hierarchies with parables from Bible and formed the life of the pastor and the congregation. There was a hierarchy of the disciples according to their vocation, and a hierarchy of apostles with Peter as the main figure. The students were placed on the lowest level of the hierarchy, whereas the pastor was labelled an apostle, the highest, and likened to Saint Peter, who was the highest-ranked apostle. I examine this particular situation and Bible school lesson in the chapter eight when I inquire into the ways in which the ethnic-religious leadership was constructed, but here I would like to point out that submission and the acceptance of inferior role was again presented as a divine principle, the natural order of things.

My inquiry in the autonomy was ruined – there was a simple answer that Roma are not taught in a way that would respect their need for self-government. Regardless of their cultural or personal preference hierarchical thinking is inculcated in them, they were taught to be happy about taking part in a game they had no control over. They accepted it, because they kept coming to the school. This is a perfect example of a breakdown, a situation when my expectations were not met, a situation which did not make sense.[26] Agar (1982, p.783) claims this kind of breakdown is a needed part of ethnographic practice. Breakdowns bring about problems which are to be solved by ethnographies; through the process of resolution the ethnographies should bring accounts which eliminate the breakdowns. The problem of ethnography in 1982 was that the ethnographers resolved the breakdowns and lost consciousness of them, because they saw them as problematic. From the phenomenological point of view, however, resolving the breakdown is successful understanding, not a problem (1982, p.785). Ethnography is a process of moving from breakdown through resolution to coherence. Coherence is achieved

> "For an observer, coherence is achieved when an observed 'expression' (performed with or without communicative intent) is seen as part of a larger 'project,' or what we will now begin to call a plan. Coherence, then, is achieved through an account of an act in terms of its relations to goals, frames in focus, or both as they interrelate in a plan." (Agar 1982, p.786)

What was then the project of the Roma in Márov, of the conversion, of the autonomy? I found two possible solutions (which I will discuss in detail below), the first is a short one which explains why they perhaps accepted this submission and kept coming – because through submission they would become free under the Holy Spirit. The second explanation is much more complex. What if the students just did not care, because there were other things they were more interested in? I started to ask what these things could be, what was the Bible school bringing to them? I deal with this second answer throughout the rest of this chapter. This breakdown also made me reconsider the scope of my inquiry and to start looking

[26] I am indebted to Manuela Cantón Delgado who brought this point to me.

at the autonomies in the everyday lives of the Roma in Márov, and then try to lay the autonomies gained through the conversions on the background of the everyday extra-congregational life.

First I will elaborate a shorter explanation for the fact the Roma students continued attending the classes although their sense of self-mastery and self-governance was threatened. I will rely here on the analysis of the modes of subjectivation of Born-again Christians in Nigeria made by Ruth Marshall (2009). She starts with the assertion that becoming born-again is not a free decision of a free agent, but a program which involves subjectivation. Subjectivation refers both to be subjected to and to the program and to be a subject of it. The process leads to a new self-knowledge that brings new protection, self-mastery, spiritual empowerment and a style of life. Obedience, according to her, is not a function of the power of a pastor over his sheep, but a result of self-examination and inner disciplination (ibid 129). The "Born-again evangelical program has as its principal object the transformation and control of individual conduct and the creation of particular type of moral subject: it is a form of prescriptive apparatus" (ibid 131). The conversion presents "personal empowerment through an ethics of submission" (ibid: 142), marked by performative expressions/acts such as "crucify yourself and allow the Spirit of God to possess and control you". It is important to note, however, that this submission is not a submission to the laws of any kind of authority, including the God. Rather it is Pauline "messianic life" which involves the imperative that the strength can be achieved through weakness, and that being a slave of the Messiah is the vocation of all vocations: "For he that is called in the Lord being a slave is Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is slave of the Messiah" (1 Cor 7:22) cited in (Marshall 2009, p.143). This empowerment through weakness and submission to the Holy Spirit is realized through practices which Marshall coins "acts of faith" and "words of faith". They construct a power which exceeds the individual and allows him to experience the new life by obeying the rules and norms prescribed by the doctrine (ibid: 145). These practices, when performed properly, bring about also unsuspected powers to the individual. Marshall points out that this is quite a novelty in the mission, the centrality of the subject who works on his own to bring about spiritual states which then influence his behaviour. The modes of subjectivation practiced by the Born-again Christians

are new modes of individuation: through the submission to new codes and doctrines the subject is liberated. The new person is a messianistic vocation of the old one; however the new person, or "new creation", is not an identity, but a mode of experiencing the world. (ibid: 163). The submission of the Roma students in the Bible school, or acceptance of the loss of sovereignty can be, according to this theory explained by the Pauline "strength through weakness" and by the fact that by submitting to an order one can gain freedom. Marshall still does not equal the submission to the Holy Spirit with the submission to an authority, and I shall come back to this point in the eighth chapter. However I believe that such an explanation is partly fitting, and that the experience of being part of the program was important for the attendance of the Bible school, but also for the participation in whole range of activities which the congregation life brings about.

My second explanations of the acceptance of the submission returns back to the classroom, but also to the extra-congregational lives of the students. I want to answer a simple question: What were the Roma students interested in when they attended the Bible school? I tried to forget for a while what I was told about the school by the missionaries, and tried to find out why Roma would want to visit it. In this sense I used the program of Peter Gow (2006) whom I already introduced in the chapter on method. He came to Pir Indians in Amazonia several decades after missionaries left them, and it was interesting for him that they did not talk about their conversions. He found out that they were not interested in conversion, but in education in Summer Institute of Languages, which the missionaries were running. I am not saying here that Roma in Márov did not convert truly, and that they were interested only in the education *instead* of conversion of submission. I just want to recall that conversion was not perhaps the *only* thing they were interested in.

Miscellaneous Bible school teaching methods

The teachers of the school were exclusively German in the first round, and they had consecutive interpretation during the classes.[27] When I visited the school and reviewed the recordings from the classes what I could see in general was a mix of very diverse teaching techniques and strategies. The basic method used by all teachers was telling of biblical stories, which were often actualized for contemporary contexts. The students were called on to read excerpts from Bible, but most of the time only one of them would read.[28]

This teacher had previously worked in Africa: his lessons were extremely interactive, and he would give a plentiful of examples from popular culture. The illustrative nature of the tuition would be supported by teaching aids, such as a map, where he would show the students where the apostle Paul travelled. At the same time he would not assume the students have lot of competencies, so he explained how the borders of the states look like on the map. He supported the tuition by his (quite general) knowledge of Roma life and institutions, such as that Roma give nicknames to each other and use them as the identity marker. There was a lot of space for realization given to those who would have visited the school for longer time and would be more skilled: they could excel in discussions, or respond questions. But the teacher would be very careful when someone would not reply correctly – he would praise the student for his response anyway, and in the same time tell the correct response himself. He was also giving a sense of ownership and management of the classes to the students, so he would ask them when he should do the break, whether he should finish the current part of the class, or they want the break immediately. The case of the German teacher was one of very interac-

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[27] It should be mentioned that the interpretation was strongly mediated, because the interpreter was very much involved with the local Roma, and would therefore adjust the message according to the public. So for example instead of saying non-Roma, he would translate into Czech as *Gadjo*.

[28] There were several more students who could read very well, especially the ones who had been raised in a children home. However they would not read most of the time – the reader was the junior preacher, and through his exceptional activity during the classes he would also build his religious capital.

tive tuition which tried to accommodate largely to the learning needs of the students, without assuming previous knowledge. It was interesting that even in the setting with the consecutive interpretation he would be successful in it, given his exceptional teaching abilities. He would also animate the students through their belief. And finally he would use some knowledge of the traditions of Roma – or what he supposed the traditions would be.

Thirdly, in the next round of the school a Czech teacher was also be present. The lack of interpreter gave him the opportunity to teach more classically, frontally, than the German teachers whose tuition would be permanently interrupted by the interpretation. He would also focus more on the active reading skills of the students, so for example while reading the bible excerpts he would ask the students to memorize many details from it, and then he would build the picture from the excerpt again with the students in discussion. But apart from this, his classes were not very lively, neither were they accommodated to supposed Roma tradition, or knowledge at hand. He would actually give a standard class he had given in different white, middle class congregations of Unitas Fratrum, so it would be very demanding, full of unknown terms and examples whose understanding supposed a lot of preparation. He would use contexts of which the Roma students would have no knowledge, for example when he was talking about rivalry, he mentioned as an example that once he was in Oxford, he was instructed not to talk about Cambridge. The students did know neither about Oxford nor about Cambridge. He would use complicated terms and concepts, such as the following:

> "So now we move to the respective steps in the biblical explication. Exegesis is explication. Four steps of biblical exegesis. So we research the context. It is literary and historical. And I will stay at that. So we determined the text, we research the text. Then we should compare the translations, and do synoptic comparison. You know what is synoptic, we have four gospels out of which Matthew, Mark and Luke have a similar structure. When you read the gospels you can see that they all write in a similar

> manner, maybe put little different stories. But the structure of the gospels is the same."[29]

Despite the complicated tuition the students would like it. Through the class, the teacher would not only teach biblical explanations, but also, and very importantly, he would transmit the cultural capital of his common white middle-class students, and of his own. The students would learn about opera houses, Oxford and Cambridge, places they would never visit; but the possession of the knowledge about these places would help them in passing as middle class.

What some of my informants articulated many times, was their lack of formal education. Not the type of education for better opportunities at the labour market, but general erudition, which would allow them to live and pass as white middle class. One illustrative example is a man who liked to be called Engineer. He mastered the art of passing as middle-class Gadjo by maintaining contacts with Gadje and learning about their lives. Once he saw I was asking his cousin about some vocabulary in Romani, he told him that in exchange for each Romani word I should teach his cousin that word in English. He said Roma must learn from Gadje, and not only that the Gadje come to steal from the Roma. The learning strategies of this man so much reminded me of the family stories about my own grandfather, who, being working class electrician started to repair phones of the higher class, and as he was very sociable and curious, he would get to know the higher-class habitus and erudition from his clients. The classes of the Czech teacher were actually giving the Roma students the same opportunity, of acquiring cultural capital of the middle class. They also talked in terms of status that they are students, and it was an asset for them. Furthermore they were also supposed to observe a neat dress code. All this helped them to develop a middle-class like habitus.

[29] Bible school 13. 3. 2010; 61:3

Use of the knowledge: in the search of respect

What was the Bible school knowledge good for? It never secured a paid position for any of the students. The use of the knowledge acquired in the Bible school was in most of the cases limited only to the religious contexts of the congregation life. For some, the knowledge of the theology was a means of getting respected, included in the group. One example for all: Kolman was already in his 40s, and he did not like the fact young Roma from the family and from the congregation would not pay him enough respect. He considered himself senior, but in many cases he would be put at the same position, as 20-25 years old guys. One of the reasons for this was that he did not have grandchildren yet. In the life before the conversion he was used to be respected, and he would tell numerous stories of how he terrified people by the use of violence and threats, so they feared him. One such a story was that some years ago he came to a beer garden and sit in a plastic chair. By that time his weight was 207 kilos, and the chair broke under him. He fell on the ground and the people around would start laughing at him. He stood up and screamed at them: "All of you have two minutes to pay and leave" and they paid and left and Kolman stayed there only with his friends. Another story was about a man whom Kolman tortured, because he was not respectful to him enough.

When I discussed with Kolman my will to visit the bible school and learn more about the gospel he told me that I should read the Bible at least little bit and then I will be surprised how everyone will note how well I understand it and how much I am into it. They would start to pay respect to me. Another day I would see him in a biblical debate recalling biblical stories and linking them with Christian movies and other stories about outstanding Christians in the world. It was Kolman's active phase, when he joined the congregation again after half year of break, and he was very much involved in all the activities, such as preaching in the missionary points or serving food to homeless. He would come to the people with biblical stories, discussing and talking about it all the time. This way he would get reintegrated in the congregation gaining his religious status again. One of the uses of the erudition gained through the bible school was acceptance within the community of believers. Kolman, who was very much in search of respect, would strive to

get respected through his bible knowledge. The conversion and knowledge of theology would help him gain the respect he could not gain through other means, for example acquiring seniority through kinship, or through the use of physical violence.

The value of education and schooling in Márov

In order to find out what value the biblical education could have for the students, I need to look at the value of common education among Roma in Márov. So far I have been talking about education and learning. By education I understand teaching activities of institutions which have as the main aim increasing the knowledge of the students – learning. By schooling I mean the very situation of the students towards the educational institution, of being schooled, but not necessarily with the intention that they learn something. Schooling without education occurs mainly during the obligatory period, when worse students still have to be in class, but are excluded from the learning process. In this sense we could talk about schooling with education as warehousing (Wacquant 2000) difficult children.

Schooling was a very unpleasant experience for most of my Roma informants, and they would never talk about what they learned in school. The only unsolicited accounts I got during my fieldwork were complains about physical punishment they would receive in the special school for mentally handicapped children they visited. The most important thing about the school was how the children feel in it and how they are treated. A mother would go and threaten a teacher even with physical violence if her child complained about her, and the quest for safe and pleasant environment was stronger than the aspirations of what kind of educational attainments the children should have.

Ruba's daughter has long had learning problems in the primary school. She was at the second grade and she was already repeating, but her notes at the end of the year were very bad and she was supposed to be re-examined after the summer holiday. Instead of the examination her teacher sent her for psychological testing to decide whether she was capable for studying in the standard elementary school, or she should study in a special school for children with mental and health disabilities. The test did not give a clear answer, because her score was 79, which is the

boundary, the highest possible IQ for a child to be considered for the special school (with 80 she would not be considered). The low score in the psychological testing (called WISC) was inconsistent with the everyday life interactions with children and adults, where she acted with no difficulty. As a 11-year old girl she was able to hold extensive conversations with adults and not only look after, but also take care and educate her younger siblings. The score was not telling much about her intellectual capacity and it did not meet the basic criteria for LMD diagnostics, which should prove that the child is also performing substandardly in his or her "natural habitat".[30] What I did observe, however, that every time the talk with her came to the issue of her education, she would lower her eyes, and refuse to reply a question, even though the setting would be a very pleasant one, and this would be only a part of a lively discussion with her. I can only guess that she would employ this type of non-response in the classes and during the testing as well.

Another prerequisite for the transfer from the standard elementary school to the special school was an informed consent of the parents: if the parents wanted to keep the child in the standard elementary school although the children's test scores are very low, they could. The girl's teacher in the standard school was positive about the fact that she leaves to the special school, but still, going to the special school was seen among the local Roma as something which should be rather avoided, so there was no clear priority. Unexpectedly it was the mother who requested that her daughter was sent to the special school. The father was against, but he was not the one who kept the everyday contact with school. Although the mother from the first sight could be seen as manipulated by the standard primary school teacher who said it was better for her daughter to go to the special school, it was not the case: at other occasions the mother showed criticism about the teacher. I think she followed the interests of her child: the girl would escape from the teacher who supposedly did not like her (wanted her to leave to the special school), and also she would go to the same class in the special school with her cousin who suffered a strong hearing impairment, and who was her best friend.

[30] For in-depth discussion see (Lábusová et al. 2010).

The girl finally went to the special school and stayed there, as she was happier there than in the standard school which she visited before, and also because of the fact the transfer back to the school was not possible anymore.[31] What was important about the school for her and for her mother was that it was similar to the common habitat where Roma children were growing: among their cousins who are their best friends, and without forcing the children to doing things they consider unpleasant. The lower number of children in the class in the special school also allowed for more interactions between the children and less intrusion from the side of the teacher. These were the main reasons why preference was given to the special school. The main value was not in learning, but in safe and pleasant schooling, which also suited the reference of the former teacher to warehouse the difficult children in the special school.

Discussion: The value of codeswitching

I did not come to know any Roma in Márov, who would be able to make a decent living thanks to his/her education, except for Waleri.[32] He travelled with his parents when he was child and studied the state school only for four months. Then, when he was in his middle age, he converted to Pentecostalism and graduated at a missionary school in Germany. Since then he was supported by a German missionary organization to evangelize Roma. While no-one's education had led to good job, some kinds of education were valued. Especially the ability to employ local West-Bohemian dialect in encounters with the *Czechs.* It was highly valued when someone was able to talk well, meaning both the use of the local West-Bohemian dialect of the Czech language, and also a "learned talk", and it was

[31] The special school was following a curriculum for children with light mental disability, and its director denied to teach the girl according to the curriculum of the standard school (although it was the school's legal obligation to do so on request). So even if the girl wanted to leave the school and transfer back to the standard school it would not be practically possible, as she would fall behind her former classmates too much.

[32] I am sure there were some, for example there was one Roma lawyer, but I never met his as he was from different family. Roma from the families I stayed with avoided using his services.

perceived not only as an inherited gift, but also a competence which could be acquired by education.

Darina was one of the several Roma (and non-Roma) women in the larger family, who were employed in the state sector, either as teaching assistants in pre-school, or at post office – the only ones who had decent employment with unlimited contract. Darina was a tall woman in her 40s, teaching assistant in a pre-school, mother of four children, and grandmother of four as well. She always was very discreetly dressed, and acted in a very delicate way, but she would also know to shout when something was going on. At home she used the Romani ethnolect of Czech with Romani accents, lengthening of vowels, specific intonation, and also strong and high voice. For a person who did not know her she would fulfil the stereotype of a noisy Gypsy woman who does not speak Czech very well, and her noisy performance would overwhelm her discreet behaviour. I considered her language an unconscious first-language contamination.

Once I had the chance to go shopping with Darina, and it was not a common shopping, but a purchase of a wedding dress for her daughter. What I heard in the wedding-dress shop shocked me, because Darina performed in a way which was completely new for me. She walked in and started talking with the shop attendant in Czech with the local West-Bohemian dialect with no traces of the Romani ethnolect of Czech whatsoever, not only regarding the accent and intonation, but also syntax and phrases. It was there where I learned that in her case the Romani ethnolect was a vernacular language, a language code; and she was able to completely switch the codes. She was able to speak both as a "loud Gypsy" and as a common working-class lady from Western Bohemia.

I had already seen codeswitching with Kolman who in most of the situations spoke West-Bohemian Czech, but when he was in a group of Roma road workers who spoke loudly in the ethnolect, he would join them and switch the codes, changing his intonation and accents. This practice was in accordance with Woolard (1985), a sociolinguist who criticized the "reproduction theorists", mainly Pierre Bourdieu, of putting too much emphasis on the role of formal institutions on reproducing the cultural hegemony. While Bourdieu would see "vernacular or non-authorized performances (as the) result from the absence of constraint"

(Woolard 1985, p.743), Woolard presented counterexamples showing that "it is as important to produce the correct vernacular forms in the private, local arenas of the working-class neighbourhoods or peasant communities as it is to produce the official form in formal domains".[33] Kolman was able to do so. But it was only thanks to Darina when I understood, and fully acknowledged her capacity of codeswitching. In her daily life she was adhering to the vernacular form in a society that inverted dominant value hierarchy. Her vernacular practices were productive, "not merely reproductive, that they arise not from a mere bending to the weight of authority, but are paradoxically a creative response to that authority, mediated by the oppositional value of solidarity" (Woolard 1985, p.745).

She was a living example of learning to talk different language codes. Once Darina's husband told me it was him who taught her how to speak properly, but it is more probable that she learned the local Czech code while working with *Czechs* at a desk in supermarket and later in the pre-school. She was able to use the local dialect and manipulate in the outside world with it in different contexts. Among other Roma the language competences were also valued, and, when there was once need for a representative in negotiations with the municipality, the heterogeneous group which was asked to delegate a spokesperson chose the one who could best speak Czech. Other Roma would also be able to learn different language codes, or languages as adults: German, Sinti, or Vietnamese by working side by side with the respective language interlocutors.

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[33] Woolard's main argument is based in her own research of status and solidarity of Catalonian speakers: "In Barcelona, in spite of the institutional dominance of Castilian, the use of Catalan evoked significantly more positive valuations along the axis I have called status, from both Catalan and Castilian listeners. The very same speakers were judged to sound more intelligent, cultured, leaderlike, self-confident, and hardworking when speaking the marginated language, Catalan, than when speaking the official state language, Castilian." (Woolard 1985, p.741) Woolard's finding was at odds with the "reproduction theorists" who would look only at the formal institutions as the reproducers of hegemony; however, she explains that it was thanks to their domination of the economic structure of Catalonia, this was possible: "such authority is established and inculcated not most importantly through schools and other formal institutions, but in primary relations, face-to-face encounters, and the invidious distinctions of informal, everyday life" (Woolard 1985, p.742).

Darina's husband, Forta, was also a good speaker and he was respected for that ability. He would not preach, but he did talk a lot in the church, and he would often lead the prayers.[34] Everyone would like him to moderate the wedding parties, especially the moment when the financial collection was made for the new couple between all the participants. Competence of the moderator is to raise funds and in the same time keep everyone entertained. While he was aware of his abilities, he would never talk himself at a court, and discouraged everyone to do so. He mentioned this also after a trial he and his wife won in April 2011. According to him they won thanks to the fact they did not say anything and only let the lawyer speak.[35]

The prestige of the office of lawyer was quite high among the Roma, not because the lawyers would be wealthy and powerful, but because they were able to change seemingly lost situations to their favour – manipulate the world with their talk. The Roma would say "*džanel te vakerel*" or "*džanel te vakerel le manušenca"*, he knows how to talk to people, how to behave. It was another occurrence of a special language code, one which speaks in the language of institutions; and they recognized the lawyer's competence is not inherited, but comes through the education. The education in law was valued, but what was valued in the education of the lawyer was not his knowledge of the laws, but his ability to employ the language code of the laws and courts and by doing so, effectively perform in the world.

In sum, the value that Roma give to education in the case of code-switching would not derive from the acquired title (symbolic capital), or skill or knowledge, which would be directly applicable in job market. Mastering different languages and language codes was acknowledged as a very valuable competence, which

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[34] These were not formalized as in the Catholic Church, but were spoken in public and required lot of presentation and improvisational skills, and training. They were quite close to polite, ornamental phrases said in Romani to a company.

[35] In another trial I could see, and it was also explained to me by Forta, that the strategy to say nothing or the least possible at the court was quite useful: those who lied and kept talking at the court got finally trapped in the inconsistence of their testimonies.

could help one to get a job, earn some extra in the informal economy or through criminal activities, give political relevance to one's claims or get oneself from problems. Schooling was not a means of acquisition of these competences; it would be through adult informal and everyday education and encounters, that Roma would learn these essential skills. This concept was not present at all in the case of children. However, the Roma were also aware of the fact some codes, such as the "lawyers language" or "learnt speech code", can be acquired by the formal education system.

Conclusion

While adult Roma converts to Charismatic Christianity in the bible school in Márov were apparently motivated enough to learn, this was ascribed by the religious leaders exclusively to their love for Jesus and willingness to learn about him through the bible and the bible school. The vicious circle has not been broken. I showed the idea that unscholarized people do not learn is not empirically sustainable, and that the Roma in Márov, before and after the bible school, have been learning lot of new things in informal contexts. I touched upon the value of education in the school and in the everyday practically oriented life, and claimed Roma in Márov did value education, especially the ones who allowed to speak into the world, change the course of events, and manipulate. The motivation for learning which I saw among the Roma students of the bible school was also a drive towards acceptance and uphold of one's part of the social contract, no matter how marginal the ascribed position was. But it was also a good way to acquire general erudition, what they would themselves conceptualize as language code, which could help the students to be able to act as a middle class Gadje.

The Bible school offered them for the first time in their life the choice to attend a school (which was not obligatory), and the chance to receive education instead of schooling[36], which would help them to manipulate the outside world through the

[36] Their only experience from the state education system was actually only about schooling, but not about learning. In this sense they were autonomous learners. In my dissertation project I took the mentions of autonomy through conversion (Williams 1991; Fosztó 2009) which reso-

use of "learned talk code". In this way the Bible school was actually helping the local Roma to resist relations of domination. While some of the missionaries were telling them that through the conversion they would get to be strangers in the surrounding society which was corrupt, they actually wanted to be included into the society, and the Bible school served them well in this regard. It would offer them both ways of acquiring respect within the community of learners, which was not based on kin, but also competencies in the outside world. The modes of subjectivation practiced by the Born-again Christians are new modes of individuation: through the submission to new codes and doctrines the subject is liberated. On other hand there were many more things in the Bible school which they could be interested in. This was not an instance of autonomy as independence from power relations and total lack of subordination, or autonomy in the sense of learning to write just by oneself. But it was an instance of autonomy in the sense of using the school for own purposes.

I do not want to drop the thesis of autonomy through conversion altogether, but I learnt that it is also necessary to involve the extra-missionary and extra-congregational situations. This is why I inquired into the autonomies in the everyday lives of the Roma in Márov, in order to gain the context for inquiring into the autonomies gained through the conversion.

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nated with the general preference of Roma for autonomous work and expected the Bible school would employ some special techniques to deal with the autonomous subjects. However, this was not the case, the school was not designed in any way to give a sense of autonomous self-education to its students.

6. Autonomies in the Everyday Lives of Roma in Márov

In this chapter I inquire into the extra-congregational life of the Roma in Márov, and in particular of the converts with whom I spent most of the time, in order to learn what the autonomies in their lives were before or apart from the conversion. I focus especially on instances of individual autonomy, of which the respect for decision is the principal act of establishing the autonomy of others. I show how children are socialized in this regard. Then I turn to review various forms of oppression, and among them the economic oppression and poverty. I review the economic strategies through different forms of formal and informal work, involvement in sex-industry and specific practice of "fucking up Germans". Then I turn to strategies of dealing with economic scarcity with a special focus on the ways to maintain autonomy in the situation of poverty. Autonomy in relationships and among family members is discussed. Finally I focus on the escapes from poverty and dependence which aim at restoring recognition, in the discussed case the status of a rational consumer. This chapter is not self-contained and it is meant as an overview of different contexts of autonomies in the extra-congregational life.

Autonomy of Individuals

The respect for individual decision

It was a very long weekend in mid-August 2011 when Forta's daughter was getting married. By that time Forta was not in a very good financial condition, he was, however, able to get funding for a very opulent event with more than 150 guests. The ceremony was held in the municipal office, and after presenting themselves at the main square with a traditional Gypsy music band, the newlyweds left in a chaise to a village where the ceremony took place. Some of the guests were carried to the village by bus, others went with their cars, and most of them stayed at the party almost until the morning. Everyone from Forta's household was involved in the organization and worked during the whole night. Three cooks, elderly Roma women were brought, and they worked 24 hours non-stop. I was asked by Forta to drive the guests back home during the night so that nobody had to drive after drinking. It was a long shift for me – I started on Saturday morning

video-taping the bride, than went to the ceremony and to the party in the afternoon, and during the whole night I was driving the guests to their homes. I had several breaks so I could dance (the Gypsy family music group was playing during the whole night as well), I could taste some of the dishes prepared for the feast and entertain myself with the guests. Forta helped me and started driving the guests at two in the morning, because there were too many people, and we finished at nine in the morning on Sunday. I had three hours of sleep and went to the Sunday service, where most of the people absented because of the wedding previous night. In the afternoon I was helping with cleaning after the party and I was also invited to a home prayer for a boy who needed a prayer. Then I went to Forta's place to transfer the recordings from a video-tape to a computer, in order to edit them. It was already quite late and I was terribly tired. I knew that on the next day I need to take a flight from Prague to join my family on vacation, but I did not plan the travel, and I was so trapped by the wedding and everything around that I learned I need to be at the airport in the morning when it was already 12pm and I was two hours' drive away from Prague. I could either drive right then, or have a sleep until 5 am. It was raining. I explained the situation to the men present at Forta's place, and told them I was terribly tired, but that I was going nevertheless. It was a very bad decision and I should have not made it: in the middle of the drive, when I almost fell asleep, I had to stop and have a nap to be able to continue. The interesting thing about it was that although everyone knew I was falling asleep when I was leaving the place, they did not say a word against my plan to drive. They left the decision entirely to me – I was a free actor who decides for himself and it made no sense to prevent me from doing anything, although they were aware it was very dangerous. I knew the people cared for me, they always wanted me to report when I got back home in Prague, when I was leaving. But there was no sign of disagreement or persuasion. But their stance was that my decision is my decision and they must not tell anything against it.

I observed this deep respect for a decision made by an individual in other situations as well. A preacher once said during a service: "I advised him to stay. I take the responsibility for what I said, but he did not have to listen to me – it depends on whether he trusted me and if he recognized the Holy Spirit in my words". This attitude prevents the hypothetical possibility of coercion – according to it individ-

uals are free to choose in every moment; it is perhaps possible to influence someone, but it is he as a free person, who is responsible for the decision. So it is also him who has the ultimate say in the decision making. In other situations there were individuals who just did not dare to discuss or engage in being held responsible for their decisions and actions – they just did what they did, without anyone questioning their right to do so, or the content of the decision. Even between partners in a couple there would be many situations when they would not discuss, just take the decision, leaving clear that the decision should be respected.

Children's decision

The socialization of a child is generally seen as a crucial phase of autonomy development. I focused mostly on the respect for the decision of children, because it caught my attention when comparing it to other ways of upbringing more familiar to me. However, the autonomy of children is a suitable way to present the autonomy of men. Women were not so free to make decisions, they were expected to submit to the needs of the family and minimize their preferences. Children were taken as individuals with agency, developed emotional life and subjectivity. Children were sometimes let to freely decide with whom they preferred to live. They would spend longer periods in the house of their aunt or grandmother if they liked, or when their parents had to move to other city they would be allowed to stay with their relatives and keep going to the same school. In the afternoons even the smallest children would be left free, sometimes leaving the house and playing on the street. There was one young Roma man who since his childhood was spending whole days out of home with the Vietnamese on a nearby marketplace – he learned their language and ran business with them since he was seven years old. His parents just let him do what he decided and he wanted to be on the market when he was a child. Boys would come home late and teenage boys would leave at night despite their parents' disagreement. As far as the love affairs are concerned, the children would also date anyone irrespective of their parents' disapproval.

Generally the parents would not order anything, but sometimes they would forbid things. Small children in Forta's household would be left to entertain themselves most of the time, and the adults would rarely play with them, or teach them or

show. However, they would shout at the children anytime they did something wrong – childish – such as being too loud. Shouting at the children was many times done at random although the children did not do anything wrong. The children were expected to know how to behave and if they did not behave well they would be denoted "no good" (*není dobrej/naláčho)* and punished. Once a 40 year old Roma who had a teenage son was complaining to me about the difficulties he was facing with the son. We were invited by the son to take part in a theft of copper near Márov, and when the father learned he was very angry:

> "In any family you have a black sheep; you know my son is bad. He allies with aliens for a business instead of telling his own father! He never goes with us when we tell him, walks around alone. He has done a lot of stupid things (*blbosti),* and I beat him every time. I love my son, so I have to wallop him (*dořezat*). But since he did such thing I need to wallop my wife as well, and tell them both that this was the last time, or I'll kick them out of the house. Because my wife defends my son and covers him all the time, but he is no good. I better send him to England."

The son was not getting punished for not obeying some given rules, but only ex post because he was not loyal to his family. He should know how to behave, and if he did not, he would be beaten, but not ordered. These expectations were, however, often unknown to the children in case they were just playing and the adults punished them nevertheless.

Values and identities

The most important values connected to individual autonomy were to be respected as a person and the ability to secure the wellbeing and security of one's own family and oneself. There were gendered individual values and expectations, such as that men should not express publicly their emotions towards their partners but that they also should let know their will. A friend once rebuked me that I was adapting myself too much to other people. I was supposed to express my opinions and wishes more openly, according to him. In his eyes I was not making decisions on my behalf, but followed the others' will, and this was not regarded correct.

It seemed important to perform carefreeness in matters involving one's future, such as health, prison, etc. Young boys would like to think about them as violent and carefree fighters who don't fear anything. A young Roma was once attacked by an older and much stronger Roma man. The fight between the two was finally torn apart by other people present, but the young Roma told me that once the older Roma would push him again he would draw a knife and stab him. He would get him and it did not matter to him what would follow, he would not care. Performing carefree violence is also an efficient strategy to win the fight. My friend weighing 45 kilos was once attacked by a group of two non-Roma of 90 kilos and a woman. He was with his girlfriend and her mother. The attackers were clearly superior and when they started to beat his girlfriend and she screamed, he decided to get mad – he purposefully hit his head against the wall to get out of his mind, and then he beat up both men causing them severe injuries such as a multiple fracture of the leg. It was difficult times for him, because the family of his girlfriend considered him useless – he had no work and was gambling – but through this act he gained a reputation and was finally accepted into the family. He also became recognized by the larger community and he was a centre of attention for quite a while. He told me he knew he had to come out of his mind in order to win.

Some people would hide their problems and present them as advantages. One friend was depressed of not finding work, and he started to laze demonstratively and think of the laze as a virtue. There was a young man who was heavily overweight and I heard him several times mentioning how happy he was about his weight. The last way to keep oneself autonomous in extreme scarcity was to change decisions (perhaps several times) without any rational purpose – people would do it and insist on it, although they would change their mind in a few minutes. The counterpart was to respect the will of the person, with no reasoning involved.

Many people scrupulously insisted on keeping tradition or moral code despite the consequences. Forta organized big marriages for his children, although he had no money and he always got into deeper debts because of it. A man would leave a good job as a cook, because in the facility the other employees were not very rigid about food cleanness.

The declared carefreeness (*mange jekh* or *mange jedno*) took place also with people's health. Once I visited a dentist with a group of Roma, and the one who got the worst drill and most of her teeth had to be extracted was telling us afterwards she did not care about her teeth. Her pain had to be terrible, nevertheless she was performing carefreeness about it and about the fact she lost most of her teeth. A friend of mine who once got his livers transplanted did not stop drinking and lost the livers again – he had to go to dialysis then.[37]

I cannot even partially account for the religious life of the Roma who were not part of the congregation. I did have contact with many of them, but we would not discuss religious issues very much. From the weak evidence, there was a weaker intermediation from the part of religious official in the Catholic Church: men and women, and whole families would go to the church on Sunday, light a candle, and pray, however most of them would never visit ordinary masses. They were coming alone and wanted to be alone. The individual relationship with God was not in contradiction withy the charismatic theology of the congregation, it was, however, mainly its communitarian character, which was not preferred by some. There were also people who once converted to the charismatic Christianity, but who later withdrew from the congregation from whatever reasons. They claimed they did not need the congregation in order to become good people, sometimes they would read Bible alone at home, but would not come to the services. In the view of the local Roma preachers these people were to be understood and respected, while in the view of the German Gypsy missionary they did not follow the right direction, as there were just the two poles: good and bad.

There were people who were acting and seen as different to the rest. Especially men and women with a longer experience of institutionalization in children homes, health institutions, and prisons, were acting differently to the rest. These people could be easily recognized from their speech: If someone did not use local Romani ethnolect of Czech, but rather would speak a dialect of Czech, it was very

[37] The *mange jekh* approach applied also to debts – several times I was a witness of a performed carefreeness with regard to non-payment of debts. One of the women was enjoying the fact she was indebted and non-payer as if this was a way to get recognition.

probable this person grew up in institutional care. They would be more active for example in organizing activities for children – taking not only their own ones, but also their neighbour's children to playgrounds or organizing common activities and sports.

Several times I observed something which could be called brotherhood, or perhaps open gathering of men, related either by blood or by occupation. They could be musicians who gathered after a gig with their friend musicians and debated the business. Or it could be male family members gathering in the household of one of them, discussing some important topic. After each party there was an afterparty which sometimes lasted for several days. Men, especially older men, were involved in it, and it was seen as a core of the family. During these gatherings people would talk in Romani.

I was also told about gatherings of the pimps "back then in the old life" when questions of territory and cooperation were debated. The pimps and heads of families recognized and acknowledged each other – relations of mutual respect that were created back then were still active years after when I did the fieldwork. I also found a strong sense of shared identity and righteous and open talk between men with an experience of children home – a shared experience of suffering and re-education, but also of friendships and important things the men learned in the institutions. Young men who were unknown to each other would start listing the different institutions, through which they went, and the friends and enemies. There were common friendships; everyone had a friend from the institution.

Oppression, relationships and addictions

Autonomy is often equalled with independence. In the following subchapter I review what were the Roma in Márov oppressed by, and what they could, then, be liberated from to become independent. The first type of oppression was related to illness, health and mental problems and lack of education. There were always relatives of the congregation members, or the members themselves including the children, who suffered severe illnesses. Just before I moved to Márov, two older family members related to the congregation died, and it was not taken as a random event, but as a sign of bad times coming to the family. A sister of Waleri was suf-

fering severe illness and was just about to die; other relatives in different parts needed attendance and were undergoing serious health problems. Each illness and hospitalization of a family member required mobilization of resources and people. When Tubi was hospitalized in Prague, there were weeks when a van travelled from Márov to Prague three times a week, full of family members to be with Tubi. When there was no money for the travel I was expected to attend the family member hospitalized in a central hospital in Prague. Parents would travel with their children for different health checks and interventions to Prague as well. In summer 2011 the one-and-half year old son of Ruba died after being hospitalized since his premature birth and unable to breath independently. Ruba had another child, a daughter, who was also prematurely born with a weight about 500 grams. The serious health problems of many people overlapped with their conversions, and I will develop the topic of healing and conversions in more detail later. It suffices for now to remark that only the stories of successful recovery were pushed to the surface.

Not only the health problems or incurable diseases, but also curses were present. Karoro once left pregnant Marika and their three children and had an affair with another Roma woman – who got pregnant as well. After some time her mother came to Marika and asked her to pay for the interruption for the child Karoro and the other Roma woman conceived. Marika told her she would not give any money, it was not her baby! The mother got angry and cursed Marika – she wished the child Marika was carrying dies. Marika cursed the other (illegitimate) child to die as well. There was already the curse on Marika and she subsequently lost several children. There was no cure to the curse, and she was left with a high probability that every next child conceived would die. The disease and curse intertwined.

Other form of dependency connected to health was the mental capacity. While lot of Roma children would, after failing in a socio-culturally biased test, be incorrectly coined as mentally ill or at least retarded by the authorities and educated in special schools designed for mentally handicapped children (more on this in the chapter on Bible school), I met with cases of people who were not self-sufficient due to low mental capacity. These people were not recognized as dependent by the authorities, and were not assisted properly either in their subsistence or for

example in legal issues that concerned them, which could have fatal consequences. A friend of mine was condemned to (conditional) sentence as a result of a situation that arose from him being racially attacked. I mobilized a group of good lawyers from Prague to get involved in case the first instance court's decision is not favourable, and the case seemed to be clearly on his side. When the first instance decided against him, he was asked by the judge if he wanted to appeal against the judgement to the second instance court. He refused and was eventually condemned. I was present at the court hearing and carefully checked with him what his understanding of the situation was, and he thought he was being asked whether he wanted the court to continue, and he said no, because he did not like the court. He was, however, not replying to the question whether he wanted to appeal or not, and although we carefully instructed him to appeal in case he was condemned, he thought that was not the situation when he was supposed to say yes. Within the legal process I learned that he was not able to understand legal text, and he was fully dependent on others in this regard. Functional literacy was in general very low, due to the improper primary education, which I rather term warehousing and schooling instead of education. When we were putting together a project proposal for the congregation to get funding for leisure-time activities with children, the leaders were fully dependent on me in any textual work.

Economic oppression

Inactivity and the lack of motivation are the most pronounced convictions about Roma in the Czech Republic. On one side they are not accurate, because many Roma are employed or working informally or taking care, and although unemployed they are not inactive. On the other side there were times when there was no chance of work, and my friends would be spending their day at home, looking at TV, playing videogames, or surfing internet, and spend their time with a certain melancholy. There were occasional possibilities of some informal economic activity (mostly picking fruits or scrap metal), but not all were such entrepreneurial to constantly look for such possibilities. After some time it became natural to me that some people are at home doing nothing and I did not expect a change. Then they would find a work and their daily routine would change dramatically.

On the other side there were people who were taken also by others as not fit to work or to find the work (meet the preferences of the employers given their physical constitution, health problems, etc.). They would live without making money, entirely dependent on the state welfare system, the family or occasional minor offenses. The subsistence on social benefits would be enhanced by the extreme indebtedness of some which was paralyzing. Once the person or the household had to rely on the social allowance, they entered into state-run system that was by the time of my research moving from welfare to workfare, especially with the introduction of coerced unpaid work. One week of each month the benefit receivers were expected to work for free on public works, in order to get the same amount of money, otherwise their benefits were cut from subsistence to existential minimum. Housing allowance was accessible for them, but it would become also part of the workfare policy (informally, through the negotiations between the Roma and the social welfare officers), so the clients when they applied for the housing allowance would be invited to take part in the unpaid work scheme – the housing benefit was offered as a favour, but in exchange its receivers were supposed to show their motivation and pay back. Once on housing allowance it was very difficult to decide where one would like to live. The municipal housing stock was generally not made available for the housing benefit receivers, and the local welfare office would not pre-finance deposit on the private rental market, which resulted in the drive of the benefit claimants and receivers to substandard segregated housing or temporary hostels, which were known to the local social department as accepting Roma.

I observed the complete dependence of one household on the state during a crisis of the IT system for social benefits connected to the problem of temporary hostels. Kolman with his wife were on social benefits and when they lost their flat they were offered through the municipal social department a place in a temporary hostel run by local Roma family. They moved together with their daughter, their rent was paid from the housing allowance directly to the account of the hostel owner, and they were living in the hostel for almost one year. There were several restrictions, in access, so no one could visit them, or in the use of electronic devices. The owner later allowed visits, but each visitor had to pay 100 CZK for entering the place. Sometimes it was impossible to reach them even when they were at

home, because their mobile phone was not functioning and there was no doorbell or reception. The use of washing machine was charged 100 CZK as well. The family accommodated to the rules and even negotiated a fixed monthly rate for one guest to be able to come more occasionally – the boyfriend of their daughter.

The housing allowance was running smoothly and the owner was getting it every month in time. Then, on Christmas 2011 a hygienic control found out that one half of the rooms in the temporary hostel were run illegally, because they were not approved for accommodation. The owner said she could do nothing and the people were told to move in a couple of days. The social department, which had send them to the hostel, did not offer any alternative housing, so the tenants went to complain to the mayor, but all he could suggest was that the tenants find alternative housing. The wife of Kolman who knew how to pass as Gádži was very successful and found a furnished flat in a decent neighbourhood of housing estate in about two days. The three could instantly move, the owner of the flat did not even request rent which was very uncommon, and there was one additional room for the daughter and her boyfriend – an ideal flat, and they could still pay it from the housing benefits. In the same time there was a transition of the IT database system for the social benefits, and due to technical problems in the transition, the housing allowance as well as the subsistence payment were delayed each month, sometimes by few weeks, or even by the whole months. The predictability of the whole system was ruined – neither the officers, nor the claimants/receivers nor the private owners knew when the money would come. Although the flat owner was receiving the full rent directly from the office to her account, she felt the system was insecure, and terminated the contract.

Kolman and his wife were left homeless, and they did not find accommodation for next six months. Their daughter went to live with the family of her boyfriend, and the couple would be moving from one relative to another relative for extended visits, meanwhile searching for housing. Finally there was no one they could visit. Six months in homelessness, they were offered to rent a destroyed flat in one of the most miserable houses in Márov. Their housing trajectory was governed by the state policies and practices of housing allowance and they could do nothing about it.

What were the viable solutions to the dependence on the state and the extreme poverty? People would ask others to help, many times they would scratch a living thanks to the fact someone gave them food. They would minimize their spending – for example collect used cigarettes. They would also carefully shop and do the basic alimentary supplements just after receiving the social benefits and supply for the whole month, many times it would not suffice, and during the last week or ten days there was nothing to eat in the household. The systems of shopping were sometimes very elaborated: when the sister of Forta came in need, Forta gave her some money, but also said they will have to revisit her plan for the home finance. Forta himself was a great saver. His household counted with up to 14 members. He had a big freezer and a storage space, and he would collect and study the discount leaflets from the local supermarkets. Based on this he would go and buy ten kilos of meat, tens of kilos of flour, large amounts of long-lasting milk, salt, sugar, or oil. This way there would always be something to cook from when the household ran out of money. Observing the way in which several household members invested in the study of the different leaflets could make one interpret the situation as some obsession by consumerism, which it was in the end, but this obsession was clearly started and driven by the economic necessity.

One way out of the shortage was to get involved in crime, but there were lots of risks, and people around us were constantly harassed by the police, and arrested for offenses ranging from drug smuggling through assaults to deceit and involvement in organized crime. Those who came from the prison after several years were unable to find their place in the economy, and got back to the prison again. From the other point of view it was also problematic for a corrected convert who decided to go back to crime, because he would already have lost the contacts needed for serious involvement – not just occasional things.

Most of the time the relatives would have no money to support others, but it was more common between parents and children that there would be some forms of support. The father of Ruba was paying a part of Ruba's mortgage from his pension. Forta would buy cigarettes for the whole household, which could make up to four packs a day. When he left for travel he did not leave any money at home and all his children were suffering nicotine withdrawal.

It was very difficult to get credit and mostly the congregation members who were indebted were in a spiral of indebtedness, so a new loan could not help them. However, some of them were taking new loans, and there were also entrepreneurial parasites who were taking advantage of them – they would promise a loan but only after one signs an expensive life insurance, but the money from the loan never came. They were also approached by other cheaters who, for example, found out that the person inherited some property or money, and needed to get it transferred to him, or when one wanted to buy a used car for a special price. I was involved in various negotiations as a consultant or an interpreter, and we always found out it was a cheat. But I guess I never learned about most of the cheats.

Economic strategies

Factory work and getting back the control

The salary, evaluation and outcomes of the work of the factory workers were not under their influence. They were a part of a very sophisticated socio-technical system of production, and even if they were free in the control of their own performance it meant little in the global view. The workers were not paid on hourly basis, but on the basis of the number of articles or operations they did. One could influence how many pieces he will do, but sometimes the components would not arrive, because the operations before him were slower. Kolman once threatened a colleague that if she was not giving him more components he would beat her, and according to his account this worked, because she put more effort into her work and he was receiving enough articles to make his money. There was an average salary with which a worker could count in case he fulfilled the norm. The norm was calculated from the productivity. If the productivity grew, the norm grew as well, and the price of the piece/operation decreased. So it was not strategic to produce more than the norm, because this way the worker would "spoil the norm" not only for himself, but also for all other workers. This produced a system of expectations, solidarities and constraints which prevented individual workers from increasing their efficiency, but also clearly differentiated who is "with us" and "against us". These were seen as individualist and excluded, mainly the immigrant workers would be talked about as the individualists.

I saw an attempt to dominate the situation of an inferior worker in factory on precarious contract working under a woman he did not respect as authority. After being fired for substitutionary reasons, Kolman explained to me how he was managing the position which was condemned as inferior without any real possibility to influence the content of the work, or income based on efficiency, because the efficiency was not only individual. I am not able to differentiate what part of the story is real and what part he invented in order to come to terms with the reality of powerlessness in the worker position in factory production. However it is a story of taking the course of production and effectiveness in one's own hands, as well as inverting the power relations of boss and inferior worker, or even the oppressive production system and him.

> "I once established a rule in my work. One day my boss, female, who was especially picking on me, reproved me for mistakes on die-castings I made. She claimed it was my fault and the damage would be deduced from my salary. I got mad (and with his outlook of a bouncer with shaved hair, tattooed arms, height of 1,90m and more than 120 kg of weight), I tore off a part of one machine, than I caught a heavy hammer and spin it over my head screaming at the boss that she is a pig and she distributes the lighter work to her favourites and me, a black guy, I am left with the hardest tasks. Everyone stopped their machines and watched me. I screamed at her that I would kill her immediately, that I did not care about anything and would not mind going to prison for several years. Then I sat and calmed down. The boss came to me and apologized, and since then she never gave me the worst work again.
>
> I did a similar thing with the director of the shift, but I did it in secret. I once met him outside on a cigarette, we were alone. I jumped at him, caught him under his neck, thrust my hand between his ribs and threatened him, that if he was not nicer to us, I would send friends at him who would fracture all his bones. The director then treated me with respect, and he always satisfied me, when I needed new boots for example. I also cut another Rom to size when he was trying to control my work and he was not

nice at us. I told him he must be aware who I am, and he should take care, or something could happen to him."

Autonomous work

The autonomy in economic strategies was not so much a matter of choice, but an outcome of unemployment. There were ways how to get money informally – ranging from picking mushrooms, blackberries, beechnuts and other fruit which could then be sold either directly to Germans at the border, or to a store. There was a man who specialized in fishing, several people were collecting waste in Germany and bringing the goods to the Czech Republic. One man was informally running quite a large business – he would travel to waste lots in Germany, stand at the entrance and collect used washing machines, dish washers, fridges and bikes for free from Germans who would otherwise have to pay for the deposit in the regular lot. He would then drive his van to a storeroom near Márov, and distribute the goods to flee market in Prague, and also sell it to Ukrainians who were coming with their vans and driving the goods to Ukraine. I suppose he could make quite a good living out of this, however undeclared – he was a receiver of social benefits with declared zero income. For the mushroom picking, there were several people who were always picking and selling, and they had their own places to pick and sell. On the other side in the mushroom season, when there was a lot of mushrooms, whole families would drive to the forest and harvest the mushrooms. These were exceptional and highly valued incomes. I call it harvesting, because we would drive in a car to the forest using the roads of forest workers not intended for public, and we would stop on a place, look around, pick mushrooms there and then drive to another place. The rest of the mushroom pickers went into the forest on foot, but we were automated. The forest was not the goal – we were there to harvest the mushrooms.

There was one woman who was babysitting Vietnamese children, although this was very unlikely – the Vietnamese often had a Czech senior as a nannie, but in this case there was some previous business between this particular woman and the Vietnamese community and she was trusted. When I met her she was babysitting a two-year old girl on weekends, whose parents just left to Vietnam, a one year old girl and a three-year old girl. She said on the marketplace the children went

from hand to hand, so they did not have even basic knowledge of Czech, and they seemed underdeveloped – for example the three-year old did not know to climb stairs. She would teach them Czech, and care about them with a great love.

The experience from legal declared autonomous work was not very good – there was the problem of economic sustainability of the business, and it was too difficult to set up a business and pre-finance its operation. It was much more likely that the unemployed turn to illegal activities – they would steal metals, pallets or anything else, and get involved in businesses connected to the border. The production and smuggling of amphetamine (crystal) to Germany was still on rise when I did my fieldwork, and some people around me were involved in it, as smugglers. One relative from the local family was imprisoned in Germany for smuggling during my fieldwork. There was also work around the sex-business (which I will present later), I myself was once offered to work as a driver for Czech Roma pimps whose prostitutes the Germans order as escort to their homes. I was said I would make good living, fuck all the time, I would just live.

It was a dream of many to move to Germany, find a work and start getting children welfare. Some did succeed; others would work in German factory, but continued living in Márov. There was one family whose desire was to move to Germany – two sisters had already been living there – one with a German counterpart and several children, the other alone with a newly-born baby. Their two brothers dreamt also about moving. One of them, still living in Márov, started working three shifts in a German factory forty minutes' drive from Márov on contract with an agency. After some time his wife also found work there and they moved, presenting themselves to the other Roma as those who succeeded after they left. The other brother intended several times to work long-term in a German factory, but he was always fired, thus he was unable to migrate.

There were also one or two Roma from the families I knew, who performed music in Germany and made their living out of it. In their life in Márov they would be very careful about what they were playing, and about their public, and there was great rivalry between the musicians and the groups. Some of the musicians would exercise up to several hours a day, with recordings of the best gigs from Youtube, and they would play the most difficult pieces of jazz. In Germany they played

neither jazz nor Gypsy music, but popular songs. Their attitude was similar, in my view, to the harvesting of mushrooms – they were detached from their performance and they were maximizing their profit by decreasing the quality and increasing the quantity. A duo of a guitar and clarinet would visit two nearby German cities (about one hour drive) in one evening, and play at several bars and pubs. Their performance in each pub would take about ten to twenty minutes – they came into the pub, played some two German or Italian popular songs, and then collected money from all the tables. This way they could visit up to eight pubs each evening.

This money was rather alms, than a fee (from an external point of view and without the knowledge that the same men really play great music one would define their performance rather as begging). And the men knew they would make most when playing the popular songs for the shortest time possible. They would not consider the popular songs of inferior quality, but they would not perform them among themselves. It paid well, for example the brother of Ruba started to make his living through the music during my fieldwork. Previously he worked in factories on precarious contracts, but then he coupled with a clarinettist from Slovakia, who already knew the business from Western Europe, and started to make his living exclusively through music. He said that in a worse paid factory position, or in the public cleaning services in the Czech Republic (his income would not even cover the rent of his flat. During summer with the "harvesting" strategy he would make about five times as much) he would make eight thousand crowns per month, but his housing expenses were ten thousand a month, so he would not even cover these. In order to survive, he said, he needed to make at least 14 thousand a month. In summer he counted that with the harvesting strategy each one of the couple would make 50 – 100 EUR for an evening, which would give an average of 1 700 EUR a month (about 45 thousand crowns).

There were several men and women with entrepreneurial spirit, who were looking for opportunities, but they were quite few and most Roma preferred stable employment.

"Fuck up" someone

For the informal sources of income, there was the possibility to "fuck up" (*podělat*) someone, most often a German. The easiest thing was to sell other thing than drugs to the German, or arrange a prostitute for him, who would run away after she was paid. A friend had been involved in both in past. Once he bought nine grams of soda and one gram of amphetamine, and sold it to a German. The German tried it from the top, which was OK, and thought it was a great material. He paid 400 German marks for it and when he realized most of the material is not the drug he came to reclaim several days laterafter. But he was beaten and cut and so he did not return again.

It was once when we were drinking in a gambling room in Márov with a group of Roma, and a man who was playing a machine just won 10 000 crowns (400 EUR). One of the Roma with whom I was drinking, Dodo, suggested we convince the man to play cards with us – last time they did 10 000 crowns like this. They invited the man, Gadjo, to play, but he replied he has to go to work on the next day, and he was leaving. After several more attempts the man agreed he would play with Dodo and another Rom of the group, who was sleeping drunk on the table, but when it came to play the cards, he immediately woke up and got sober. We were fired from the casino, because cards could not be played there, and we went to another one, operated in a cellar by a Vietnamese who was on drugs, I was told. Dodo started to buy drinks to everyone, especially the Gadjo with money, but he himself did not drink at all. After a while the three players agreed on playing *prší* (game played with German cards), and played for about three hours. Dodo dealt most of the games and he would always shuffle the cards (quite visibly) in such a way, that he got the cards ensuring winning. He would give the cards to the other Rom to cut them, and he would deal to the two from one half of the cards and to himself from the other, so that he got the cards he prepared for himself. He also cheated during the play of the cards and discussed with the other Rom in Romani what he should play to help him. The money was paid in such a way that the one who finished with most cards in his hand paid to the winner 10 crowns for each card. In this way Dodo would make 40-100 crowns for each game. When Gadjo lost about 2 000, he would draw the new money note by note

from his backpack, which no one would touch, on the other side Dodo was leaving all the money he won on the table. I was surprised that Dodo was not taking the money away from the table; it had to provoke the Gadjo every time he saw how much he was losing. I asked Dodo, and he told me it was the same for him.

The game did have some dynamics, Dodo was playing the same game all the time, always drawing the same cards, so the Gadjo would be able to point "And now you are going to put the seven, right?". Several times the Gadjo would take the cards and deal them himself and he would sometimes win. Then the cards are taken again by Dodo and the Gadjo started losing again. The Gadjo stood up several times in an attempt to leave, but he always came back with a hope for good luck. In one moment he said he would not continue and started saying things like "You might not be here, you know? We could send you to India." The youngest boy of the group started shouting at the Gadjo that he is a citizen of this country and would not stand this racism. It was a strange situation, because the Gadjo was sitting in a corner of a room, and there were six Roma around him, and me. As if he wanted to get in problems. He continued in the racist talk, and the associate of Dodo started shouting he will kill him and that he is *mulo* (dead). They nevertheless continued in the game, Dodo was telling friendly things to the Gadjo, but just a second later he would very aggressively start shouting at him that he can kill him, using a very strong voice from throat. Again the Gadjo was nearly beaten, but he remained with the group when we moved to another place. One of the Roma said it clearly – this man was *mulo* (dead), he had nothing to live for, and so he did not care about his life.

The rise and the fall of prostitution in Márov

Before proceeding to deal with the issues of prostitution I need to explain a distinction which was sharply made in Márov. Ruba told me once that in the "old times" (approximately until 2002), in the "era" it was popular to "fuck up a German" (*podělat Němce*). The Germans who were coming to Márov were stupid and the girls would just tell them to pay in advance and they left with the money and never came back. It was such an easy money that any girl would stand on the street and negotiate with the Germans, I was told, even from the most "decent"

families. The girl would take the German to a flat or to another place, where her father, husband or policeman would surprise the two before anything happened, and let the German pay ransom from the situation. When people talked about the old times, they sustained a clear and sharp division between the girls and women who messed up Germans and those whom they called hookers and who were having sexual intercourse with the clients. A couple once went with me showing where their girls were standing. The wife would stay on the other side of the road hidden. The girls were taking their clients to a near forest, and she always came there and "messed up" the Germans in disguise of a policewoman. She never played the role of the prostitute.

Until now the prostitution is a part of everyday experience of the inhabitants of Márov and the villages which are closer to the border with Germany. Prostitutes are very visible in the very centre of the city around the main street, they are often staying next to a night bar with casino together with their pimps. They would be on the road intersections, in night clubs around the road, and during the day even at the entrance of the train station – some potential clients were coming by train. Many people would also see the business from their windows looking on the road to Germany, and meet the prostitutes every time they went out or returned back home. Small children would play next to them, and they would be part of the everyday reality. That applies not only to them, but also to their clients – the Germans who are coming alone in cars, and searching through Márov for sex. Women, especially young Roma women, in Márov were approached by the Germans even when they would not visibly offer sexual services. The fact that young Roma women were asked to offer paid sex both by the clients and by intermediaries blurred the lines between professional and occasional prostitution – it could easily happen that a girl who went to a disco would be given an offer. It could also happen to a girl or woman on the street that a car approached her and she was asked for sex. In a report by German TV, also brothers and cousins were offering the Roma girls from their family to the Germans in a car, while begging from them. The Germans in cars frightened some of the mothers so much that they would not let their daughters walk alone outside. There were also cases of children and women having been kidnapped, people whom no one has ever seen since, which worried the parents and women.

The prostitution was close not only in distance, but also socially – people were part of social networks which contained prostitutes (not only the girls who messed up Germans), they were partners of prostitutes, and their friends or their wives were former prostitutes. Once I was leaving with Ruba and his daughter from their house at the margin of Márov on the road to Germany, when we met a young nice Roma girl, under 20 years old, in a chic long dress with big sun glasses on, although there was no sun. They met with Ruba, greeted each other and started to talk, Ruba with a kind smile in his face, and she embarrassed. She called him "uncle". Ruba told her she grew up and she was surprised how big his daughter was. They were looking at each other as if there was something between them, as if they had been lovers, or had something very personal in common. He asked how she was and where was she going, and she said she went to visit a friend. He said, still with a very kind smile, that he lives there across and looks at her often. She got even more embarrassed and said it was embarrassing for her. But she spoke still very kindly. I thought she could be a prostitute but she was very young, fresh and nice girl, she did not look like being on drugs, or so. Ruba asked her where she lived and she said at a friend's place, but she had nothing in common with him, just suck him off time to time. Then she said she would leave, that she was really embarrassed, and she left. The interesting thing about the whole situation was that they both were smiling during the whole conversation; there were no reproaches, hatred, or nervous reactions. I was expecting some conflict, but it did not happen. On the way to the car, Ruba made sure I understood she was a "hooker", she was a relative of his cousin, and thus a far relative of him as well. She called him uncle, but he was not her uncle, he said. He then turned to his nine-year old daughter who was present to the whole encounter, and told her: "Well, she did not study well. Today she has no work and must do this". The daughter replied she would never do such a thing herself. This was an everyday interaction without any sign of exceptionality or stress. The way Ruba acted was really as if this was a part of a daily routine, an interaction with no moral implications or values. The prostitution was just so close to him. The mentions about "hookers" (*šlapky*) were common, and they were part of many situations and memories. The son of Forta once talked about a car-accident they had, and just by the way mentioned that there were some hookers in the car with them, but it was not import in the story.

Girls from the whole country were coming to Márov in the "era", but then the families divided the territories, and when someone new came he or she had to pay a fee. Finally they started to sell the girls among each other. People who remembered the "good old times" told with sentiment that there had been a certain brotherhood or at least respect among the pimps, then. One of the former pimps told me:

> "When they needed something I helped them, and I knew exactly what I could expect from them. They would stand up for me if the police came. If the police came they would not tell anything. I know them for so many years, if they had a problem, for example on the road with the hookers or with somebody, they would just call me and I would take my dogs and go to help them."

How did it happen that someone started to sell women for sex? I saw three trajectories, and all of them had to with institutional care or prison, and drugs. The first was a young boy, who just left the children home and moved to Márov where he had some relatives. He started to take drugs with a group of young people and committed an occasional theft or other offences. Once a German approached him and asked whether he was able to get him a female prostitute. He went and asked a girl who was taking drugs with them. In this way he became her pimp and he kept on offering her to other Germans. When the girl was working he always kept her ID so she did not get kidnapped. He also fell in love with her but this did not prevent him to continue selling her. Once his friend wanted to borrow her for a job, and took her with the ID, but never returned her back – he sold her to a German for 40 000 crowns, and no one has seen her ever since. The second and the third cases were young men who returned from prison. They did not have work, did not know what to do, so they found a girlfriend and convinced her to become a prostitute.

I have not inquired into the trajectories of the women to the sex work. I met one prostitute who once was making good money for herself, but then she was forced to start working for the families, and they abused her – she changed four different families. I was asking if her husband did not care, and I was told that it was OK as long as she brought the money home. Young Roma boys liked her, because she

was sleeping with them for free. I was told by another 30-years old prostitute with children that she grew up in a family with three daughters, and their mother most loved the one who made money through prostitution. The mother, according to her, would always tell them "Just go, my darling, and bring some money"[38]. When I was trying to check it, I was told it was not true, because the girl started to work as a prostitute in a different family. Nevertheless, she and her sister when they were already prostitutes and they were living with their mother were expected to go and "make some money" when the family needed.

There was a very delicate border between a client, friend and a lover in some cases. The wife of my friend told me he cheated on her, but they found out that his lover was a hooker – and she seemed to be satisfied about the fact, probably because my friend would not leave the wife and the children for a hooker. There was a "friend" of Forta, a non-Roma, heavy drinker who was known to paint flats of the Roma. Once he was telling us about all the "Gypsy hookers" he had sex with, he seemed to have a huge experience with the prostitutes, pimps and Roma. He was not a client, because he was poor, perhaps something like a friend or an occasional lover who occasionally paid the bill.

Especially in the case of Germans it was actually impossible to differentiate between the client and a friend or even relative. I came across families whose young daughter was cohabitating with a German pensioner and who deeply disrespected him. I once saw a Roma family consisting of a grandmother, her twenty years old daughter with a small child and her 55 year-old German partner. They were keeping their German who came from time to time for sex and maintain them, I was told by a friend who was present. The girl would leave for Germany with him, I was said. The German did not know Czech and the grandmother was loudly in-

[38] Children sex could be a very conflicting and explosive topic, and together with the children prostitution it was considered improper to talk about it. I saw a big conflict between two sisters-in-law. The first one heard a rumor that her 14-years old daughter-in-law had sex in a cellar with some boy. She asked the daughter who denied it, started crying and went to tell her parents. They (the brother-in-law and sister-in-law) got very angry about the woman, stopped talking to her, and came to her house and shouted that their sister-in-law is unclean. Children sex was definitely a taboo.

structing in Czech her grandson to kick the German, she was showing off her disdain towards the German whose financial power was taking her daughter away.

In most of the cases the woman left for Germany after some time, and was regularly living with the German. I was told there were many cross-border love stories which resulted in happy mixed families. Some of them started through the prostitution, and ended up in happy life. I have not heard about the not so happy ends. There were more Roma girls and women who succeeded in marrying a German, but I did not have contact with most of them – they would not live in Márov, and just sometimes came for example to visit weddings. When the prostitute agreed with the German she could leave if the German paid her pimp. If the prostitute did not want to leave with the German, the deal was not, I was said, done. It was different with "harems" in Germany, however, where the girls would be sold directly without consent. They were sold and resold by the pimps and intermediaries.

The German counterparts would support to some extent also the relatives of their partners/wives in the Czech Republic – deliberately or being unaware of it. One friend who was hardly mobile after an accident and he was not receiving welfare for his handicap, was always helped by his mother who "had a German". She met the German after she got out of jail, and after some time moved with him to Germany. She was not working, but she was able to considerably support her son: when he was establishing himself in a new rental flat she came and invested 60 000 CZK (2 400 EUR) in the furniture and home electronics. She would also bring him food and drive him when he needed to travel. The son was dependent on her and she was dependent on the German.

How did the prostitution decline in Márov? It was about eight years prior to my fieldwork when the first pimps started to leave the business. There were two major factors: the police was getting tougher on them and several pimps got arrested. The second reason, I was told, was that many of the prostitutes grew older, and started to have families. It was unacceptable for a mother to work as a prostitute on an ordinary basis, so they left the business. Before it was not a shame, everybody knew, but once they had children the situation changed. First, one of the pimps said he would quit, and when the others saw he was doing well, they also quitted. For the women who just "fucked up" the Germans it also became more

difficult, because there were more police controls and the Germans started to be more aware and cautious due to media coverage of this type of business. Several people got arrested, everything was more complicated and the women had to start really prostituting themselves, which was for them a very different thing compared to just "fuck up a stupid German".

What remained were the shadows from the "life before". The girls who were once "hookers" but also the ones who just "messed up" Germans had a bad fame. Márov also had a bad fame among the Roma from different parts. However, the story about the life then, the "era" when the Germans were stupid and the money was just lying on the ground, was also a story about economic independence from the state. "We were no bad people" referred to taking the German money. The individual stories of coercion, cheating, torture, drugs and sufferings were suppressed in these accounts.

Autonomy, scarcity and money

Given the economic situation of most of the congregation members, the autonomy was to be performed in the situation of scarcity. One realm of free choice was the Christian name. In the Czech Republic everyone is free to name his or her child as he likes, provided that the name is recognized by the authorities. Roma in Márov liked to look for interesting names – when the grandson of Forta was born, his father first named him Mario, later changed it to Santiago to finish with an uncommon biblical name. Nicknames were also a field of lot of invention and parallel identities. Another field of autonomy was the home of the starting family – the couples found a great pleasure in moving the furniture in their rooms, getting new (often used) furniture and throwing the old, painting the walls and decorating them with stickers. These changes could be done with a minimum of money. The families also thrived to have their own place for leisure time. Forta once rented a garden outside the town so the family could spend weekends there. The problem was there was a ruin of an old cabin. Forta had not enough money, but nevertheless he organized a group of workers who during two months built a new cabin.

People often needed credit. I regularly lent out to a woman with three children who was on social benefits which are paid monthly and every month she was

lacking cash one or two weeks before the payday. She would borrow for the week and find me always on the payday to return the debt. Once she asked me for a credit to pay the doctor for her daughter. However she did it in a manner that made me offer the loan instead of her asking for the credit. We were chatting on Facebook:

R: She is bad, I will have to go to the doctor with her tomorrow.

S: I hope she is well, I wish she cures soon.

R: thanks but there is a problem you know *nane love na doktoris* ☺ ☺ (there is no money for the doctor)

S: *keci*? (how much?)

R: *so keci*?? (what how much??)

S: *keci love* is the doctor? (how much is the doctor?) You don't have for paying the charge?

R: no way ☺ ☺ ☺

S: ☹ ☹ how much do you need?

R: what??? Why??? Are you asking

S: well I thought you want credit. Maybe I misunderstood.

R: And you have money?? At least 10.000 CZK

S: I do not, but my wife does. Aha, I thought you need something like 200 crowns. We don't have 10 000, no way. ☹ ☹

R: I am making jokes juju Štěpán and you would give me a credit yes. Jaaj, *konec*

S: ☺ ☺

R: so how much can you lend me until 11. 5.

S: how much you need?

R: jooj Štěpán I don't feel well

S: no problem

R: sure

S: yes yes

R: juuj Štěpán let us keep this between us yes at least 500 CZK ☺ ☺

I am quite sure the request for 10 000 CZK was meant seriously, but it was thrown in the air (through the electronic chat) in such a manner that it could be downplayed in any moment. But the interesting part is the way how asking for credit or begging was avoided. She explained the situation and in the end I was the one who offered the loan, and it was a pretended surprise for the woman who was in desperate need of cash when I made the offer. The same happened when her washing machine broke and at the end I found myself repeating five times the offer that she could wash at my place. This way she was able to maintain her esteem although living in severe poverty. She was not begging.

To my knowledge every household which I knew was heavily indebted on payments ranging from the health insurance, rents and energy consumption, through phone bills, consumer loans for goods they once bought but never used them again, to small credit schemes with huge interest rates, and usury. Large part of the Roma were formally under seizure, and once they started to work legally, they would be left with minimum, most of the salary having been taken by the creditors. For some this was the reason not to work at all, because they would not be able to survive with the rest of the salary they were left with; they would then depend on social security system, which would secure housing and living allowances for them (although this could be existential minimum). The other strategy was to work informally, or to work in Germany. The Czech creditors were able to find the incomes even on German bank accounts, but there was a special protected bank account that could deal with the problem. Many were escaping from their debts that were objectively unpayable. To my knowledge only one household from the congregation accessed the option of personal bankruptcy, and it was a

big success. The income of the household head would be cut during five years to five thousand crowns per month, he must not acquire any possessions, but at the end he would be freed from debts which otherwise he would not be able to pay during his whole life. There was no motivation for him, however, to work legally. He would be involved in many things, organize the work of others, get furniture from Germany, or exchange things and services, but he would not work. The most often stance towards the over-indebtedness was a deep depression and paralysis.

Money exchange bind people in relationships and relationships limit. One very strong form of detachment from some person was to say "I will not ask him for money again", which could concern both credit and a gift (the two things were often blurred; and depending on the situation getting a credit from someone could be conceptualized as cheat the person, depending on who the person was and whether the debtor planned to pay it back). This approach towards the potential creditor (I will not ask him for credit) goes much further from the instrumental approach to credit and recognizes the morality of credit, and crediting as a moral exchange, not an act of subordination and dependency. And it gives agency to the receiver – the credited one, who is free to decide whom he will ask, so the intentional lack of contact with certain person is not contradicted by the relation of donor-receiver. I was once instructed I must be aware not to build a relationship on the fact that I lend to someone. When anyone wanted to thank me for the lease, I was supposed to tell him to thank the God; the worst thing that might happen, I was said, would be if I gave money eleven times, and then denied the twelfth time: I would be seen as mean. When people were to thank the God this was avoided.

Once issues arose in the management of the congregation, the German Gypsy pastor who was also the fundraiser and treasurer was pushing on a dissenting preacher that his salary would be discontinued, and offered a position to another preacher who was then working in a factory. This could make a huge change in the life of the second preacher, but they both agreed that they do not want the money if it meant a lack of freedom for them.

One was supposed to a have relaxed attitude towards money. When there is plenty, it is possible to waste. Once happened that men from Márov travelled to Pra-

gue to buy a second-hand car. They bought one, which was cheaper than they thought, and they were happy to spend several tens of thousands in food, drinks and shopping. This was a favourite story. When you have money you are also expected to help people, and this is more important than the way how the money was made. When I first visited Márov I was offered accommodation at a former gang member's place. He was telling me all the time how bad he used to be, but now he changed and was good person in Jesus. In accordance with the narrative structure of a testimony of a convert, he negated wholly the past. In the evening his wife, who was not yet converted at that time, told me: "But we were no bad before. There was more money. We were giving to the ones who lacked." They were making money illegally on cheating Germans, coercion, and violence, but the important thing for her was that they had money and they could help other people.

It was not only helping, but also inviting – the one who had money was somehow supposed to invite others to food, sweets or drinks. Once I lent to Forta quite a lot of money for the marriage of his daughter. He expected the money he raised would be collected back during the wedding party from the guests. He had no cash and needed to pre-finance some expenses. When I lent him, the first thing he did was to invite me to a food from this money which was to be used for his daughter's wedding. This same action could be interpreted within the framework of the economy of scarcity, where the one who has cash, tries to use as much of it as possible, because it is improbable there will be another occasion ?more). In this context I see it, however, as an example of the detachment from money, which Roma are supposed to perform. In line with this expectation, when one had money, he was trying to hide the fact from the others, in order to keep it.

Money can make their possessor crazy; not the lack, but the surfeit of money is dangerous, as shown on the following excerpt when about the congregation members talked about the former pastor while he was not present.

> "Šunen hej, to je mezi Gadje mezi Cigány, na? Manuš a kor savo hino čororo, on NIKDY má všechny rád. Sar hino čororo, av ke ma, av ke ma keraha peske tejos či babovka, lupački. Ča šun. Aj poslouchej. (people laugh) A sar barvaľol, se zblázní? Kdy se zblázní člověk, když má, nebo nemá?

Reply: Když má.

A co on mi říká teď? Kdy se zbláznil? Když zůstal na podlaze? Ne, když zbohatnul na nás. To je moje slovo. A kor ačhel pes případy, když člověk zbohatne ačhel dilino andro love."

"Listen you, this is between Gádjos and Gypsies, no? Once a man is poor, but he NEVER loves everyone. As if he was poor, come to me, let's have tea and cake, croissant. Just listen, listen. (people laugh). But once one gets rich he gets crazy? When does he get crazy, when he has or when he does not?

Reply: When he has

And what he tells me now? When did he get mad? When he was left on the floor? No, when he made money out of us. Now cases will come when one gets rich he gets crazy from the money."

The autonomies performed in the situations of scarcity were small things, such as naming a person or rearranging the household. When asking for credit the Roma would try to arrange the situation so that the money was offered to them, and they would stress the morality of the credit – even in need they would not ask certain people to lend to them.

Relationships

Roma would be to a large degree autonomous on the choice of attachment to a family (more on this topic in Chapter 8). Kolman who worked with the partners of his nieces-in-law in a factory was once asked by his boss to "tell to his relatives" something. He got so angry underlining that he stays for himself, not some family, and that he is no family with them! Another day his son in law complained Kolman told a story where he called him father (*táto, to je von* – father, it is him). The son in law got very angry stressing he already has one father.

Most of the people preferred to stay with their families. There would be continuous stream of communication between the family members, and between partners. When we left with Forta for Prague, he would be on phone with his wife literally

during the whole day, explaining each detail of our actions. They would have at least five long calls, but up to eight or ten calls (Forta had an unlimited tariff). When his wife was not calling, his daughter took the initiative and had explained the same things again.

The couples would have various practices which connected the couple; these could be seen especially among the youth. I could observe several times that it was common that one of the partners had the ID of the other. The son of Forta was once unable to receive a registered letter, because his girlfriend who was not present had his ID. He said she had it because he did not have valet, but few days ago he had the IDs of both, because she did not have a handbag. Finally he called her to dictate the number on ID and he could receive the letter. The changing of IDs was used as a marker of commonalities the couple had. It had also a different meaning, from the "past". The sex workers never had their ID with them in order not to be kidnapped, and also not to run away. If they were to leave the pimp, he had to approve, and the possession of the ID was at least some form of control – they would mostly leave abroad and there the ID was necessary. The practice that once started as means of coercion was now used as binding practice for couples.

Men and women were also often interchanging their mobile phones, or if they had only one, the one who had to leave took it away. This could create a terrible dependency and helplessness: the wife of Ruba was once left with the children at home, while Ruba went to work (with his phone). Suddenly someone started to bang on their door so strongly, that it was about to break. She could not call for help, because there was no means of communication, so she took the children and waited in the room terrified to death. None of the neighbours helped her or would call the police, they were just not interested. Finally the intruder left, but she was afraid since then, and for example worried about using the lift, so she would carry baby carriage six floors every day. Finally they moved away.

There were couples whose relations were far from tender. Three brothers who were raised in children home were used to humiliate their girlfriends, especially the two younger ones, and show disrespect towards them. They would use physical violence, and lead the partner conflicts to the point when the woman would come to them humbly begging. Then they would express their disinterest in such a

begging woman. The oldest of them once explained to me how he once ran the sex business:

"When I was 18 years old I was released from the prison and I started to work as a pimp. I would drive to discos to the neighbouring village or city, and pick up a girl. I would sleep with her that night and then I would wrap her around my finger. After two weeks I would tell her that I could make the money, but I would rob and I would go to prison. Or her, she can go and make money. These girls loved me and always went to walk the streets. During the day I was in the next city, in the evening I would drive them to Márov – to make money. The best was the one who went with the German just for a while, and she always brought loads of money – once almost 150 000 crowns. Or she would have the German pay in advance, 400, 500 marks, and then ran away. Once I had five hookers in the same time – two in the near city and three in Prague. The girls did not know about each other, I would travel to Prague only once or twice a month. I would always get 200 000 or 250 000 from them. In one year I made 10 million. The girls were giving me all the money, and I would buy them clothes, nice underwear and so. But they loved me, so they were giving me all the money they made."

The corrupt relationships were also influencing the lives and relationships of others. His younger brother was overly proprietary and extremely jealous about his girlfriend. There were issues with forced sex within the couples, although I was warned not to ask about the topics related to sex, and I followed the advice, from the small evidence I have it seems the couple has sex when the man desires, not the woman. A brother of my friend forced his girlfriend to have sex with him, and when she denied he would beat her. The couple was staying at his sister's place:

"They did not know about me, or they thought I was someone else. I suddenly hear a crying, and I thought it was just a joke. I looked there and he was throwing her from wall to wall. She was crying and crawling on the ground. Then it turned out he was beating her because she did not want to join him in the bed. I screamed at him to get packed and get out of here, immediately"

Although the couple was evicted from the place and became homeless, neither the sister nor anyone else living in the house would reply when I was urging them to

take measures to stop the violence. They knew it was happening for a longer time, and once the sister finally decided to kick him out. However, they all claimed this is between the two – the perpetuator and the victim, and no one should interfere. The only thing they could do was to make sure it was not happening at their place.

The distrust between partners who were involved in the sex-business was extreme and their emotional dependency as well. Jealousness was often performed even in very unfitting situations, as if it were some must.

Abuse

The extreme poverty, dependence and indebtedness has led some people to situations comparable to slavery, when the supposed debt could never be paid, but one is urged to work. Forced labour has been a recurrent theme in my fieldwork, especially around the sex business, but also in other instances I was acquaintanted with a young man who claimed he ran from home when he was 14 years old, and came to a circus asking for work and shelter. Since then he would be working for 20 hours a day for several years with no possibility to escape – "Once you work for them they will not let you go", he said. He was hiding in Márov for some time. Homeless people, disabled and mentally ill, were exploited and coerced – the worst work would be left to the homeless, because they would work almost for free.

In some cases children were abused psychologically. One father would care so much about losing control over his daughter that he was producing lots of conflicts and his daughter had to obey extremely strict regime. Physical punishment of children was quite common. Once we visited relatives of Ruba. There was a new boy in their household, a four-year old nephew, and his grandmother was taking care of him. The boy was very violent with other kids, and did them unexpected things, while he was extremely diffident towards the adults – Ruba took him in his lap and described to me how the boy was shuddering, and when he touched him the boy would recoil and close up. He did not talk. His grandmother told us that he did would not sleep in bed or eat at a table, but on the ground, because he was used to do so. The family was, however, accepting the state and did not plan to do anything about it. Ruba decided he would take the boy home, and

care about him. When we were leaving from the visit to Márov we asked the boy whether he wanted to come with us, but he ran away to another room. Only later, on the way back, without him, we learned from Ruba's wife, that her sister, aunt of the boy told him that if he left with Ruba she would beat him.

There were cases of parents who disregarded their children due to various reasons (mainly gambling and drugs) and had them taken to the institutional care. But the disregard and disinterest had also more nuanced forms, such as when one of the parents did not care about the school results of their daughter and did not help her at home, so she ended up in the special school where her prospects for the future career would be very low.

Another forms of oppression involved the dependence on one's own emotions, a total lack of distance. When a child was ill or had an accident there would often be another person, often the father or grandfather, who let the sorrow overtake his actions, and would run away and spend a night on a bank, disappear in an important situation, etc. The attention of the family would then turn from the ill child to the father who got mad because the child was ill. I have not encountered any excessive fear of *mule* (the dead), which is reported in ethnologic literature. Some people will be dependent on the evaluations by others, dependent on conflict or violence.

Self-governance

Men mostly would work in factories on three shifts basis; some would work also for the technical services. Most of the men were struggling with the precarious contracts and financial conditions, which, during the economic crisis, were getting worse and worse. For example Roma working for the municipal technical services at an unqualified position would gain up to 16 000 CZK monthly before the crisis, and 9 000 after the crisis. The households were falling into debts and extreme poverty. It was regarded as a duty of the man to find and keep work, although he would have to keep subordinate position. When someone was fired from the work because of revolting or arguing with the boss, it was seen as a failure.

Even the people who seemed they would never work, became very active when there was going to be a new child in the family. Becoming parent or grandparent and the need to provide for the children and to prevent their institutionalization was a strong motivator. The lack of relations, on the other hand, could be the reason or excuse for inactivity and resignation. Once we met a 30years old homeless Rom on the street with the preacher Míša. Míša knew him because they had supported him for several years, and he lived in the household of his uncle who took him from the street. The homeless spoke perfect Czech, because he was raised in children home. We offered him some fast assistance such as food and shelter and then Míša asked him when he will finally improve? He replied that the only chance is that a girl he loves (cousin of Míša) says yes to him, then he would change immediately**.**

Each individual was responsible for the reputation of the Roma as a whole, and for the reputation of his or her family. Especially for women it was important to pass as a "decent Roma" when dealing with all kinds of various issues from negotiations at the social welfare office, through communication with the school authorities to getting credit from banks or getting discount in a shop. There was a general strategy used "I am different to the others" and intentional code switching would be used (more on this in the chapter on the Bible school and the value of code switching). In the church Roma were expected to tell the truth at all costs, and they would.

Disciplination of the body

Men and women are demanded to be beautiful and fit, and in the longer term, many were building their bodies in order to fit the picture. For the momentary outlook, the look was preferred before all other things. I observed several times during different formal occasions that both men and women would suffer wearing very uncomfortable shoes. Whereas on other occasions they would content themselves with sports shoes, for the wedding this would change. The women would complain about their shoes, and have serious problems with their tightness, which would not allow them to enjoy the dance. Some of the men would have the same problems.

Most Roma in Márov generally did not care about their health when it came to prevention (I already mentioned the carefree attitude which was performed towards one's health, but only when it was not very serious) – they would eat very unhealthy food, smoke, drink alcohol. Especially older men with serious health problems disregarded the orders of the physicians and continued drinking alcohol and smoking.

There were others who did follow the orders of the physicians, and cared more about themselves. The change in the life of one of the congregation members started when he was admitted to the hospital with diabetes. He had been in the organized crime for 15 years. For several years he was visiting a gym and consumed anabolics, but once he stopped the exercise his body started to absorb more and more water, and in addition he would eat mostly junk fast food. His weight increased to 209 kilograms and when he walked several meters he was out of breath, so he moved only in the car – he managed the business from home and the men were coming to him. In the hospital he stayed for nine weeks with advanced diabetes, during the following three months he continued the treatment at home. First he lost 22 kg, then more. They sold the car and he started to walk on crutches, first around the block and then for longer walks. He also had to radically change his diet – he would eat only boiled chicken, vegetables and rice three times a day. He also stopped smoking, but he was not gaining weight. This was actually the first step of his conversion, but first there was the killer disease and only then the conversion.

Especially the younger Roma were expected to care about their bodies, and build them. My friend admitted to me that his wife did not attract him anymore, because she put on during the pregnancy. It was the duty of the wife to be attractive; if the man found a new love he was hardly condemned, but the wife who was not fit enough was seen as a sufficient justification for the infidelity. And the women cared: two young mothers who remained in Forta's household refrained from breast-feeding after giving birth to their children, and managed to go down to their weight before the pregnancy in just a few weeks. The young men also cared for their look – they would intend to regulate their weight and to gain massiveness in their chest and arms by going to gym and using special substances for body build-

ing. Bodies and body-building would be a frequent theme in chats among youngsters, but also many of the middle-aged men were going to the gym.

As it was the duty of the woman to care about her look it was also her duty to look after her reproductive health, and when there was a problem, it was the woman who would first be blamed as the guilty party.

Escapes

To my knowledge none of the congregation members were addicted to drugs by the time of my fieldwork. There were people who would occasionally smoke a joint or perhaps take the crystal which was very common drug around, or have an ecstasy on a celebration, but they would not be used on daily basis. Some of the members did have a drug experience from which they recovered – no one of them would go through a medical or psychological treatment, but they would just decide and quitted the drugs from day to day. In the religious context it was little different and I shall deal with it later. However, drugs could be seen everywhere – lean people with sunken eyes and strange motion, young mothers with children, or young men, but also older Roma, big guys who were consumers of crystal and were unpredictable and violent. Some family members were taking drugs and were involved in the drug business as well.

As to the other addictions, gambling was prevailing. Forta and some others were ex-gamblers and they were trying to stay far from the machines, but they would be able to spend the whole night at a computer playing the machines without real money – this was a habit. The son of Forta was regularly playing the real machines and when he had money, he would often lose it on the machines. There was another family member and a congregation member, who worked in Germany, but once he got paid he would lose all the money in the machines. His wife ended up in drugs and their children were institutionalized in a short time after I left Márov. Forta said he would beat him, but he never did, and the man was considered lost. Most of the people with exception of several young men who were raised in the faith were heavy smokers, and fully addicted to cigarettes.

Escape through consumption

Consumption was one of the responses to the economic scarcity/dependence and low social status. Continuous lack of cash led to the desire to use the money once one got them – when Kolman came from a temporary job in Germany with 500 EUR, he gave 60 to his daughter and her boyfriend. Having not had cash for weeks, they went and spent the money on new shoes from the Vietnamese (20) a hoodie (10) a T-shirt and two packs of cigarettes, and they were left with nothing. It was possible to obtain very good quality clothes and shoes for free in charity bags the family had access to, but they were not new. The things they bought were cheap blazing goods of poor quality, but they were new, and it meant a lot to be able to buy a new thing. This applied to brand clothes as well.

There was a special industry created to feed the poor with overpriced goods of dubious quality, and give them the feeling of being rational consumers, at least for a while. Once Forta was invited to a dinner, and he could bring people with him, so he took his wife, daughter and son-in-law. They all put on their best clothes and left the flat in a great mood. All of us who stayed were envious, Waleri phoned later and when he learned about it he was offended he was not invited as well. The dinner was in a near restaurant and it was supposed to last for one hour. The company, however, stayed for three hours and they did not respond phone, so we would be babysitting their kids who were becoming nervous, and had no chance to call the parents. When they came home it appeared that the supposed dinner was a presentation of cooking pots. Forta was relating with a great enthusiasm that they bought some pots, but will only pay them in several months – they would pay 15 000 CZK. These were some pots with inside Teflon layer, but they were shown that even a knife would not scratch the pot. The presenters also burnt milk inside, and then just wiped it from the bottom. They are very good quality pots, the bottom is thick, but they warm up very fast. From what they were saying I thought the pots were from stainless steel, so I tried to convince them that they also have pots from stainless steel, and that they are very good. I was told it was important that in these pots one can prepare both the meal and the side dish at the same time. What is more, cooking in them is very healthy, because one does not need to use oil. (I never heard them talking about healthy food and I cannot imag-

ine them eating a meal without a lot of fat or oil). Forta started to count how much he will save on oil. The brand is also important – these pots are of brand "Moravia", one has to be very careful, according to Forta, when buying, because there are lots of imitations, but this is original, no teleshopping. His nephew has them and Waleri as well, they bought them one year ago and they are very happy about them. Forta once met an old sister (in Christ), Gádži, who has owned them for eleven years now, and she was happy about them. Later on it appeared that the pots are made of aluminium, and in my view they were of a very bad quality, but Forta and the rest as well insisted on the rationality of the purchase. In the end they never bought the pots and I am suspicious they had to pay something for having them ordered, but the point is that this was a thing that they thought "decent" middle-class people do – they buy expensive pots. Although that might be the case, these pots were certainly not the ones the rich people buy, and the Roma were cheated in their effort to become rational consumers.

Summary

The respect for decision of an individual is the single most important concept employed among the Roma in Márov with regard to autonomy. Roma men are not held accountable for their actions – they just do what they do, and no one questions their right to do so, or the context of their decisions. Roma among themselves deeply respect this right, and do not inquire into the rationalities or motivations of other Roma. Doing so they acknowledge the subjectivity of others. Children are socialized in this practice since their early years – they are left to freely decide about important matters, and they are hardly ever ordered. This does not mean that they would be completely left without upbringing, but they are generally expected to know how to behave, and if they do not, they are punished, but ex post.

It was valued when someone was able to act without caring despite his or her difficulties, be it financial or health problems, or different kinds of threats. Among the things that caused problems most were severe illnesses (including mental health problems) and bad luck due to a curse; the two categories would sometimes mingle.

Autonomy is many times understood as independence, and the autonomy through the conversion as well. I thus reviewed the various forms of oppression which prevent Roma in Márov from independence – illness, health and mental problems, lack of education, and last but not least poverty. In the case of poverty and dependence on the state I have shown some of the strategies used by Roma to overcome them.

Autonomy at work has been the most pronounced preference of Roma elsewhere. I describe a case when the power relations of inferior individuals in factory work were temporarily reverted: through violent attitude Kolman dominated for a while at the workplace. However he was fired soon. The rest of Roma in Márov who were once working in factories did not seem to employ any autonomous strategies, to make other business in the factory, or outside of the factory. They were just interested in keeping the job and getting paid, so the worked. This does not resemble any of the theories of Gypsy work discussed in the chapter two.

Autonomy in economic strategies was generally not a preference, but a result of unemployment. There were several individuals with entrepreneurial spirit, who were self-employers, but it was very uncommon, even in the case of musicians performing in Germany – they were rather Roma from Slovakia who performed in the next German cities, than Roma from Márov. One big exception from this rule was different strategies of "fucking up a German" which were the ones used by everybody, I was said. There was the image of stupid Germans who are coming to Márov to get "fucked up". This practice was closely related to prostitution, which I also discussed. Sometimes it was difficult do differentiate between prostitution, "fucking up a German", and "picking a German" and having long-term relationships with them. One of the strategies to overcome the poverty was definitely to marry a German and leave with him.

On the case of asking for credit I have shown that even in the situation of economic need Roma are aware of the morality of crediting; it gives rise to relationships, and they intend to control these relationships. This strategy is to avoid asking for credit, and instead waiting until the creditor offers it, and also avoiding to ask certain people. I also reviewed autonomy in relationships, and situations of abuse of children and adults and slavery. These were also coercions which were awaiting

the liberation. Finally I reviewed cases of self-governance and disciplination, and ways of escaping the difficult situations.

This chapter was meant to give an overview of some of the strategies to achieve or sustain autonomy in the everyday lives of Roma in Márov, and also to present the wide array of coercive situations and settings in which the Roma found themselves. If autonomy through conversion was to make them more independent it would address some of the burning local problems. In the next chapter I will present the promises and effects of the conversions.

7. Conversions: Expectations and Ends

/:Soske ajso dživipen, te man nane lačhipen.
O Ježišku amaro, som terno, som čororo. :/
REF: Ko na pačal le devleske, vičinel Ducho bengeske.
Visar tut more ki o Del, av imar láčho ma košker.
/:Ča tuke, tuke savoro. Miro jilo hino tiro:/
O Ježišku amaro.

/: What's this life for, if I am not on the straight and narrow.
Oh, Jesus, I am young and unlucky:/
REF: He, who does not believe in God invokes the spirit of the Devil,
Return to the God, man, and become good, stop cursing
/:Just yours, yours is everything. My heart is yours:/
Oh, our Jesus.

(A favourite song in Márov, composed by a member of the congregation while he was in jail.)

In the third chapter I presented the media image around the conversions of Roma in Márov produced by different missionaries who worked there, or visited the place. The congregation did not, however, produce too much material about themselves, except for the web pages, which were entirely prepared and produced by one younger preacher who learned how to do it himself. The web contained a very general mission statement that the members of the congregation accepted Jesus in their hearts and now want to share it with their surroundings. While there was a separate page prepared for "personal stories", the preacher never put there a single one, and the visitor of the webpages would not find any of the stories about the congregation, poverty, and wickedness in Márov – this discourse was entirely absent from the web. The congregation members most of the time kept silent about their "wicked pasts", or were far too general about it.

The more silent were the local preachers, the louder was the pastor Waleri. He used his personal example on many occasions, especially for proselytizing. In this chapter I am going to present some proselytization strategies used to find out what the people who converted were promised. Then I will review the impacts of the conversions on problems such as illness / dependency, poverty, drug addiction, and involvement in sex-work, and ways of personal realization through the membership and activity in the congregation. Thanks to this overview I will be able to assess what novelty the conversions bring to the local practices. I will then connect this analysis to the autonomy thesis proposed by Williams, and through an example reconsider the use of the concept.

Proselytization

A general topic of entitlement appeared often, in various forms, but they had in common the emphasis on the status of being chosen. People are a chosen species who can have a personal relationship with God – not even the angels can do so. The missionaries then used schemes fitting to the current situation and the habits of the public. Accepting Jesus would improve one's life: he would stop gambling, and start loving his family. All his sins will be deleted, and he will be able to start a new beginning. One would also be released from any fears, such as darkness or night.

What were the first issues one would hear when the missionaries came and organized an evangelization campaign? Waleri proselytized with his own example, pointing at his own life. He used to gamble and take drugs and he had very bad relations with his wife. Once he started going to the church everything improved: he got rid of his dependencies, and he started to love his wife again. Every day he would be going to the street to preach in his new life of convert. When his relatives came to visit him to a party, they would find him preaching on the street; he was no longer interested in alcohol or drugs:

> "They came there and they saw me with a Bible in my hand. BEFORE, BEFORE my cousins when they came and asked my wife Where is Waleri? I was either in the pub or in casino. They would come to me with a bottle of whisky and we would drink for the whole night. And then they

> saw me working on the street. They came once, twice, three times, and they never appeared again. I lost all my friends. 'If you don't want Jesus I cannot go with you, please forgive me.' When I had birthday they asked me 'Waleri, should we come?' Ad I said: 'sure, we'll have a coffee and some dessert.' And my whole family, my whole nation did not recognize me. And they really said: 'Waleri is a different person.' During the first five years they even hated me. And they were calling me MAD, SECTARIAN! My uncle wanted to beat me saying: 'You are not going to lie anymore? And you will not cheat the Germans? You know what will happen? You will come to me crawling. You will become a pauper.' But after five years they understood I really mean it. And other Gypsies came, TV, they had gold and wanted to give it to me. And my family came to me, but said it is meaningless. And now I will tell you the truth in your eyes. They were even afraid of me. The whole nation had this respect before me. But it took five years."

This was an important story to tell, because one of the fears people could have was that they would lose their community, their old friends, and remain alone and helpless. Waleri was an example of self-made man, who did it, and ended up very successful. He had a nice family; he was living in a house with a garden, wore a suit and a shirt and drove a big van, and always had money and the latest technological devices, such as IPhones and IPads. Through his example, people would be able to see the success implied by the conversion. After all it made sense to leave the friends and family behind, because brighter tomorrows were ahead. For some people it was difficult to imagine that they could change their whole life, leave the community and join a new one, the one they choose. Waleri was not saying that the new community has a lot of constraints, perhaps much more than the old one – what he promoted was that the new community is successful. This was not a script of escape from something terrible, but rather a model for the recomposition of the whole social life of a person to allow for upward mobility. The change of one's primary group was supported by the fact that most of the preachers in Márov were coming from a decent and strong family with reputation. When Waleri was telling to the masses that there is one God, one family and we all are the children of God, it had also to do with the difficult kinship relations his Roma

publics in Western Bohemia were going through and the vision of settling in a family, which is closer to the model of traditional Roma family (for in-depth discussion of this topic see chapter nine).

Waleri encouraged people to radically break up with their own past by his personal example:

> "They thought, because I always did everything to maximum, they thought he is intensive, he will improve and come back again. Then I was even expelled (from the group of Gypsies). And why? Because I want to love my Jesus. And I want to love him until I die. For several years I have been praying, I never want to lose the God. I better die than lose the God. I never want to come back, never. This is my heart wish, this is my Jesus. And if someone asked me 'What do you want, Waleri?' I would reply 'I want to die in faith.' And now I tell you something. I am no special. Every of us can learn. It depends only on us how much you love Jesus; it depends on us how much do we want to live with him. And the same thing that happened to that woman will happen to us. Jesus told us that if we stay in him, we will get what we need. Not what we want, but what we need for the life. That is what I wanted to tell you today. And also that we love each other. And so we hold together. You can always make mistakes, and do a sin. You can always drop to the sin, but you can always turn to Jesus."

He went through the radical break up with his own past, with his family and community, and he was here, full of energy and successful. Now he invited the public to do the same, because if he could succeed they could succeed as well. Waleri did spread this message, what he did not spread was the contacts to the people and organizations that found him, and when it came to a split, the donors would always stay with him. He was a success story, but that was thanks to the fact that he had a missionary organization and he was very good in fundraising.

Waleri had the "great life" and great family and the Ipads and Iphones thanks to the fact he was on the top of the pyramid, but people would expect to gain the same, which was impossible. Sometimes he did invest in the local leaders, bought them notebooks, or helped someone with an urgent lack of cash. But he would

support mostly the ones who were closest to him, not the ones whom he was proselytizing. Also the personal relationship with Waleri and a sense of being a part of the new family and lively community was limited. He would not go and regularly visit people who were living in the worst conditions, he was dividing his time between his family, many events, and the contact with his closest collaborators – a new convert would hardly gain access to Waleri regularly.

Waleri was able to help occasionally by ten euro, but he was not able to maintain the converts from the money he fundraised. What were then the strategies to overcome the scarcity, poverty and exclusion which the congregation promoted? The most common advice was to hand in the problems to God and pray for his help. He knows what one needs. He will not give people luxury cars, or wealth, if they pray for it, but he will give them the things they really need. Once during a service in a village, a newly convert was asking how should he cope with his economic situation? He did not have enough to feed his children, so he had to pilfer. He asked how the God could help him. The preacher Míša replied that he should hand in his problems to the God, and he will see the change. He mentioned the example of David and Goliath, but not with the point that David won Goliath thanks to his cunning:

> "Goliath was so big compared to David, but compared to the God of David he was this small. (…) David knew he was small before the God. This way your problems are also such small compared to how big is the God. If you pray to the God and hand in to him your problems, then the God can help you"

This advice was used often for the people who were dealing with problems they could not overcome. They were instructed to calm down, ask the God, and he will wisely decide what to do. There was a certain grace in this attitude when it was performed by the congregation members, a similar to the carefreeness which I described as a value for Roma. The converts said they can recognize a Christian when they see him on the street, because he is smiling, he is in a good mood. In this way the converts were not released from the debts or poverty, but the ideal was that they are made happy – that they do not leave the negative emotions govern their behaviour. The debts, however, were remaining.

This new community was not announced only by Waleri, it was a more general topic of proselytization. Roma living in social exclusion were offered with open arms to become members of the new family. It was the summer of 2010 when the preachers and helpers from Márov travelled to a village in the region, which has a large Roma population, and organized a proselytization event – they played music, preached, Waleri testified, and the group played a theatre. At the end of the program there was the appeal for the people to come to the front, and the missionaries would pray for them. Forta was then telling them in Romani about the new community they are about to access:

> "Dikhen, sar oda hin šukares. Te na uľahas adaj o Del, ta na aven kadaj anglal, te na šundžanas andre peskro jilo, hoj tumen o Del bičhavel anglal, ta na avľanas anglal. O Del aňi amen na kamas ňič. Amen tumenge ča avľam te phenel leskro nav, leskro lav. Hoj tumen o Del avke kamel sar the amen. O Del na kerel rozďili, hoj ko barvalo, ko čororo. Ov kamel savore džene, hoj te džas paš leste. Akana sam andro Del savore, so akana sam kade, phrala o pheňa. Chudas pes vastestar a modlinas pes kijo Del. Ko sar kamel, sar hin andro jilo, mange pes. O Del dikhel, o Del šunel."
>
> "Look how nice it is. If God was not here you would not come to the front. If you had not felt it in your heart you would not come to the front. Neither the God nor we want anything from you. We just came to announce his name and his word to you. God loves you as much as he loves us. He makes no difference whether one is rich or poor. He loves all people. He wants us all to come to him. Now we are all here brothers and sisters. Let us now hold our hands together and pray to the God the way everyone feels it in his heart. God sees, god hears."

Apart from the new brotherhood[39] and community of faith, there was an important stress on the acceptance – the missionaries came from a city, they were seen as

[39] According to Johannes Ries the reference to family metaphors is one of the main sources of attractiveness of Pentecostalism to Gypsies: "With constant reference to family-metaphors, the converts form a family of spiritual relatives in which everybody can be reborn through his or her own efforts. The act of conversion and baptism as a symbol are rites of passage that initi-

richer than the Roma in the village, but they tell them they are all equal before the God, because he makes no difference. Also the individuation takes place, when the public is invited to pray, not collectively, but each participant of the event is to pray individually in his own way. This way the collective program individualized, to allow for the interior subjectivation.

The space allowed for individual and autonomous forms of belief was quite open during the proselytization phase. Once we visited a near village where the preachers were going to serve the local Roma. Míša from Márov, a middle aged Roma preacher, was telling that us, who accepted Jesus in their hearts, are OK and will be saved. But there are also people who accepted, but later forgot. The enemy, Lucipher, is nevertheless walking around seeking for such people who are empty in their hearts in order to attack them. There started an interesting debate between a big lady, a convert, and another woman who did not seem to have converted. When the preacher said that the heart is either with God or with devil, or that a person lives either according to the God or the devil, she replied that one can also live according to oneself! The big lady opposed that a person who lives according to herself, lives actually according to the Devil, but does not know about it. Míša returned to the topic again at the end of the sermon concluding that people can live according to themselves, and offered a third way. The big lady said it depends whether the person accepted Jesus in her heart honestly, and there were people who did not, and who had their heart open for devil although they formally accepted Jesus. Thus a fourth category was established.

Another day I was present to a similar discussion between Waleri and one Rom. Waleri was proselytizing the Rom, telling him there are only two ways, and who does not accept Jesus he will die in pains. The Rom countered that when he was in prison he read the Bible and another book, and based on this reading he came to the conclusion that the God donated brain to people so they think and make their life and if they do not use the brain it is against the God. Waleri did not argue against it, but he incorporated the opposing view claiming the Rom was on the

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ate the candidate, make a believer out of an unbeliever and give birth to a new family member. In this family, the converts as individuals unite as one group." (Ries 2014, p.121)

right way, but he was alone. If the sheep are in a herd, the lion cannot attack them, but once the sheep leaves the herd or lives out of it, the lion will attack her. Then he invited the Rom to join the congregation. This was a very powerful strategy, because it was very fitting to a common practice among the local Roma – anytime it was seen as dangerous and pitiful when someone was alone, and the Roma would do anything to prevent individuals being alone, offering accommodation, company, and food. When I wanted to go back to my flat in the evenings when my family had left and I would be alone, I was urged to stay overnight so I was not alone. A man should not be alone, that was the local rule and the worst thing people could imagine was to be left alone, for example in prison. This went very well with the argument of the lonely sheep and the lion.

The missionaries compared Christianity to other religions as a very free religion – there were examples given of the Jehova witnesses who cannot accept transfusion, take part in the ceremonies of other denominations, drink alcohol – all this is possible for the Christians. The conversion was always offered as a way out of fears of night, darkness, forests, and animals. God is here so we need not fear. Furthermore once they become Christians, the other people also treat them better. It was a strong moment in the arguments that Roma as such can become more accepted and improve their position when they convert. There was a story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman. The Jews had Samaritans for unclean, and what was more, this lady had five different men one after another and she was excluded to the margins by her own people. Despite this she was the first to whom Jesus turned. There was a clear historical parallel drawn: In the times of the Old Testament not all people could enter the synagogue, but only the Jews. But once Jesus came, he elevated us to his richness, and thanks to the fact we can now come to the church. Jesus invited all the nations to the church, and opened the universal possibility to become a preacher. These were very appealing scripts of transformation for the Roma in Márov and around.

However, there were many people who did accept Jesus on some occasion and came to the service several times, but then stopped coming. They were still under the influence – now with the mark that they were not fulfilling what they promised. There were instances when lot of people accepted Jesus at once during an

evangelization campaign, even almost without noting. There was an open program for families and children, then there were prayers, the word and testimonies, and lot of music, and after that, the missionaries asked who wants to be relieved, they should come to the front. Many people would come, and the missionaries would have them repeating the commitment to Jesus – they accept Jesus as their lord and personal saviour. They did, but the reason why they came was that they wanted to get recovered, not that they would voluntarily like to engage in the formal institution which the congregation presented. However according to the theology of the group, the recovery was coming only after accepting the faith, so it made sense to engage in the congregation in order to recover.

The mission as such was presented as a possibility, but not a destiny, or an obligation. I heard the image of Jesus throwing his word as a rescue rope to people, and it is up to them if they grip it or not. Christ pulls the rope and is able to help people to deal with the problems, but they need to hold firm. This included coming to the church for every service. Once Waleri preached about the spiral of the sin: he put one chair on the ground, this was the sin. He said "if one has a sin and stops coming to the church, because he is shy, the sin rises", and put a second chair on the one on the ground. "After not coming to the church for a longer time, one does not even realize that what he is doing is a sin, and it rises and rises." He put maybe five or six chairs one on the top of the other. "But once you renovate your relationship with Jesus, the load of the sin disappears" and he took the chairs away. The theology was to come to the church, as if the church was a universal response to all problems.

This had an interesting echo – I heard a boy who was doing terrible things to his girlfriend that he perhaps acts so badly, because he had not been going to the church for some time. He stopped being responsible for his actions – it was the fact he was possessed by the wicked spirits that he did it.

Liberation / healing

One of the long-standing attractions of the Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity and especially the Faith movement, is the healing and wealth prospects (Gifford 1993; Coleman 2000). These prospects were introduced by Kenneth Hagin of Tul-

sa, Oklahoma, who took seriously the performative notion of praying that when "I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them and they shall be granted you" (Mk11:23). In other words, he understood that first he had to believe he was healed and then he would be healed. Hagin's prayers of healing were answered when he was cleansed of a diagnosed terminal illness. Naturally, out of his testimony, Prosperity and Faith movements arose (Gifford 1993, p.146). In Márov, the religious leaders would not promise any healing whatsoever, and they were very well aware that healing promises had been done before. Disappointment amongst the local Roma was quite palpable when their prayers were not met with healing effects.

Miracles were part of the religious experience of the converts, because some happened although they were quite scarce. One of the preachers in Márov was severely ill. His uncle was sleeping during the day on a chair when he got a message from God – he should sit at the computer, write it down and then perform it with the ill person. He wrote about one page and a half what God dictated him (the message is already lost), together with instructions how it should be said, and that oil should be poured in a certain way when using the treatment. Every day people would come to the preacher's place and pray at his bed and perform the communion. After five days the preacher was miraculously healed. There were also cases of healing from infertility. When the topic came about at one service, various people knew about someone who was cured. According to one preacher who was present the children are the best gift the Lord gives us. Other preacher added that in the bible there were several examples of women who could not have children, but they received a child because they were saint. People at the service remembered there was a tour of healing, a preacher came and healed five couples who could not have children. Relatives of someone present were healed then, and after twelve years received a child. As noted elsewhere, the fertility was generally taken as a responsibility of the woman and if the couple could not have children the woman was blamed, not the man. I do not know about a couple who would test the men, but the woman must have been healthy and "care about herself". Thus this healing of a couple was also the liberation of the woman from the guilt of infertility and her restitution as a valuable person.

People got liberated from issues that seemed to have no solution. In one family the domestic violence was a day-to-day problem: the father beat his wife and five children. Two of his sons whom I knew also used to beat their wives. My understanding is that for them it was a common solution to problems they knew from their upbringing. We got to discuss the issue when a serious violence happened in one couple and we were discussing to what extent we can get involved. One of the brothers said that he does not beat his wife ever since he has been believer. The other expanded on the topic:

> "I used to beat my wife when she was doing any of the 'stupid things' or something I did not like, and if I did not convert I would continue. I am thankful it is over for me.
>
> SR: How did you manage?
>
> Once God let me feel how the woman feels when I am beating her, and I asked God to release me from that attitude. Since then I never beat her again. I might get angry and shout at her, when I am nervous I shout at her to stop it or to do something, but I don't beat her anymore."

The conversion was a point when the hereditary circle of domestic violence was once interrupted. Not altogether, there could be some exceptions. It was done on the declarative level, and it was also prescription for behaviour, but there were cases of breach. Both brothers played in the church band which was considered a prestigious position. Once one of them actually did beat his wife, and the pastor learned about it and he forbade him to play in the band for several weeks. It should also be noted that the relationships between the couples improved. Forta, for example, was meeting another woman prior to his conversion, and it took him three years until his wife believed him again, but since then they have been happy and together.

A miraculous release from prison happened during my fieldwork: son of one active lady from nearby village, where we were coming to serve, was imprisoned for assaults. Once the Roma converts from the village gathered and prayed for his release. In the same time he also prayed in the prison, and on the next day he was unexpectedly released. It was the preacher who said he would not be released oth-

erwise. The released son became part of the local congregation, but continued in informal work and with some minor criminal activities– there was no work in the village and he was to feed the family. However he was promoted as an example of a miracle.

There were also examples of unsuccessful healing. In September 2011 I attended a Fire conference organized by Christ for All Nations, the major organizer of "crusades" where tens of thousands to more than one million of people would gather, and get the fire of Holy Spirit. I was asked to drive two members of the Roma congregation along with another Roma who was in a wheelchair and was attending another Charismatic congregation in the town. Only later did I learn by happenstance, from a social worker, that his mother had left him when he was a child and went to work in Germany supposedly as a sexual worker. He went through drug addiction period and other difficult times.

The conference was held in a sports hall in Brno, regional capital of Moravia, with a presence of about seven thousand people. The aim of the gathering was to light the fire of the Holy Spirit in Central and Eastern Europe. Reinhard Bonnke, the most famous crusader was supposed to come, but finally only Daniel Kolenda, his younger colleague came. The program consisted of promotion of CfAN goods, music, and preaching. Kolenda was empowering the public, shouting deliriously:

> "You shall receive the power of the Holy Spirit. I will tell you what the Czech Republic needs. It does not need more professional educated preachers. It does not need a church. I WILL TELL YOU WHAT IT NEEDS: IT NEEDS THE FIRE OF HOLY SPIRIT. It needs people who will say LORD IS GOD, LORD IS GOD."[40]

At the end of this session we were supposed to tell personally to the Lord what we had in our hearts. Then a tunnel of fire was made in the front of the sports hall, with pastors and preachers making a human tunnel, through which the seven thousand people were encouraged to pass through. Kolenda said he would personally touch everyone, and he would stay for as long as needed. He explained:

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[40] Own recording from the Fire conference, 24. 9. 2011, Brno.

> "I will tell you what is going to happen. I call this the TUNNEL of fire. You come from one side and leave as a completely different person."

Then he went to explain how the Holy Spirit works, that people would be healed, saved, the addictions would be broken. We were supposed to raise our hands and worship. The praises started to play and the people started to move. After an hour and a half, the walk of up to seven thousand people through the tunnel was done. It was only the wheelchair users who were not able to go through and now Kolenda came to them.

He came to the immobile friend, he started praying for him and shouting that the disease leaves his body. There was an interpreter with him. Then Kolenda moved on to the next person on wheelchair. My friend tried to stand up, but he was unable to do so. He became quite depressed and wanted to leave immediately. There was still afternoon program, but he preferred to wait in the car for us for several hours. He insisted on being alone. When the program ended and we came to him, he said he was not supposed to be there with his friends, but instead with his mother. He thought that if his mother was with him, he would have been healed. He said that nothing made sense anymore. The encounter with the Faith movement healing practices resulted in his depression and maternal blame for not being healed.

Release from drugs – Muddy and his paranoia

In past the preachers were trying to release people from drugs. They were staying with the addicts during the day and constantly prayed for them. They were not very successful – only one out of several attempts resulted in complete abstinence. He is still member of the congregation. I also know about other people who quitted drugs, but it was their own deed, they were not assisted by the preachers. During my fieldwork I saw one example of release from drugs, where the religion played a role, however not a very strong one.

Muddy was about 17-years old son of one congregation member. He was not going to the church, until he once started to appear. His face showed confusion and apathy and his motion was slow and disordered. I have not met him personally

until once I was with the preacher Míša who was called to visit him. We came to the flat, sat in the kitchen, and Muddy's mother started explaining that he used to take drugs (crystal) and now, two weeks after he quitted, he does not sleep, he has many fears, and paranoia. Míša left with Muddy to another room, and when they came back Míša said:

> "We talked about it, and what he needs is to start to think positively, find a job, go for a walk, and gain other thoughts. It is not worth to suffer like this, or to fear anything without a reason. You also have your siblings who love you, and your father and mother love you too, so you should make them happy."

Muddy stood, but did not say anything. It did not seem to help him at all. Muddy's mother started to be very active, and tried many things. I know they went to visit a psychiatrist, but they were relying mostly on the religious authorities. They would go every day to the United Protestant Church in Márov (although the mother was a member of the Roma congregation) and asked the priest to pray, but they would also ask other people who were around to come and pray for him.

Soon after that Muddy came to a service, and walked to the front to receive a prayer from Waleri. It turned to be both a liberation prayer from the drug addiction (which he actually did not have) and a proselytization act, where at the end Muddy received Jesus in his heart. First Waleri just prayed in German and then with a Czech translation. The whole event was full of emotions, people would be crying around and Waleri talked with a great vigour:

> "Waleri: Jesus, show him you are with him, that you love him, show him he is a big value for you that you would not leave him even for a second, and in every situation you would be with him. Give him new joy from his life. Give him good future. Show him you are the way and the truth. And you are looking upon him; you see how the Satan wants to destroy him. That he found himself in his mind. You can see his desperate heart. In the name OF THE JESUS CHRIST who created the heaven and the earth, who will win over Satan, over the sins, so you heal him, and Satan: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, leave him. In the name of Jesus, Satan, leave Mud-

dy, leave his heart, leave his mind, relieve him from his drug dependency' and I ask you in the name of Jesus that he become free, THAT HE STOPS BEING ON DRUGS, IN THE NAME OF JESUS (Muddy cries very loudly) SATAN, LEAVE MUDDY! Now Muddy, repeat after me.

Waleri and Muddy: Dear Jesus Christ, forgive me all my sins, all the sins I did, you know all my sins, and now I pass all them to your hands. And I thank you that NOW you forgave me all my sins, and that you relieved me from all the powers of Satan and from the drugs. Now, give me a CLEAN heart, give me clean mind. I want you to become the master in my life again. And give me the power to follow you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

(Jan speaks in tongues, Waleri screams in Gypsy that the Satan should leave, in the name of Jesus, the names of the people present, and family members.)

Waleri (in Czech): Jesus loves you, Jesus loves you, Muddy. Satan came to destroy and kill. I bless you, go, you are blessed. And please, bless all who were at the wedding (there was a wedding the day before and the wedding guests did not come to the Sunday service after drinking during the whole night) and do not let anything bad. Give all who were there new mercy and new love in the name of Jesus."

The first thing to be noted is that Waleri supposed that Muddy was addicted to drugs, but in fact he had been abstaining for several weeks then, and he did not intend to take the crystal again. However the liberation had to be performed, as the first step. It is important to note that it was not only about the drugs, but generally he passed all sins to the Lord. The second step was the imposition of power on him – once he was liberated, he needed something to follow, so he was told to follow the Lord. Finally he was blessed, so the choice to follow the Lord which he did (he actually did not, because he was "just" repeating) was positively confirmed by the blessing. All this happened in a very tense and emotional setting.

Muddy became a congregation member, but his problem was not solved yet – he had fears, he could not sleep and he was paranoiac. For two weeks I did not see him and I suppose he was attending prayers with many different people. He also

started to come to the gatherings of the youth from the congregation, which were supposedly (but not really) taking place every week. We were four in the room where the services were taking place – Muddy, a young preacher who was a leader of the youth group, Muddy's friend and me. Muddy asked us to pray for him, and then the young preacher held a very long talk.

> "I partly understand what you are going through now. I understand you from some 60%, I cannot tell 100%, because I am not you to tell what is happening. But I went through something similar and I understand you from some 60%. I could tell you what you should do now, how you should behave. But I won't. I'll tell you only one thing which is crucial for you. This thing is that you should seek the community of Christians, and the rest will come gradually. And do not plunge into anything headlong. You made the first, the most important step. Once you accepted Jesus he washed your heart and now your heart is clean, tidy, and empty.
>
> Matthew says that once you run the wicked things out of your home they are walking around and look where to go, or how to return. Once you accepted Jesus your heart is empty, but the wickedness is looking for gaps to return. In your case this is all the temptations and incentives to sin. You have to fill your heart now as fast as possible by something good so the wickedness cannot return. If you fail, the wickedness will come back and bring seven demons who will roister there and destroy it wholly. And it would be even worse than if you never accepted Jesus, because the seven demons can do a big mess, it is as if they come to your house and completely destroy it."

Then the preacher offered Muddy a company with other boys who were coming to the youth sessions. He had already talked to them and they were open about it: they could go play football together and become friends. It was important that Muddy finds someone whom he trusts and shares his feelings with him, but he should be very cautious not to get abused. After about an hour of monologue by the preacher, Muddy asked him to pray for him. He came, inserted his hands on him and started praying. Then Muddy prayed and it was an unexpectedly coherent

speech as if he was preparing it for long. During the prayer he started to cry and the preacher encouraged him to keep crying and cry more.

The paranoia was not improving and Muddy was still down. It was shortly after the praying when the preacher Míša arranged a place in Teen Challenge program for Muddy. Teen Challenge is a Christian ministry affiliated with Assemblies of God which specializes in drug and alcohol recovery programs. On Sunday the preacher told him goodbye at the service and wished he managed to stay in the program. He said they all expected it would take about three months, but it might take little longer. On the next day I drove him with his parents to a farm, almost two hours' drive from Márov, where the community lived. There were various young men, some of them with injuries. An employee welcomed us and asked Muddy if he really wanted to be there and he said yes. The employee continued that it is little bit as in the army, there, and for one month he will have no contact with his family. The mother asked if he can call them, and it was not possible. After one month he will be allowed to make a ten minute call a week to his family, and after three months the family can come and visit him. It will take at least eight months until he will be allowed to go home for a visit. Muddy, his mother and his father were quite surprised by the arrangement, but they did not discuss it. Then the employee asked about money, Muddy should have arranged that the social benefits were sent to the Teen Challenge, but it was not arranged at all. His mother promised they would send some money, and Muddy could stay. They were supposed to leave him some money on the spot, but they did not have any except for seven Euro for the travel back to Márov. They gave it to him. Muddy asked them for cigarettes, and the employee took the cigarettes and threw them in a bin, the community is non-smoking. Finally we took Muddy's things from the car and left. His mother was crying, Muddy seemed he was prepared to stay there.

On the next day Muddy called me if I could drive him home. He did not want to stay. To my knowledge this was the end of his treatment. He came back to Márov, and found a girlfriend with a child and moved to her flat. The fears and paranoia disappeared after several months, and he has been abstaining since then.

Muddy in fact healed himself by abstaining, and his mother helped him, because she was constantly with him, when they were walking between the prayers.

Waleri and the preachers were directing Muddy towards accepting Jesus and becoming a regular member of the congregation, but they were not able to address his main issue: paranoia.

This example is in fact an antithesis to the argument of Patrick Williams that Roma become autonomous through the conversion, and that they perform the autonomy despite structural factors, deliberately disregarding the circumstances of their change, and putting themselves (and the God) in the front. Not only were they prepared to subordinate in the Bible school as shown in the chapter four. Muddy actually accepted the dispossession of his effort in the drug release. He played a role of the person who is just being healed in the church, and did not protest against the fact that the church would take the credit of his healing. There is a short and easy explanation to the stance of Muddy, which is nothing new: for Muddy it was also advantageous to "get healed" in the church and become a convert. As I already presented at length in the second chapter, he could use the locally accepted way to detach from his "old life", friends, and networks of obligations, which conversion (together with parenthood) presented.

Let me remind of the theory of autonomy (of the oppressed) by Christman (2014) which I presented in the second chapter. If a person acts according to an identity, he knows how he should act, so his actions are understood as intentional (in accordance with the practical identity). If he decides to use an identity and he affirms himself through this identity, he is an autonomous person. Now, what Muddy did is that he underwent a radical change which he caused himself – together with his mother they were very active in enacting the change by seeking prayers and help. When the change was done the problem of his fears and paranoia brought him to the congregation where he was "healed" and became a convert. Instead of being an isolated former drug addict he found a new community; he was offered new friendships and guidance. He decided to use the identity of the convert and he affirmed himself through this identity. He was autonomous even before the conversion with the identity of a former drug addict, and with the new practical identity of the convert he stayed autonomous. What actually changed was the possibility that he regains a status of an intentional agent and perhaps a respectable person in the future. He could better construct himself as an intention-

al agent if he made a radical break with his past. If he did not, he would still be considered one of those young boys who make "stupid thing" (*diliňipen*), sometimes they take the drugs, other times they do not, but they are not wise and respectable. The conversion allowed him to construct a radical break with his past (when he used to do stupid things) and become adult, not only free of drugs, but an intentional, respectable agent. Once he was unintentional and made stupid things, and now when he converted he became intentional.

Relief from prostitution and forced labour

Sex work was a major topic in Márov, but the congregation did not address it in any way. Some of the members were ex-prostitutes, but the current sexual workers were not helped by the mission. And Waleri was also sceptical about their possibilities – what should he tell to a mother with children who does not have what to cook? Should he prevent her from going with the Germans? He did not have anything to offer them.

Some of the members were also ex-pimps, drug dealers, and criminals. I might be mistaken, but I think they did not review their position towards their previous involvements, especially the way they used to treat their victims. Some did learn to control their violence, but this was different. Some people just did not talk about what they used to do, because they were ashamed, or because they knew it was not fine. But there were individuals who did talk, and who even revel in telling stories about their cruelty. I friend of mine once wanted to give warning to a man who offended him, so he beat him and told him that should not happen again, or he would take him and drown him in a dump. He continued that once they drowned like this a German who had 50 000 USD with him, but he did not want to tell them where the money was. They used a girl on him who lured him to a cottage house, and there the friend with another man started to work "on him". He was describing in great detail all the things they were doing to him. I was trying not to listen, but the other men who were with us were listening and laughing. Once he started describing how they took an angle grinder and cut his teeth I told him to stop – I was not interested in hearing such things. I felt sick. He finished that they took the German and threw him in a dump, but he finally escaped. I was

feeling sorry not only for the German, but for the interlocutor who was a convert, and who was such a cruel person, a man of a huge body but timorous character, who liked to frighten people. His stories of the convert were stories of cruelty which was never reassessed.

Some of the converts were still living in a world where the forced labour, disrespect to human dignity, heartlessness and opportunism had its place, and I do not think this was an issue that the congregation would worry about, or cultivate. Once I had one of the elders of the church, Forta, at home – I wanted to have my flat painted and he knew someone who was doing the job. They both came to Prague, the painter supposed Forta would help him, but he hardly did. There were issues with the efficiency of the painter, because he was supposed to finish the flat in two days, but it was more work and he drank a lot of beer. The painter was becoming nervous and sometimes shouted and cried, I felt very uncomfortable about him. When I was out of sight Forta bawled him out and pushed him to work more, because he wanted to go back to Márov. Later on Forta told me how the painter should be treated – one must not listen to him, because he talks stupid things all the time. One should not give him too much beer, but he should get some in order to work. It is also needed to scare him or blow up at him from time to time, because otherwise he would just hang around. The painter, on the other side, seemed to need help from Forta, but he would not help him. Finally I learned Forta was getting a commission out of the job, but he did not work. This was commission for the intermediary and for the management of the worker. Forta was an ex-pimp and what he was doing with the painter seemed very similar to what a pimp does – he just managed the human labour and used coercive means to achieve the efficiency. He would frighten and shout at the worker, and take commission as an intermediary. He did not respect the painter as a human being, but he was abusing him. However he did not seem to be aware of being in any kind of morally dubious situation when he abused people and in the same time being a convert.

When Forta was helpless about some problems with other Roma he liked to say "I will return for one day to the old life and play merry hell with them!" Although physically non-violent, he kept the aggressive attitude in solving everyday situations (night screaming at home). He also kept cruelty from the "old life" and dis-

respect to human dignity. He was not sorry about treating sexual workers as slaves in "the life before", and still had a similar concept for certain people then; he abused people who were stupid and he knew how to be very authoritative.

I once met a friend (convert) with someone whom he knew from the "life before". They both were talking about their experiences of humiliating people – the other man was showing off with stories how he raped men in the prison, humiliated and raped women. They both agreed how it was great back in the old times when they just opened the doors of their cars and got a blowjob from some junkie. For them being violent and heartless was a value in itself.

To my knowledge no deeper reflection and revision of the past actions of the converts against the human dignity took place, and they still thought it was fine to abuse and disrespect other people if it were possible.

Realization through the conversion

While most of the congregation members would be very active in formal and informal work, trade or exchanges, there were several people who did not have what to do and seemed to be happy for any meaningful activity they could be offered. People who seemed they had nothing to say, were discovering talents and religious charisma and they were able to preach to more people and convert them.

Superhuman powers were favourite topic of discussion, some of it experienced, others heard about. Forta was once called to liberate a Rom from the nearby city. The Roma was on drugs and could be almost double the size of Forta. During the liberation a foam started to go out of his mouth and his eyes were turning around. Forta knew that the devil was present, and he held the Rom firmly. Everyone else was afraid of facing him, but Forta remained holding him until he calmed down. Forta won thanks to the supernatural power he was given at the moment, he said.

A story about someone holding the supernatural powers was enough to encourage people – a friend was very happy that he travelled to Germany to a Christian gathering and he met a man who liberated someone who was possessed by four demons. This was inspiring for him. There was a story about a Korean man who was supposed to carry a Bible somewhere and he could not make it, but suddenly he

was taken to the doors where he was supposed to come and arrived in time. Supernatural powers and charisma were appearing often. People had experience of burning of the possession of Holy Spirit (although during my fieldwork I am not aware of seeing anyone in trance – the gifts of the Holy Spirit were very moderate here, some said even supressed by the theology). There were also people who suddenly and without any preparation could talk – God talked through them. he was "using them" (*použil si mě*). The main local preacher had the following personal history: one day he suddenly started to preach, and since then he has been able to preach even in front of big crowd with very small preparation. Others were also able to preach and to talk publicly about the Bible.

This ability to talk without preparation about spiritual matters was very well accepted by the non-converts as well – I witnessed numerous situations when the congregation members and preachers got involved in a talk on spiritual matters. Roma in Márov generally liked to talk about the spiritual matters and the preachers and educated members were much respected partners in these talks. This was an interesting career, they were getting recognition for studying and even the youngsters could talk as tutors to elderly and be listened without offending them. This was one of the very few fields where they could control and work on their reputation – there were many other status dimensions they were not able to influence – when their status would depend on their age, number of children of grandchildren, the fame of their family, or their behaviour since many years ago. With the charisma and education they were able to shine here and now, and they were able to influence it. It was not by accident that one Rom told me that I should read bible and I will see how much the people will start to respect me if I know about it and talk about it. This was his strategy for recognition which he lacked in other regards.

Some people were able to overturn their bad fame or bad luck into an advantage. The testimony by Parno which I presented before is a great example – from the biggest boss and drug user he became a leader of a new congregation. It was a little different case with Ruba – he was able to take the suffering caused by the death of his son and assign a meaning to it, which restored him from the one who was perhaps punished by the God to a leader with a message. Just after the funeral

of his son we went to the flat of his parents where the whole extended family gathered in grief. He held a long talk:

> "And now I will tell you a testimony. The day my son died I was walking at the train station. Suddenly I heard God telling me to look at the clock. It was ten to four. And God told me my son will die at four. When I was leaving Forta's place later they phoned me from the hospital that my son just passed away. It was four o'clock. Afterwards I was checking it on the documents, and he died at four o'clock."

Then he had a long spiritual talk to all people present, and his point was that the death of his son had some generative effect. Now God gives him something new. I saw that what he was given was a charisma, and everyone was listening to him. His suffering had meaning, because God wanted it this way, and he turned the misery into an opportunity. This was further coping strategy, and I would see it as a theology of victory. Similarly to some of the problems and strategies presented before, if the problems are too big to manage them oneself, one should look at the God and he will always be bigger than his problems, so one is temporarily relieved to life, or one can re-mark the problems, overturn them and say that this is a challenge by God, a sign with a deep meaning which is generative. This approach concurs with parts of theology presented in the Bible school for Roma – they were not empowered in the sense that they would recognize the supressing structures and start addressing them, but they were told, that their suffering in this life is perhaps a test from God. Any disaster could be presented in this way.

The charisma which the converts acquired was quite limited for the use among fellow Christians. It was the possibility to come out, to be good in something and get recognition. The preacher Míša had a parable, that people could feel old, ill, or our life does not seem to have a sense, but we are just instruments and if we let the master play us we will sound with the most beautiful tones. This recognition was, however, limited to the congregation, or sometimes to the community of Christians. The local preacher Míša, who seemed to me to be a clear charismatic leader when I became acquaintance with him and the congregation, and how people react to him. Once we had a meeting with him and a friend of mine from Prague, about a project the congregation could run. After the meeting my friend eval-

uated his as someone who lives in a different world and never asked the meaning of what he is doing. This was quite a sharp evaluation, but I could see that the charisma Míša possessed for the people inside the congregation did not work outside it or would not work universally.

Reputation

The conversions could improve one's reputation in the outside world as well. A former criminal (who converted and de-converted several times during my fieldwork) told me all policemen in Márov know about his past, but now they also know he is going to the church, which restored him in their eyes to a certain extent. There was perhaps some release in the vigilance or mistrust. The status of a Christian was used to gain credibility. One girl was called to witness with the police about an accident at which she was present, and the police questioned her version. She said she could not lie, because she was a Christian. During the court hearing various people actually lied, including her. When a young preacher was explaining the advantages of being Christian to unconverted Roma, he also mentioned that when Roma become Christians, non-Roma also treat them better. Again, in practice I know, and the same preacher also told me – the racism towards them was the same, but within the community of Christians it could happen that a Roma would meet non-Roma who would not act in a racist way towards them. However, this was a catchy outcome of the conversion – if people treated Roma who converts better, he could also become little bit more his own master – there were just too many instances of racism and discrimination that limited Roma in acting freely. Finally the Roma in Márov also felt that the conversions restore them in the eyes of other Roma and Sinti. They once earned the worst reputation, because they were selling their women – they became unclean. In the Christian gatherings they gained little by little their position in the society of Roma and Sinti.

Connected to the reputation was the problem of deservingness. Once the preachers together with Waleri went to a mission among Roma in South-Eastern Europe and when they returned Waleri was showing photos of poverty and underdevelopment, and he was telling us we should look at it with the Christian eyes. Then the

preachers went on to explain that the poor Roma deserved it, because once they had money, but spent it all. The same could happen to us, so we should be warned. One woman told them she used to have such nice clothes for her and her children, but then they became poor, and live in a shack at the outskirts of Sarajevo. Another preacher added that they also met Christians and they are much better, they know how to behave and have no economic problems. This interpretation presented Christians as people who generally have a better life. If one is not Christian he causes his poverty and according to him he deserves it.. The Christians, in contrast, are successful.

It did not always work this way and the preacher himself knew it, because his wage was cut by 40% during the economic crisis, and he was not able to feed his own family, although he was a Christian. It was the exotic experience that let him judge this way. This moral superiority led to paradoxical situations, when being Christian was used to own ends in the situations of severe poverty. I once lend money to a wife of one preacher for several days. She was never going to give it back again, I suspected, but when I reclaimed when the lease expired she told me I had enough money and I had to look at it through Christian eyes.

Tradition, family and conversion

There were strong issues between the kinship relations of the larger family, conversions and management of the congregation. I am dealing with this issue in a separate chapter, however I need, to remark now that the congregation was once started by two relatives – uncle and nephew – who formed a prayer group around them, where the close male relatives were coming. The group had a very egalitarian spirit – its main activities were prayers/meditations and moral concentration. The members of the group started to uncover things that otherwise were hidden even between the family members, but which could be said during the prayers. The group grew and moved between various preachers and pastors, but it never gave up the claim that the family was before all, and that the traditions and certain rituals must be respected. Attending the wedding on Saturday until the morning was more important, than going to the church on Sunday. When an aunt died, the music group of praises would not play for certain time, because the tradition was

that music should not be played after a death in the family. Although the "most important day of all Christians" as the preacher coined it, it was more important to celebrate Easter in a way it was celebrated among Roma, than to strive for restoration through intense church activities, as it was done in the local Catholic Church. On Easter most of the preachers left to travel on mission abroad, and only about 20 people came to the church. Certain autonomy was also built around the notion of home. The congregation was home to its members, and they were locals. When someone came from outside, he was welcome, but he was not to rule here, because he was not at home here. This aspect was even stronger given the fact that a generation of children who were socialized in the congregation became adult and objectified it, as can be seen from the following quotation of a preacher:

> "We can go to serve wherever we want, around all the Czech Republic, to Germany to serve Sinti, if God wants. But still we are at home here. We were raised here in this congregation. My daughter when she told me 'father, it is ten years since I have believed. Where should I go?' WE should lose this congregation? Where should I go if I was 10 when I accepted, and now I am 20 almost? Where should I go? To Bublava? I should go to Bublava from here to serve? Or to a service? Well, she can go, but it won't be at home. Home is here, in this congregation, here when she was born and raised."

When it came to decide who was at home and who was not, it was quite clear. People remembered the times when they managed the congregation themselves and they had the pastor only coming once in two weeks to celebrate the mass and give them material and financial support. When problems with the German Gypsy pastor arose, he was blamed he stole the congregation – he would be saying things like "*mire menschi*" (my people), but they rebelled against being "his people" – they were their own people and the people of God, not his.

Conclusions

I started this chapter with an overview of the proselytization strategies and prospects of the conversion. Unlike the local Roma preachers who were more silent about their pasts, Waleri was presenting an in-depth testimony of his detachment

from the family and Gypsy community, and new life within the community of successful Christians. This was a script of change presented to Roma for whom it was difficult to imagine they could make such a radical shift. There were also prospects of wealth implied in the testimony of Waleri, but the missionary resources were not so high as to allow for upward social mobility of the converts. The more converts there was, the less probable it became that they get financial help from Waleri.

The missionaries did not fight openly against personal beliefs of unconverted people, but rather warned them that it is dangerous to stay alone, and invited them to come to the congregation and be protected against the evil by becoming members of the community. This resonated with the general value of the local Roma that one must not be left alone.

Healing was not promised, but the converts would talk about miracles, especially concerning fertility, there were cases of "healed" domestic violence when a man became empathetic and stopped beating his wife, or miraculous release from prison. The local preacher knew well that it was not a good idea to promise healing. However, once I was present to a strong healing promise by a preacher during a Faith movement conference, which did not fulfil. Instead of blaming the preacher or the religion the ill person started to find mistakes in his surroundings and ended up blaming his own mother.

On the example of a young man who stopped using drugs and was seeking help in psychiatric difficulties I have shown how the religious specialists displaced his aims and needs. First, he was seeking help because of paranoia he was facing. He got cured from the addiction to drugs as he was not addicted to them by the time he received the "healing" in the congregation. He became "liberated", and a new life prospect was given to him in following Jesus and becoming a member of the congregation, and he got blessed for doing so. He (autonomously) healed himself, but it was not recognized at all: instead it seemed he got healed within the congregation while becoming its member. This is in fact a counterexample to Williams's theory of autonomy through conversion, because instead of crediting just himself and the God for something that happened due to various factors, Muddy did not credit himself at all for getting rid of drugs, and let the church/conversion narra-

tive take the merit instead. Nevertheless I consider this act as an act of autonomy trough conversion (and autonomous conversion in the same time). It is just needed to refine what is meant by autonomy, and here the concept of autonomy of the oppressed promoted by Christman (2014) is of use for me. Not only did Muddy gain autonomy through the conversion (he actually already had it as an former drug addict), but he was able to gain the status of an intentional agent, of an adult who does not do "stupid thing" (*diliňipen)*, through a radical break with his past through the conversion.

Muddy was not alone in handing over the credit for his own effort in executing the change to the (narrative of) conversion. Until now it is not very clear why the pimps, drug dealers, and other criminals in Márov stopped doing the business after 2000 and became converts, and the reasons and factors seem to be multiple. However many found it appropriate to assume the identity of the convert and thus make a radical break with their past. Although they were not very open about the "bad life" before, and their testimonies were not as public and as open as in other Charismatic/Pentecostal churches, it was implicitly inscribed in their membership in the congregation, that the change they did and the conversion went hand in hand.

The ex-pimps and ex-criminals who converted in Márov did not seem to have revisited their past actions against human dignity – some of them talked with joy about the violence in the past; others kept abusing people, although not prostitutes anymore, and there did not seem to be a clash between doing so, and the habits of the congregation.

The converts realized their talents in the new religious arenas. They were even able to turn their bad situation into a God's intention; however the recognition of their new charisma was most of the time limited to fellow Christians. The conversions did not change the structural position of Roma in the Czech society and did not address main problems which the local Roma were facing, be it racism, over indebtedness, drug addictions, or lack of education, qualification and decent work.

8. The Makings of an Ethnic-Religious Leader

Leadership of the churches is one of the most interesting agendas of the research on the Pentecostalism among the Roma. What are the characteristics of the church leaders? What are the trajectories of becoming the leader? Are the local leaders coming from the local elites, or from all the strata of local community? What are the formal and informal requirements for the leadership? What is the relation between the authority of a religious leader, and the authority based on other system, e. g. kinship, seniority, attainments, and recognized talent? These and many more questions emerge around this issue. In this chapter I intend to answer some of them.

Drawing on the literature on charisma and ethnic leadership, I construct a case study of and ethnic-religious leader, pastor Waleri. He came to Márov with a clear vision of ethnic leadership, promoting mono-ethnic church with dedicated mission. His role in this new organization was that of an ethnic and religious specialist on the issues of Roma. Locally he developed and sustained his authority through inculcation of hierarchical thinking about the congregation, and textualization of his own life. What helped him, paradoxically, was the fact that he was not part of any local family, so he disregarded some locally required codes of conduct.

Charisma is barely referred to in anthropology of religion, according to its main proponent, Charles Lindholm, due to the dubious position of ethnographers of charismatic groups: as there is usually no space left between being in the group, and out of it, researchers may have gone through initiation procedures and may have made promises of obedience to the religious leaders. Writing about charisma might then be seen as a form of betrayal and thus could result in losing access to the community under study (Lindholm 2013, p.18). In my view, this assumption could be extended to almost any kind of ethnographic involvement. The act of "betrayal" is difficult to differentiate, and, in my opinion, holds the same significance to informants in possibly non-religious or non-charismatic settings.

Alternatively, there seems to be an explanation that seems more reasonable: "scholars have been reluctant to dwell on issues of authority and leadership because of the marked popular tendency to engage in reductive and largely pejorative psychological speculations about the nature and motivations of group leaders" (Dawson 2011, p.2)

There is an interest in the topic, marked by 2013 book entitled *The Anthropology of Religious Charisma*, which contains nine ethnographies and an introduction by Charles Lindholm. Interestingly, for my own case, Lindholm himself was attracted to the topic during his fieldwork in Northern Pakistan where egalitarian and competitive culture went hand-in-hand with charismatic involvement (Lindholm 1982).

What is charisma/charismatic authority?

Max Weber listed charismatic authority alongside with traditional and rational authorities as an ideal typical model of legitimate domination. He defines charisma as

> "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a 'leader'. (…) What is alone important is how the individual is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by his 'followers 'or 'disciples'" (Weber 1978, pp.241–242).

From the definition, it is clear that charisma for Weber is a relationship between leaders and their followers; or in other words, charismatic authority is a hierarchical relationship. While, on the contrary, in Durkheim's work religious charisma is a collective effervescence, an event where separate individual identities get lost and new collective identities are established. Gathering around totems would be considered an example of such an event. A religious leader for Durkheim is only a human totem, an empty symbol. Problematically, Durkheim fails to take

into account concrete individuals who make the charismatic moment occur – the "technicians of the sacred" as Eliade calls them (Lindholm 1990, p.16). Lindholm notes that, although Durkheim downplayed the role of leadership in establishing and maintaining the charismatic authority, both Durkheim and Weber would agree that it is not the meaning which is retroactively assigned to the event, but the "participatory communion engendered by the charismatic performance (which) experientially and immediately releases the onlookers from their mundane sufferings" (Lindholm 2013, p.12).

As described above, this relationship is heavily loaded with and fuelled by emotions. In some cases, the charismatic experience can be compared to strong love (which can also overturn to strong hatred). Lindholm calls it volcanic primary form of charisma, an "explosive and compulsive force radiating from a deified leader". This volcanic charisma has the potential to bring about new worlds, and very importantly become the aim, or a telos, in itself, for all parties and actors involved in the charismatic experience (Lindholm 2013, p.14). Interestingly enough, fire is a very fitting metaphor mobilized by many charismatic groups.

Charismatic leaders and the dynamics of charismatic authority

A charismatic leader is the one who has been recognized, and who has invested in the charismatic relationship. The very concept of leader is culturally and also subculturally relative. This is precisely why the leaders might be seen as ordinary folk by non-followers, but also deemed normal by people who know them from their everyday lives. The leaders use techniques to make themselves un-familiar to some or extra-ordinary to others. Charismatic leaders are energetic, self-confident and determined in their mission. They make the sacrifices they require from others. In personal encounters they present themselves as being invested and very interested in the lives of others. Additionally, in the early stages of charismatic group development, they tend to look after and tend to the well-being of the group as a whole. They have very good rhetorical and interpersonal skills and know how to frame complex and complicated problems through the use of catchy and witty words. They also make themselves part of the History by "inserting themselves in the great historical and mythical scripts of their cultures" (Dawson 2011, p.117)

Wallis, with his famous study on the social construction of charisma, argued that rather than an irrational regression from a linear development of people and society towards the rationality, from his research charisma seemed to be rationally pursued by both parties – an exchange. Through the story of David Berg, a charismatic leader of a group called the Children of God he traces the steps that one must socially endure in order to become a charismatic authority. David Berg was a fairly unsuccessful missionary having moved from job to job and from church to church. Deep down, however, David knew that it was his vocation to become a religious leader because his mother was a Pentecostal missionary. After roaming for a while, it was not until David was in his 50s when he was able to find a group of people who gradually began to see his work and preachings as messianic. These were a group of young hippies in Huntington Beach, California, who took to Berg's thoughts and sprigs of wisdom. After the death of his mother, Berg's identity transformed from subdued person to a prophetic icon. The death of his mother freed him from the restraints of doctrine and morality; he started teaching about a primitive communism Jesus espoused; he spoke out against the public education system and church doctrine. Berg socializing quickly became deified by this Huntington Beach following. At the beginning he was just another human being, a sexual partner, an older mate, a pastor and the leader of the group with the worldliest experience, but later he became identified by the others as an incarnation of the prophets of the Old Testament. The group became known as the Children of Israel and Berg became their Moses. Once he was recognized as a prophet the movement and his charismatic authority started to disperse to people outside of the group and abroad through his letters and word of mouth mythology. He started to restrict access, forming a community of love around him, full of affectivity and open sexual relationships. To ensure a presence with those outside of the group, Berg published letters of adoration written by his followers in a journal for the movement. The publication would then be disseminated to those followers who did not have direct access to him and his internal circle. In this advanced stage of the charismatic moment, there were only two options for Berg's followers: either total acceptance and devotion to the leader, or excommunication from the movement – this was the mechanism to maintain his charismatic hold (Wallis 1982).

In other words, charisma is a very precarious function and is in constant need of reinforcement. The love and passion may quickly turn into hatred against the leader and love towards a new one.

Projects of the study of charisma

One important part of the study of charisma is also the study of its context specific social sources. Researchers often ask about the origins and causes of charismatic authority emergence. Scholars and academics often ponder on whether charismatic followings rise from social crises. This causal link seeks to explain how a crisis spurs a recruitment of followers (and also leaders) from marginalized populations. Most agree that the social crisis is a precursor to charismatic authority, but it cannot be solely explained through the notion of the crisis. These followings can also be explained through what Lindholm postulates as a human being's basic need for commonality and communion. Given that our societies are becoming deeply complexified social systems, we are not always able to cultivate very profound relationships. The absolute autonomy given to individuals in (post)modern societies in the absence of a hierarchy of values, according to Lindholm, leads to the loss of self and absolute socialization.

More succinctly, it is the desire for an experience of attachment that drives (post)modern individuals into charismatic groups (Lindholm 1990, pp.94–100).

An abundance of charismatic following research has also been marked by value assumptions on the sources and functioning of charisma: being studied as something harmful, dangerous; a shamanism capable of making people irrational and moulding the participants into lunatics. Comparatively, it is no surprise that these assumptions are made given that the most referred to charismatic leaders in history were Adolf Hitler and several leaders of the tragic suicidal millennial groups. Sociologists and anthropologists put lot of effort in distancing themselves from the studies of social psychology, which would primarily associate any involvement in charismatic relationships as pathological, an outcome of disrupted personality and brainwashing. Rather they propose to study the social conditions which give rise to charisma, the role of socialization, the processes of *charismati-*

zation (Barker 1993), patterns of recruitment, ideology and institutionalization of charisma.

Ethnographic research of charisma can aid a turn away from the value loaded charismatic leaders, groups and events, to charisma as a part of everyday life and as a lived practice. It is at this junctured where I see the project of Charles Lindholm (2013). For him it is not the relationship itself, but its social embeddedness that determines outcomes. The aim of his earlier work was, however, to understand what charisma means to people from a psychological and emotional point of view (Lindholm 1990, p.11). Dawson (2011)and Wallis (1982) suggest a sociological explanation of the typical patterns of charisma as situationally generated in interaction. While Joosse (2012) suggests to use Goffman's dramaturgical sociology to analyse the charisma Dawson proposes three foci for the study of charismatic authority : "(1) the conditions giving rise to charismatic leaders; (2) the social construction and management of charismatic authority; and (3) the institutionalization of charismatic authority, or what Max Weber called the "routinization of charisma" (Dawson 2011, p.114). According to Dawson, the study of the routinization or institutionalization of charisma is especially understudied.

Institutionalization / Routinization of charisma

In Weber's theory the charismatic authority is opposed to everyday routine structures. Once the domination over large masses is established, the charisma needs to be handed over to the everyday routine:

> "the most fundamental problem is that of making a transition from a charismatic administrative staff, and the corresponding principles of administration, to one which is adapted to everyday conditions" (Weber 1978, p.253)

There are two main reasons for this: first, the ones who ascended to power in the movement want to conserve their status, and second, there are needs in everyday life that require adaptation of the rules and administration. Additionally, for the charismatic relationship to be balanced and stabilized there needs to be some form of routinization. When the leader dies or leaves the problem of succession comes

and it is overcome either by traditionalization, or by rationalization. The first possible resolution is to seek a new leader who bears the same qualities; the leadership becomes traditionalized. Weber enumerates alternatives, such as revelation and various types of characteristics of a new leader. In case of succession, the new leader might be either designated by the old leader, or by the administrative staff, and needs to become recognized by the community (Weber 1978, pp.246–250). During the routinization period the organization systematically slides from charismatic following to one of direct authority: "in the course of routinization the charismatically ruled organization is largely transformed into one of the everyday authorities, the patrimonial form, especially in its estate-type or bureaucratic variant." (Weber 1978, p.251).

The makings of an ethnic-religious leader

The preacher John with whom the Roma in Márov originally converted had a project of a mixed Roma congregation. However, for the purpose of the missionization he would always prefer having Roma proselytize Roma recruits. He was also deeply convinced that a good leader of a Roma congregation should be a Rom, because such a leader would have more natural authority than a non-Roma. When he talked about Waleri, he would say:

> "He is more able to point out some things which should be improved. He is more able to do it without them dissenting because he is one of them. They accept it differently when a Roma tells something to them. If you are in the position of a spiritual leader you see people's lives; and it is your duty before God to remark upon certain spiritualties. You know, things that should not exist; if someone is a habitual drinker, yes, it is directly written in the Bible; if someone smokes, if he lives in an extra-marital bond. These are all things that depreciate God's name, which we bear."[41]

He portrayed a spiritual leader as a person who should watch over the behaviour of the members of the congregation and make remarks or reprove when needed. In

[41] Interview with preacher John, 8 May 2011, Márov, Czech Republic.

this case, why was it important to know who reproved or corrected the behaviour of others? One answer would be because the licence to rebuke was traditionally reserved to those akin to authorities. As I will claim in the following text, Gypsy pastor Waleri was a trailblazer due to his ability to acquire this licence as an ethnic religious leader.

The power regimes inherent within ethnic boundaries and ethnic leadership affect the charismatic authority of the ethnic religious leader. In terms of leadership, Slovak Roma once had political leaders called *vajda*, yet through the course of migration, urbanization, and assimilation these positions were lost. Many attribute the weak political representation and political involvement of Slovak Roma due to the lack of formal traditional representatives and ethnic leaders in the public sphere. Consequently, in public discussions, again and again we are coming across the cliché that the Roma are without, and thus awaiting, their Martin Luther King[42]. I see two reasons for this comparison and assumption: 1) a supposed need for a dominant class to efficiently manage the dominated groups and 2) the current model of cultural hegemony which invites the dominated to develop particular types of ethnicity and ethnic leadership on a large scale.

First, the introduction of an ethnic leader who helps to efficiently manage the subjugated group can be found already in the classical literature on the relations between whites and blacks in the US in the first half of 20th century. Myrdal, Sterner and Rose (1944) saw a rise of racial segregation in the American South in the 30s and noted that ordinary blacks developed fewer contacts with whites who would help them in case of danger or need of assistance. Thus, the blacks who were known to maintain contacts with whites were becoming important also within the black community (Myrdal et al. 1944, pp.722–726). Another important shift distinguished upper class black leaders from the archaic figure of "Uncle Toms". The "Uncle Tom" leaders would be ridiculed for their lower status within the black community, whereas upper class blacks who slowly and very selectively started to emerge would be honoured within the community. Soon thereafter, the whites

[42] This call for a MLK is not an exclusively Czech cliché, but can be found elsewhere, as in (Cooper, 2001).

realized, according to the authors, that "they could find as many 'Uncle Toms' among Negroes of upper class status as among the old-time 'darkies,' and that educated persons often were much more capable of carrying out their tasks as white-appointed Negro leaders." (ibid: 729)

A similar pattern of ethnic leaders as servants of the paternalistic system could be also found in colonial administrations, but as Werbner (Goulbourne 1991, p.22) argued these same ethnic leaders, in time, became the main proponents and social forces in anti-colonialist struggles and helped in its overthrow. This is because "radical institutions are often born out of accommodationist, state-sponsored buffer institutions" (ibid: 22).

Secondly, cultural hegemony in the age of globalization is not homogenizing, but it is expressed through the promotion of difference of a *particular kind*. Contrary to direct imposition, dominance is achieved by "presenting universal categories and standards by which all cultural differences can be defined." (Wilk 1995, p.118) Domination finally causes the domesticated local, ethnic and national particularities to become constitutive parts of global cultural flows (ibid).[43] Ethnic leaders then become (in a uniform way) representatives of local cultures or ethnic groups (of a particular kind) in the game of cultural hegemons of which, nonetheless, they play a highly active role as *ethnic entrepreneurs* (Brubaker 2002). What does the hegemonic model of ethnicity look like? Goulbourne (1991) notes the existence of a universal hegemonic model of society called "communal option" which presumes that:

> "Humanity can be legitimately and properly divided into easily recognisable ethnic or racial categories, and that members of these categories wish to enjoy security within specified enclaves which are exclusively their own. These enclaves are further presumed to constitute the proper boundaries within which individuals should be encouraged to conduct their daily lives." (Goulbourne 1991, p.203)

[43] For a discussion of this argument in the case of Spanish Gitanos, see Gay y Blasco (2002).

Gypsy nation and Gypsy Pentecostalisms

Historically, it was the French Pentecostal Gypsies who let a very specific collectivity of "Gypsy people" (*peuple Tsigane*) emerge, composed of very different groups of Gypsies. This collectivity served as a response to the hegemonic demand towards Gypsies, who previously used to be hidden, to "gain a face", have representatives and become accountable in the eyes of the public administration. Contrary to the minority concept promoted by pro-Gypsy activists in France, which put forward an image of suffering and of Gypsy history with the Holocaust, Gypsy Pentecostalism brought a re-appropriation of self-image and self-history and progressive possibility to present it publicly without revealing too much of Gypsy identities (Williams 1993b, pp.6–8). On the other side, the entity of "Gypsy people", as Williams shows, is also turned inward. It is "based on gatherings, shared convictions and emotions and not only on agreement with the view of the non-Gypsies" (Williams 1991, p.88 own translation).

A similar turn occurred in Spain where some Pentecostal Gitanos started to act and view themselves as a diaspora, as "members of a society in the traditional anthropological meaning of the term (as a coherent body of institutions, statuses and roles)" (Gay y Blasco 2002, p.16) in contrast with a previous concept of the Gitano people "as a scattered aggregate of persons, of undefined size, origin and location, who are similarly positioned vis-à-vis the rest of the world and who uphold the Gitano laws" (ibid: 7). However, Cantón (2010; 2004) calls for differentiation:

> "the new ritual spaces occasionally lead to a strong reformulation of ethnic identities that in some contexts, and always closely related to local circumstances, can strengthen the sense of belonging to a distinctive ethnic group or to a specific religious group, or combine both levels of belonging without much conflict" (Cantón 2010).

In the case of Transylvanian Roma, Ries (2007) presents two different views on the effects of Pentecostal mission on Roma/Gypsies. In Western Europe the *Romany/Gypsy church argument* prevails and, subsequently, the reformulation of Roma/Gypsy identity occurs. Whereas in the Eastern European context we have

many accounts of *transethnic congregations* and the Pentecostal mission serves for overcoming boundaries between Roma and non-Roma. Ries presents an ethnographic example when two different groups of local Gypsies were missionized with the same transethnic congregational argument: one group who was willing to assimilate with non-Gypsies, and the other who wanted to keep their exclusivity. This kind of mission was successful for the group who wanted to assimilate, but Ries suggests if the missionaries adopted the Gypsy church model for the second group who was more exclusivist by itself, they would have been more successful. On the other hand, it would seem that the success of a Pentecostal mission is dependent on whether it allows for the missionized group to cultivate an ideology they prefer.

Roma migrants from Eastern Slovakia in Márov and leadership

My case is different, because the Roma I worked with can be most of the time better characterized as *escaping Gypsyness* (Abu Ghosh 2008), but the ideology promoted by the leader/missionary was of an ethnically exclusive congregation: a congreg(n)ation of Roma and Sinti in Europe.

The Roma settlements in Eastern Slovakia, where parents and grandparents of the converts in Márov came from, were organized along kinship lines with whole kinship groups living together in a small area. *Vajda*, a Gypsy chief, used to be a very common position. "In Roma settlement vajda worked as a catalyst who settled disputes between his Roma, gave advices in the times of crisis, and kept his group in internal harmony and symbiosis with their surroundings. People trusted him and followed his advices." (Kašparová 2007, p.47)

> "The situation radically changed for majority of Roma during 50s – 70s of the 20th century after the relocation to Bohemia and Moravia. The communist regime supposed it would be beneficial to all if Roma are divided into nuclear families and scattered (…) The Roma families were torn apart and the former values and ways of dealing with crises were cancelled. The internal authority represented by the position of *vajda* got lost and the bonds of the extended families strengthened their sovereign position, with its own value system, responsibility towards each other, own truth, rights

> and duties. In the settlements the narrow family formed part of a larger whole for which the family was responsible. In the cities it was left alone. It fostered its autonomy and in the same time it decreased or even lost its responsibility towards the whole" (ibid: 20)

Márov was also a city where many different families lived and the above-mentioned description fits, although the extended family, *fajta*, those living outside of the city, still plays an important role.

Inquiring into the motivations of the Roma to convert to Charismatic Christianity, Jurková (2004) listed several traits of this religious movement that, according to her, resonate with Romani traditions: the emotional religious services, which go well with the tempered Romani character; the possibility to organize their matters within the community, and also the figure of the pastor, a leader, an authority, who is "one of them" and replaces the traditional strong leader of the community. However, the explanation of the authority of an ethnic pastor through the figure of *vajda* remains unconvincing to me. The *vajda* is an old structure fixed in folklore studies and in the popular imagination of the majority non-Gypsy society. Nowadays though, this recalling of the tradition is rather wishful thinking on the part of the majority society than an existing political structure or disposition. The refusal of *vajda*-like people was embedded in the local political order of the Roma with whom I did my research and in the decency which forbids them from reproving each other.

Local political order: Reproving in the life outside the church

The key to local political order lies in the practices of reproving mentioned by the preacher John in the introduction. Generally speaking, most of the time people would be left to 'go about their business', including children, and no one would interfere with others even though their behaviour may have been unorthodox in the eyes of the community. A direct rebuke was almost unthinkable (unless it was done by the oldest person of the family, or the father, or the husband) and the way to solve problems with one's behaviour was either by using very delicate techniques of indirect rebuke, such as gossip, making their behaviour public, or ostensibly ignorant questions, on one side. On the other side, there would be instances

of open and direct violence (or cursing) done in an altered state of "having bad nerves" (*mange nervi*).

Physical violence and screaming were the most common methods for reproving or correction. I witnessed both beating and shouting in public – firstly because it was mostly an immediate reaction, and secondly because there seems to be little need to hide it. In addition, the practices of beating and shouting were also used as an upbringing technique in order to put one's son, daughter, or wife in line. Beating needed not come after a forewarning for disobeying, as everyone was supposed to know how he/she should behave. One of my informants used to beat his wife "when she did some stupid things" or something he did not like. I was told the young boys who did "foolish things" (*diliňipen),* which could for example tarnish the reputation of the local Roma, were beaten up by an elder Rom, usually their uncle, and it was an acceptable way to reprove them.

Beating was accepted from the kinship authority, but not from anyone else. In terms of political authority, the local Roma would be subject to the decisions taken by the father of their family, the head of the household or the eldest of the extended family – this was the optimal internal organization applied in most of the cases. Quite clearly, there is a hierarchy with clearly designated positions, but also there is a strong interest in equality among the rest of the Roma community, and any actions seen as superior, superordinate, would be sanctioned.

Reproving, moralizing and sermonizing in the congregation

Violence was strictly forbidden from church life and when a fight once occurred in the church problems ensued. Throughout their conversion process, men were trained in suppressing any violent actions as a way of learning how to solve problems through alternative means. It was not possible to reprimand with aggression inside the congregation, but kept to the personal lives of its members.

The church preachers who came from the local community abstained from any verbal reproving remarks and no criticisms would ever be directed towards the church members. Alternately, when something needed to be said, they would say it openly only during a public prayer, where they would pray for someone to

overcome his sins without publicly listing the member's particular faults. For example, the preacher would speak in general terms: "God, please let this person quit evil things. You know best what this person has in her heart and what she needs", but they would refrain from being explicit. Not once did I witness them prohibit someone from doing a specific action or even tell an opponent in a theological debate that he was not right. The preachers stayed within the limits granted to them by the local political order. Moreover, it was not only the behaviour of the preachers, but the whole organization of the congregation which understood and respected the local authority's hierarchical position.

A new Gypsy pastor and an ethnic Gypsy congreg-nation

The Gypsy pastor Waleri had a completely different vision of the congregation to that of the previous pastor John. While John promoted outreach to non-Roma marginals such as the homeless and drug users, Waleri came with a concept of ethno-religion: a free Charismatic church formed by the Roma for the Roma, in which the members are trained to evangelize among fellow Roma. His scope was broader, as he was Sinto himself, so he included the Sinti and Roma in Europe among the groups of the mission, and also created the foundation for a collective unity between the Sinti and Roma within the church.

According to Ruba, a young church music performer, who used to travel with Waleri to Germany and play Christian music on different occasions there, the Sinti regard themselves as a better caste than the rest of the Gypsies. They looked down upon the Roma from Márov because they considered them immoral, the ones who "once sold their women". With that in mind, for the local Roma, it was an honour that a member of the Sinti group came to evangelize among them. In this sense of being a member of a higher caste, the Sinto, was predisposed to lead, such as blacks from the upper class would nearly automatically become political leaders in the U.S. since the first half of the 20th century (Myrdal et al. 1944, p.727).

Waleri claimed that by being a Sinto he knew the laws and traditions of the Roma, so he became a specialist in mission work among them. He was, and still is, a great example of an ethnic leader and ethnic entrepreneur who founded his career

upon promoting cultural difference and naming himself as a cultural specialist. He used to portray the Czech society as ethnically divided, with the Roma on the bottom, living only in segregated neighbourhoods, with all of them being quite impoverished. He withheld the fact that two-thirds of the Roma in the Czech Republic do not live in social exclusion, there is a significant Roma middle class, and even the lives of the poorest Roma are always intertwined with the lives of some non-Roma. By reinforcing the image of a divided, segregated society was powerful enough to bring money for the operation of the mission and, more importantly, to open ways for his engagement as an ethnic Gypsy leader.

Waleri was very soon able to mobilize faculty consisting of evangelical pastors from Germany and run teaching in a Bible school for the Roma every two weeks. Over a period of three-and-half years, he trained the local Roma in biblical knowledge, with teachings of the Holy Spirit, church history, religious studies, preaching techniques, pastoral work, etc. Local Roma were eager to learn about religion and enjoyed the Bible school as a source of education.[44] Waleri also went on missions among the Roma both in the Czech Republic and abroad together with a church music group and organized several conferences. During my stay, seven members of the church became deacons.

Introducing new hierarchies through the Bible school

In terms of political authority, the local Roma would always be subject to the father of their family, to the head of their household or to the eldest of their extended family – this was the optimal internal organization, and this was applied in most of the cases. Waleri, unlike anyone else before him, introduced the Roma to a hierarchical structure of positions in the congregation, and he was able to sustain this model of congregation for several years. In terms of religious authority, the local Roma who had been previously involved in religious life, had a completely divergent approach to religious authority and managed most of the religious activ-

[44] In the chapter five I am showing that, of course, they were motivated to study by the fact that they were fresh converts, but also that in the school they learnt a new language code which they could use elsewhere – they were becoming generally educated.

ities themselves[45] (most notably, through individual or collective prayer). Baptisms and burials would be the only instances where the Roma would ask the clergy to lead the ceremony, but for example if they married, they did so at the municipal office.

Waleri's direction, conversely, imported new hierarchies into the congregational religious practices. During one of the sessions of the Bible school for local Roma, which was organized every second Saturday and enjoyed an attendance of 10–15 important congregational members, a German teacher, the one with whom Waleri converted, depicted Waleri as Saint Peter in contemporary times. Waleri was casted as even more righteous in his mission as Saint Peter, because he denied his own people and chose to be Christian when it came to a crucial decision in his life. The purpose of this particular lesson during the Bible school was to build a hierarchy with listeners positioned as inferior to the pastor.

The invited German speaker, Teacher Hans, asked the students for the definition of an 'apostle' and if the students had some apostles in their congregation. One of the preachers replied they had many apostles; all of them would missionize here and in surrounding towns. Hans corrected him though: in the congregation there would be only evangelists. He reminded the student of the (hierarchical) sequence of God's servants: apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors and evangelists. True apostles not only spread the Gospel, but also exorcised demons and practiced healing:

"And evangelists always pertain to a local congregation, as for example here. It is possible they also do powerful things, but their main job is to spread the Gospel. But an apostle has more to do. (…) He finds new areas, new congregations. He prepares a new situation, a new town, to arrive and spread the Gospel. And there the will of God shows through him."[46]

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[45] Fosztó (2007) writes about a similar example from Transylvania, where the Roma would invite a priest to play a side role in broader rituals.

[46] Excerpt from a recording of a Bible school class by teacher Hans, 24 October 2009; the recording was made by one of the students and the author was not present in the class.

Hans explained to the students that they were not apostles; they were lower than apostles. During the same class, he introduced another hierarchy: that of leadership rank. When he lectured on Saint Peter he accentuated that Peter was the first among the disciples and corrected one of the students who did not elevate Peter to the beginning of the disciple sequence:

> "Hans: And what we hear here is Peter's vocation. Peter is a special person, what we read here in the Gospel is that Peter was a leader. When there is a list of the disciples, Peter is always in the first place. In Matthew sixteen we just read how Jesus asks the disciples, 'who am I? What do you think I am?' And it is Peter who responded. And then, within the twelve who were closer to him, who were the three?
>
> X: John, Jacob, Peter.
>
> Hans: You should start with Peter to be correct.
>
> X: Peter, John, Jacob
>
> Y: Peter, John, Jacob. Johannes, Jacob.
>
> Hans: So it means that he was the first. It means that if the group is together, a group of Christians, they must have a leader. These are people who can be at the head. It is not bad to say we are all the same. We have the congregation here, we have the leaders, the elders. It is a natural thing and Jesus, this was the will of Jesus for his congregation. It means that Peter is always the first one of the twelve disciples."

Finally, Hans ranked the pastor in the same position as Saint Peter:

> "Hans: Some time ago I preached Ephesians 4: 10 in my congregation and asked: Do you know the apostle of today? No one knew the apostle. So I named someone for them. And I said Waleri (the pastor) was God's apostle. (..) He created, built, and founded a congregation. And you saw powerful things. There was a healing, maybe the demons are not chased yet, I

> don't know this. But God with all his power created a congregation here in the town, he is an apostle. And Peter was exactly this kind of apostle."[47]

Throughout the Bible school lessons, two hierarchies were constructed: a hierarchy of the disciples according to their vocation, and a hierarchy of apostles with Peter as main figure. The students were placed on the lowest level of the hierarchy, whereas the pastor was labelled an apostle, the highest, and likened to Saint Peter, who was the highest ranked apostle. Thus, he could reinforce the leadership of the pastor over a community who had no pastor before.

An ethnic pastor who is not "one of them"

Pierre Bourdieu examined how the church inculcates individuals with hierarchical thinking:

> "The most specific contribution of the church (and more generally of religion) to the conservation of the symbolic order consists of (…) *transmutation of logic into order*. It makes the political order submit to this by the mere fact of the unification of the different orders." (Bourdieu 1991, p.32)

The church is capable of doing so in the first place by establishing correspondence between the cosmological hierarchy and the social or ecclesial hierarchy. It constructs the hierarchy between the apostles, and likens them to the relations between actors in the congregation, identifying the pastor with Saint Peter. These hierarchies are embodied by repeating and engraining the "right" and proper ordering of the disciples. Furthermore, the logic transmutes into order by "imposing a hierarchical way of thinking that 'naturalizes' (…) the relations of order by recognizing the existence of privileged points in cosmic space just as in political space." (ibid: 32) This is done by presenting and promoting the hierarchical political structure as a "natural thing", privileged in the sense that Jesus himself wished his own congregation was similar to Waleri's.

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[47] Excerpt form a Bible school lesson, 24. 10. 2009

Logic, reasoning, and other new competencies that arise with Bible study, are inculcating hierarchical cosmologies. The position at the top of the hierarchy allowed Waleri to wield direct power. For example, he would interfere in relations between couples, which used to be an absolutely uncontested terrain before, or ban smoking at the church door. He also openly criticised people for their behaviour. He did not make use of the indirect moralizing techniques used in life outside the church; neither did he use the techniques of the local Roma preachers to avoid interference. In my view as participant observer, he was constantly crossing the boundaries of non-criticising, which he admitted, as he claimed he was very knowledgeable about the traditions of the Roma and their culture. In his time as pastor of the congregation, he could get away with these criticisms.

Waleri actually transformed the existing local political order from a kinship-based community with peculiarities of an individualistic structure, towards an ethno-religion of the Sinti and the Roma in Europe with him as the ethnic leader. Thus he succeeded in transforming his ethno-religious capital into a political one, which was previously reserved solely to kinship structures. This newly gained political capital, then, allowed him to reprove and moralize the members of the congregation.

However, it was not a change for all, and it turned out to be very temporary and linked personally to him. During the summer of 2011, Waleri found himself in the middle of a dispute with an aspiring local Roma preacher prompting him to finally leave the congregation. The succeeding local preacher criticized Waleri for correcting people all the time and, instead, offered a charismatic alternative:

> "People were coming to me and telling me that they could not manage anymore, that they were giving up. And I MOTIVATED them, I GAVE FIRE, I PRAYED FOR THEM. Pavlík (one congregation member), when he came to me, he told me he was lying on the ground. (…) IF I ONLY PREACHED TO HIM WHAT HE WAS AND WAS NOT SUPPOSED

> TO DO, I would kill him. Spiritually. BUT IF I GAVE HIM FIRE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, then the people could live. And I live as well."[48]

Nonetheless, the new leader's charismatic attempt to keep the congregation alive fell flat and met with little success – people simply were not interested in following him. He is already embedded in the local political structure based on kinship, he is the father of someone within the local community, and now he wanted to be the father of all the congregation. He failed and the rest left because they were subject to their fathers and elders of their kin and did not accept the fact that individuals from the community would be exalting him above the others. Ultimately, he failed because he was one of them and he did not restore the egalitarian setting of the prayer group meetings, which paralleled the local political order.

Conclusion

My findings disagree with Ries' (2007) statement that missions are successful among Roma/Gypsies if they are able to adapt to their position vis-à-vis the non-Roma population. In his account, a mission with a trans-ethnic ideology which aimed at an exclusivist Roma group would fail, whereas in the case I presented, an exclusivist missionary aimed at the Roma, who were more likely striving for recognition and integration, succeeded as an ethnic leader through the reinforcement of an exclusionary model of ethno-religiosity. It was Manuela Canton who already warned against generalizations about Gypsy Pentecostal churches and commented that "the Philadelphia Church is gypsy, separate and distinct, to the extent that there is a recognized line dividing gypsies and payos in certain aspects of social life" (Cantón 2010, p.263). This line is not established by the nature of one or the other group, of course. My case brought yet another dimension, one of a strong ethnic leader who works with this line creatively.

Pierre Bourdieu states that the prophet is less an extraordinary man than a man of extraordinary situations; an individual with strongly decrystallized status who is able to occupy places not available to him in the normal order of things. The study

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[48] Interview with Míša, September 2011

of charisma must seek to unearth characteristics, which predispose certain individuals, to test the ethical and political arrangements already present in the group (Bourdieu 1991, p.35). In the beginning of this chapter, we heard from the non-Roma preacher's thoughts on the Gypsy pastor Waleri: he could afford to reprove others because he was "one of them". Some scholars also tend to reduce the questions of leadership in Roma congregations to ethnic self-leadership. I claim that Waleri could sustain an authority which allowed him to reprove others thanks to the fact that he was not "one of them", so he did not have to follow the local political order. Ostensibly, he found a gap. If he was one of the locals, he would have never been bestowed the privilege to moralize or sermonize upon all members of the congregation. We could also say that Waleri succeeded in constructing a new community and became its leader. But again, as with the notion of charisma, this ethnic leadership was not self-explanatory.

This presented deconstruction of charismatic leadership, also reconciles the seemingly conflicting relationship between the emotional and embodied paradigms in the study of charisma, as represented (among others) by Lindholm (1990; 2013) and Asad (1983). While Lindholm asserted that embodiment, obedience and ritual Fortang to the realm of traditional, habitual authority (which is a different analytical category), I showed they were rather inseparable preconditions to the development and preservation of charismatic authority. The very idea that different vocations are given to individuals, that these vocations are hierarchical, and that the hierarchy in vocations should correspond with the hierarchy in the political organization of the religious group, had to be inculcated through repetitive learning in the Bible school. This embodied hierarchy could then be used to construct and sustain charismatic authority as an eruptive, emotionally loaded relation between the religious leader and the group.

9. "Do You Want to Have Fellowship With Us?" Kinship and Conversions of Roma to Charismatic Christianity

"Under what conditions will the anthropologist's treatment of the blip-relationship fall under the rubric of kinship structure? It will be so subsumed if the anthropologist believes that the blip-relationship overlaps, in a predominant number of cases, with some physical kinship relationship" (Gellner 1960, p.187)

The relative conversion of Tchirklo

The purpose of this chapter is to unpack the "blip-relationship" between Roma who convert to Charismatic/Pentecostal Christianity and its relation to what used to be called and seen as "kinship structure", at least in the anthropology in 1960s. In other words, I want to bring more of the anthropological theory of kinship to the study of conversions of Roma, beyond the drawings of genealogical charts.

For Patrick Williams, one of the important arguments to see Pentecostal conversions as continuation rather than transformation was that the conversions did not seem to intervene in the pre-conversion marital preferences of the Roma. According to him

> "we can often observe correspondences between kinship networks and conversions: before a member of a family gets baptized the whole family adheres to Pentecostalism; another person, who is culturally very close to them, whose life intersects a lot with theirs and with whom they keep good relations, remains Catholic." (Williams 1993a, p.9)

Kinship and marital preferences were clearly very important moments when Williams was to evaluate the extent and depth of Pentecostal conversions of Gypsies.

On the other hand kinship (and conversion as well) are not only rules and constraints, but also realms of possibility, new arenas for action. Conversion acts as a medium which is able to reconfigure relations between people. In an article dedicated to the conversion of his Manus informant Tchirklo, Williams shows how Tchirklo was able to reconfigure his kinship ties through conversion. When

Tchirklo was 21 years old, he married a Manus woman from a different kin group – a thing that was barely seen before. In his account he was somewhat ambiguous about whether he married or converted first, but Williams found that shortly after marrying her, he got baptised. He joined his in-laws[49] (the family of his wife), appropriating their economic strategies and routes. However he did not abandon his relatives totally: every autumn he came to their camp, parked his caravan, and worked with his cousins, doing both the jobs they had always done and also using the new strategies learned from his in-laws.

Both Tchirklo's marriage to an alien family and his baptism would have been unacceptable to his relatives, if they had happened separately. But once he was married to a Pentecostal family, he could convert, and once he converted, it was accepted that he would marry a girl from a different family. Here Williams makes an interesting point. The conversion of Tchirklo is not about escaping from the old world, but rather about being a part of two worlds: the world of Pentecostalism and his wife's family, and the world of his relatives. The most enriching part of this story is that it is ambiguous, and neither Tchirklo nor Williams are trying to silence the ambiguity. We wouldn't be able to learn about the interplay of kinship and conversions if the ambiguities had already been smoothed out, by extremely coherent narrative of conversion or by our ready-made ideas about Gypsy kinship. Tchirklo shows us that it makes a lot of sense to pay attention to particular circumstances and individual cases in order to understand how the conversion is performed. In short, conversion is a means to manipulate the realms of possibility in kinship and vice-versa.[50]

While this argument, which is in line with current anthropological approaches to the study of kinship, was made in 1991, it does not seem to have entered mainstream scholarship on the conversions of Gypsies yet.

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[49] I am using here the distinction between relatives (blood-ties) and in-laws made by Schneider (1980, p.21).

[50] Conversion seems to share this quality with other devices, such as assisted reproduction (Strathern 1992).

Kinship and conversion

My main aim in this chapter is to connect anthropological theory of kinship with the accounts of conversions of Gypsies to Charismatic Christianity. I want to critically examine the relations between kinship and conversions. I do not sustain that all scholarly works are ill-informed in their theoretical framing of kinship in conversion processes; however, I find it important to recall these basics of contemporary kinship theory in the scholarly debate because many times they seem to be neglected. The extent of this chapter does not allow for extensive review of kinship theory in anthropology, but the main debates will be referenced where appropriate.

In what follows I will differentiate three levels of interrelation between kinship and conversion. The first level is the strategic use of kinship relations by missionaries to proselytize effectively among populations whose strong organizing principle lies in the kinship ties. I will call it *kinship as proselytizing strategy*. The second level is the analytical approach, which investigates how and to what extent relatedness could be a factor, catalyst or mediator of conversions (and deconversions). I will call it *kinship as a factor of conversion*. On the third level we can research how and to what extent kinship is the organizational principle of Charismatic and Pentecostal congregations. I will call this level *kinship and congregation*. Each of these levels brings about lot of complexities which I review briefly.

In the second part of this chapter I will focus more on the level of kinship and congregation with examples from Márov. Kinship ties, which the missionaries once used for proselytization, turned out to be potentially threatening to the congregation's smooth operation. Through a look at a misunderstanding between a German missionary Waleri and Roma preacher and his relatives on the nature of kinship, I come to the conclusion that my Roma informants were much more reflexive about kinship than the German missionary, who held that their behaviour was a pure function of blood-ties and it should be changed. Instead they kept a Schneiderian-like concept of kinship which differentiates between substance and code of conduct. My suggestion is that the use of this framework seems to be more appropriate when theorizing relations between kinship and conversions.

Kinship as proselytizing strategy

Kinship ties have been used by Charismatic/Pentecostal missionaries to proselytize since the first reported larger scale missions among Roma. In the proselytizing strategy of Clement le Cossec, the founder of the Romani Pentecostal movement in Western Europe[51], we can read that within bigger gatherings called conventions he was suggesting to "evangelize the unconverted brought to these conventions by their families or friends" (Acton 1979, p.293). Le Cossec used the important persons with authority in their respective communities, who received pastoral training either with him or in Assemblies of God colleges in Belgium and Germany, and then started to form independent congregations. Le Cossec did not, however, limit his mission to one particular group or family of Roma. He started to preach among the Manus in French Brittany in the mid-50s, but he would also preach to Kalderash Roma and migrant working Spanish Gitanos. They took the Gospel elsewhere, especially to Spain (Cantón 2004; Cantón 2010); Kalderash Roma who converted in France would missionize among their kin abroad including North and South Americas (Ripka 2008; Bernal 2014).[52] Apart from the extended kinship ties, which persisted between countries and communities, it was also the shared historical experience of Porajmos which contributed to the spread of Pentecostalism among Gypsies (Acton 2014, p.44).

The fact that kinship ties have been strategically used for proselytization is also reflected in the studies of concrete congregations and communities. Consider the conclusion of a study made in 2005 – 2006 by Tomáš Hrustič in Slovakia:

> "The family bonds and the personality of an individual pastor can play a key role in the process of religious conversion of Roma people to Pente-

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[51] We also have accounts of Romani Pentecostalism in Finland and Sweden dating back to the first half of 20th century (Thurfjell 2013).

[52] Jorge Bernal writes that "The message of the Romani churches was brought to South America in the 1970's, when Roma from Paris came to visit their relatives in Argentina and left the message of this new movement. Many people at that time accepted the Word of the Gospels with joy and Juan Kalmycoff was anointed as the first pastor of this congregation in the early days of its formation." (Bernal 2014, p.196)

> costal, charismatic movements in Eastern Slovakia. Almost all conversions to either the Jehovah's Witnesses or to the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, were inspired by their family members. After a closer analysis of family relationships and genealogies this kinship principle proved to be a general rule." (Hrustič 2014, p.190)

If proselytization of the relatives is a common feature of missions among Roma, it is then no surprise that the ties between the members of the Gypsy congregations would be kinship ties to some degree. The research of Manuela Cantón among the Gitanos of Andalucía also supports this assertion: "It is quite common to find cases where complete families join local churches and spread the conversion to the rest of the members of the extended family." (Cantón 2014, p.79) Unfortunately we cannot even estimate to what degree. There is some anecdotal evidence, such as the following: In an interview with a Roma Pentecostal preacher who is from a Mexican Kalderash family, is affiliated with Gods Gypsy Church in Los Angeles and is interested in genealogy, I learned that 90% of the Western Romani preachers are from the Demetriu or Demeter families[53] (Ripka 2008). Although the figures given by the preacher might not be accurate, they help to construe the image that kinship structures are formative to Roma Pentecostal churches.

It has been reported by scholars of Romani conversions that whole families are entering and leaving the congregations together at once, and generally, that the kinship relations are more stable and permanent than the relations created by common religious affiliation (Cantón 2004, p.358). On the other side, we also know that proselytization is clearly not taking place only through kinship connections. There are reports from Pentecostal Roma missionaries who are travelling to distant places where they have no relatives, such as Kalderash missionaries from France and Spain who missionized in Stockholm among unrelated Kaale Roma

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[53] Thomas Acton writes that the contact through Demeter family from Western to Eastern Europe were not so successful: "Originally, Gypsy preachers from Western Europe and the United States tried to use their contacts with the well-known Demeter family (whose distant relatives live in Romanville, near Paris, France where there is a large Gypsy church community), to facilitate contact. These initial overtures however met with little success." (Acton 2014, p.55).

(Thurfjell 2013, p.43), or missionaries from the French church Vie et Lumiere or the American church God's Gypsy Church who missionize among Roma in Eastern Europe. Still we can sustain that the introduction of relatives into Romani congregations has been supported by the missionizing strategies of the denominations.

On the other side, we should not focus only on those who converted, but also on relatives who did not convert. Magdalena Slavkova reports that in Bulgaria "Gypsy families continue to be strongly connected to their relatives regardless of whether these are Evangelical or not and despite the fact that they feel the members of their church are their brothers and sisters in Christ." (Slavkova 2014, p.72) During my fieldwork among Pentecostal Roma in Mexico I heard accounts of how congregations were founded after one patriarch converted, and then his whole family (*vitsa*) converted as well. However, in the concrete Mexican *kumpánya* where I did my research, I encountered a situation in which one part of the *vitsa* was regularly visiting a Roma Pentecostal church and the other part was very much against it. They stated that it went against tradition, especially their inherited obligations towards the Virgin of Guadalupe (which a convert could not fulfil). There are clearly conflicts which arise from conversions of one part of the family, and there are always many relatives who do not convert. Yet kinship is seen as a catalyst of conversion, something which facilitates it.

Kinship as a factor/intermediary of conversion

From a strategic vantage point, we might be tempted to look at the use of kinship in proselytization as a factor (both positive and negative) of conversion: if there are kinship ties, according to this view they will facilitate conversions and vice versa. On the other hand, belonging to a family can prevent conversions if the family is not supportive. Fosztó (2009) gives us an example of unfinished conversion to Pentecostalism, a reluctant convert who was caught in her family ties. Róza, an older woman who was healed in a Pentecostal church and received Jesus in her heart, did not convert wholly because she could not receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Once in her home she was very close to speaking in tongues, but her husband prevented her from doing so:

> "She imagined an ideal scenario of spiritual support: upon the first signs in the convert's behaviour that the Holy Spirit was appearing, the family members would kneel down around the convert and pray for his or her baptism. She experienced the signs: she trembled, her hands rose against her will, a power like a strong wind or fire came down to her, and she began to speak loudly. But the family refused to support her. Roza's husband strategically referred to the presence of Roza's sister's young children, who should not be frightened." (Fosztó 2009, p.131)

In the case of Róza it was the unsupportive family who prevented her from converting fully and so she remained a low-profile adherent. If the family was supportive she would convert (at least she thinks so).

In both the failures and the successes, kinship tends to be taken as a factor which either facilitates or complicates the conversions, and if it is not involved in the conversion process, we do not think about it. Tchirklo, whom I mentioned earlier, converted despite his family and changed his family despite the conversion. He brought about a special quality of both conversion and kinship – the ability to open new spaces, new possibilities. In the case of Tchirklo, kinship is not taken a factor, but as a structure which can be creatively worked with.

My ethnography in the Czech Republic forced me to apply the opposite logic to "kinship as a factor of conversion" and look at the involvement of family in the successful conversion process as a thing that must be explained itself and not taken for granted. I could no longer sustain that the fact that one was brought to the church by his relatives and then accepted Jesus was unproblematic, because there was a problem. Was one motivated to convert only because of the family, or was it really that one wanted to be with Jesus? In other words, was the convert sincere in his conversion and change?

I understand my questioning of the relationship between kinship and conversions, which is actually motivated by the cases when kinship did not work as a factor, as the opening of a blackbox. In the aforementioned studies, kinship works more or less as an intermediary, i.e. as something which transports a meaning or force without transformation (Latour 2005, p.39) in the conversion process, or as a

black box. Similarly to the original application of the concept of black box to complicated technological devices, if we know the inputs in the conversion process – likely or unlikely relatives – we also know the outputs – successful or unsuccessful conversion. The kinship in the conversion would be black-boxed by its own predicative success. As with technology, "when a machine runs efficiently, when a matter of fact is settled, one needs focus only on its inputs and outputs and not on its internal complexity. Thus, paradoxically, the more science and technology succeed, the more opaque and obscure they become" (Latour 1999, p.304). If the involvement of kinship did not follow this pattern in some cases, then we would not think and write about kinship in the conversion process, but neither would we challenge the kinship as intermediary either. In my case, the likely family was a problem to be resolved, not an input which would lead to a predictable output. In other words, the lesson forced me to start understanding kinship as a *mediator* in the conversion process instead – something whose *specificity* must always be taken into account, whose input is not a good predictor of its output, and which translates, distorts and transforms what it is supposed to carry (Latour 2005, p.39).

In order to open the black box of kinship in the conversion process, I must present readers with the site and context of my fieldwork. I would like to remind readers that we are still dealing with the second instance of relationship between kinship and conversions, with kinship as a factor of conversion and perhaps as a blackbox in conversion process.

When akin converts are a problem

Most of the congregation members are part of one cognatic descent group – the fajta – and are thus related by blood. Of course, this can be taken as self-explanatory since we have acknowledged that kinship is a factor of conversion: some members of the fajta convert first, and then their relatives find it easier to follow them. Upon closer examination, however, I discovered that it was not so self-evident.

Kinship relations to member(s) of the congregation can actually become a potential obstacle to conversion because there is a threat that the conversion can be seen

as an act of loyalty towards one's relatives instead of as an act of sincerity. New people coming to the congregation are constantly tested for their sincerity. There are discourses about other Roma who have converted in different cities with the vision that they would get money and help from missionary organizations. An underlying assumption in the "testing" process is that some people try to convert but are not sincere in their attempt to establish a close relationship with Jesus. The conversion, then, can only happen if one sincerely (without side intentions) accepts Jesus as his personal saviour.

From the point of view of the person who is about to convert, the fact that the members of his or her family have already converted can actually make things much more difficult. Is he converting really because he wants to accept Jesus in his life, or because he or she follows his family? How can he or she make sure, and how can the others make sure? When I asked about this ambiguity, the preacher of the congregation agreed there are lots of people who actually hesitate to accept Jesus exactly for this reason. There are always people who say they want to accept, but that they feel shy about accepting Jesus publicly at service because others might think that they are accepting Jesus only because their relatives have converted. This is an example of how the black-box has to be opened. Kinship stops working in such a predictable manner that it can either facilitate or complicate conversion. Here the family is likely to the conversion of one of its members, but the very fact that they were likely was challenging the purity of one's motivations to conversion. He might be seen as converting only because his relatives have converted as well. And this tension needs to be solved and overcome in order for one to accept Jesus and become a sincere convert.

I was surprised to find no scholarly literature on this aspect of Romani conversion. Fosztó (2009) uses Keanne (2006) to talk about the quest for authenticity during conversion – the need to perform towards oneself and the community with a sincere heart and to put one's acts in line with the one's words – but there is no specific reference to akin converts who might actually be a source of mistrust. Neither is there a focused account on how converts actually overcome these moral ambiguities.

How then do converts overcome this problem? It is through various devices that build discontinuities in one's life – what Joel Robbins (2003) has coined *rituals of discontinuity*. In Márov, one way of accomplishing this is the usage of the conversion theory that says that once you have accepted Jesus into your heart, you come under his influence and he starts to work in your life (e.g. washing your heart from sins). Another way is the model of the born-again Christian, who, after the baptism, is a new person in Jesus Christ. What brought you to the congregation or the intentions you may have had when you cam are not so important. Once you start to come there, however, you get under the conviction of the Holy Spirit (Harding 1987). What really counts is that you are there.

Furthermore, there are rhetorical devices that may be used, such as the building of (retroactive) conversion narrative, in which converts are encouraged to look for the presence of the God's intention in their lives prior to conversion and to speak out the conversion without reference to the circumstances which brought them to the faith. It is these rituals that make it possible to build an accountable personal relationship with Jesus, and thus reliably construct their conversion as a way towards a sincere personal relationship with Jesus, despite the fact that one is following a family conversion pattern.

With this account, I hope I have helped open the black box. Now that the black box is open and kinship is no longer seen as a simple intermediary or as a factor in conversion, I may go on to discuss the complex facets of kinship that I encountered during my fieldwork. I am coming to the third possible relation of kinship and conversions in the organization of congregations. As I have already shown, the congregation of Márov is very much centred on one *fajta* and their in-laws. This very fact attracts comments and ethnotheories about the relationship between membership in the congregation and kinship, which I will present.

Kinship as organization principle of congregations and possible threat

The third level of relation between kinship and conversions emerges when we investigate how kinship affects the organization of congregations. It has been reported that Pentecostal Romani congregations have temporally succeeded in downplaying the divisions between different groups of Roma, constructing the

Gypsy nation, Gypsy people, or the Roma and Sinti nations. A sense of "community", "people", or "nation" is emerging: in France with the "people Tsigane", the common nation of Roma and Sinti at my field site in the Czech Republic, and in Spain with a sense of community opposite to traditional "communion" (Gay y Blasco 2000). In France, conversion has actually meant a reinvention of ethnically distinct identities for some assimilated Gypsy families; for example, these families learn Romani only in the church (Williams 1984). On the other hand, Manuela Cantón (2004) places Gitano conversions to Iglesia Filadelfia in Andalucía in contrast to the conversions of Mayan indigenous people in Central America. Whereas the Maya use" the conversions as a means to detach themselves from the logics of their traditional communities, Gitanos in Andalucía tend to reproduce kinship (and other) ties after conversion, but they articulate them in religious terms. Furthermore, relating the organization of the congregation to its composition and keeping in mind that the use of kinship structures has been an explicit proselytization strategy, it is no surprise that congregations often consist of close relatives. If there is a majority of relatives, this is reproduced up to the level of the organization.[54]

In Spain, the role of family/kinship has been regulated by bureaucratic procedures: "the organisation of the Iglesia de Filadelfia itself is premised on an institutional hierarchy that transcends barriers of kinship, region, and ethnic affiliation and so on, and that binds Gitanos in any particular area with Gypsy converts elsewhere within a world-wide, God-given plan for action. This hierarchy has a president at the top, regional delegates beneath him, and then local pastors and trainees at the lowest levels" (Gay y Blasco 2000, p.15). The bureaucratic hierarchical organization is supposed to prevent kinship from taking precedence over religion. The Spanish Gitanos who convert are instructed to stay away from blood-feuds between families, and for good reason. One such reason is that blood-

[54] This could actually be the key to the claim of my aforementioned informants in the U.S who said that 90% of Western Roma pastors are from the Demetriu family. Nonetheless I doubt the accuracy of this count, and I also think many pastors that he counted would strategically be referred as Demetriu, but they would not have to be related by blood.

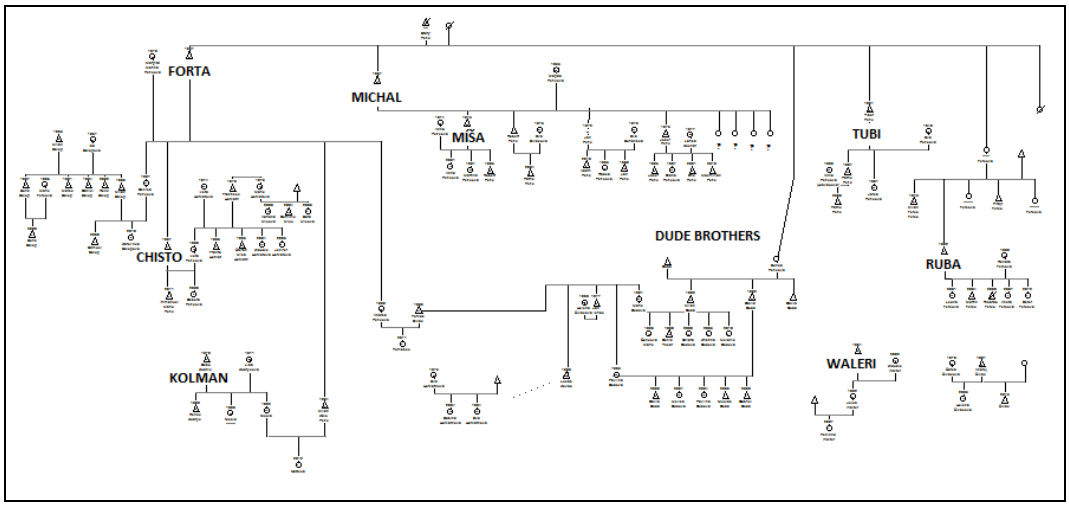
feud,s although they happen in the "world outside", would have a serious impact on the congregations (Gay y Blasco 1999).

In Márov the general rule is to keep mundane disputes out of the congregation, but the truth is that it is a difficult task to achieve and people are not very successful at it. In numerous sermons, congregation members are told that they must avoid disputes, and if they occur, they are to settle them fast or forget about them, i.e., to forgive. On the other side, disputes are the main reason why congregation members do not participate in the religious services, and if the disputes are heavy, the closest relatives of the ones involved are always supposed to defend "their" side, without thinking too much who is right in the dispute. As a channel of disputes, kinship is thus becoming quite threatening to the congregation, as it can drive whole families who are supposed to be loyal in quarrels away from the congregation.

Kinship problems in Márov congregation

In the third chapter I made an overview of the kinship relations between the congregation members. I differentiated five parts of one *fajta*, kindreds centred around several figures: Forta, Chisto, Michal, Tubi, Ruba, and the Dude brothers. Most of the congregation members were part of one *fajta.*

Figure 10: Overview of kinship relations among the congregation members. Snapshot of congregation members in 2011.



When Waleri, the German Gypsy pastor, was still in the church during 2009 – 2011, there were several people who stopped coming to service including the brother and the father of the senior preacher Míša. They claimed they were not coming because the pastor was offensive to them. I am not sure about the father of Míša, but the brother of Míša stopped participating because he saw Waleri as a prospector, who was more interested in money than the congregation. At the same time, a large group (especially the young ones, but also one of the elders of the congregation, who is the uncle of Míša) was very close to the pastor, admiring him and spending all their free time with church-related activities. So there were two parts of the family: one which was very attached to the pastor Waleri, and the other which was more attached to the preacher Míša (his father, brothers and their families) and did not go to the church regularly.

It was in June 2011 on the occasion of sudden passing away of Ruba's baby that these two parts of the family came together. They were living in the same city and they would have been able to meet each other elsewhere at other times, but it had not happened for several months. Also most of them worked full-time during the day, and during the evenings and weekends they spent time with their families or with those with whom they participated at church. They would not directly avoid each other, but opportunities for meeting were very scarce. The cousins from Míša's side commented that they were so happy to meet again since they would still not be able to meet with their other cousins. By that time the German pastor was on holiday in Croatia, and Ruba was angry with him because he would not come to the burial. At the same time, he also got angry with his cousins because they did not help him financially with the burial.

One month later the pastor was back from holiday and he was accused by the senior preacher of corrupting some of the church money. It is clear that Míša, the senior preacher, was also driven into the conflict by his father and brothers, but it was he who started it. Waleri decided not to get into a conflict with Míša and left the congregation immediately. He also gradually stopped all the financial support he was providing to the congregation, including the salaries of Míša and other church elders. Míša, who was the keeper of a Fort Transit church van, kept the

vehicle for personal use claiming that it was originally meant as a gift for the whole congregation, not just as Waleri's property.

After Waleri left, Míša took over and in the following months, most of the congregation members stopped coming to church, including the church elders, Míša's uncle and young preachers/deacons. On the other hand, Míša's brother, who had not been coming to the church because of Waleri, started to come from time to time with his father. Míša made several attempts at restoration in the autumn and winter of 2011 – 2012, but it did not have a lot of effect. By April 2012, when he learned that everyone hated him and his father and that they blamed him for the fall of the congregation, he started to divide the congregation members and to get more and more nervous. There are two main stories in this crisis – one of Ruba and his ongoing collaboration with Waleri, and the other of undisciplined congregation members who stopped coming to the services.

First kinship controversy: Kinship based on loyalty

The first controversy was between Michal (the oldest member of the family) and Ruba and his brothers. Michal was 60 years old, and that was considered the elderly. He was actually one of the leading forces behind the scenes who would manipulate his son Míša against Waleri. When Waleri left, he would very much feed a conflict between his sons and the rest of the congregation who were not so critical about the pastor, or who would even defend him and meet with him. The father would effectively manipulate people in these circumstances with reference to kinship.

When the congregation was falling apart and people had stopped coming to services, I was actually one of the very few who kept coming (because I felt that it was part of my fieldwork to assist the services instead of, for example, following the people who were no longer coming on Sundays). Michal understood from my continuous presence that I was on his side and that I was sympathetic to the conflict between Míša and Waleri. Michal then started to call me *mro čho* meaning "my son". I was considered part of the family when I was showing I was not on the opposite side. My relationship to Michal was not just as a patron; people around us noticed that I was called *mro čho,* asked me if I knew what it meant,

and considered it an important thing. I would be called *amaro* (ours) on different occasions, but this also could refer to the fact I could understand a basic conversation in Romani, and I would try to assist my hosts with different practical things, some of which could build a sense of complicity or binding insider knowledge.[55] However it was still different to naming me *mro čho.*

This relation brought some expectations and obligations as well. Shortly after, Michal's brother Tubi experienced heart problems and travelled to Prague for surgery. No one from the family was able to accompany him at the hospital because no one had money to travel (Tubi's illness transpired before family members' receipt of social benefits payments), and so I was called to be present at the hospital while Michal's brother was there. No matter what my work, family and study obligations were, I was supposed to be with Michal's brother in the hospital most of the time, and when I was not, he would use quite powerful strategies to make me to be there. He also knew I would come because I felt obliged. My supposed loyalty made me part of the *fajta* for some time.

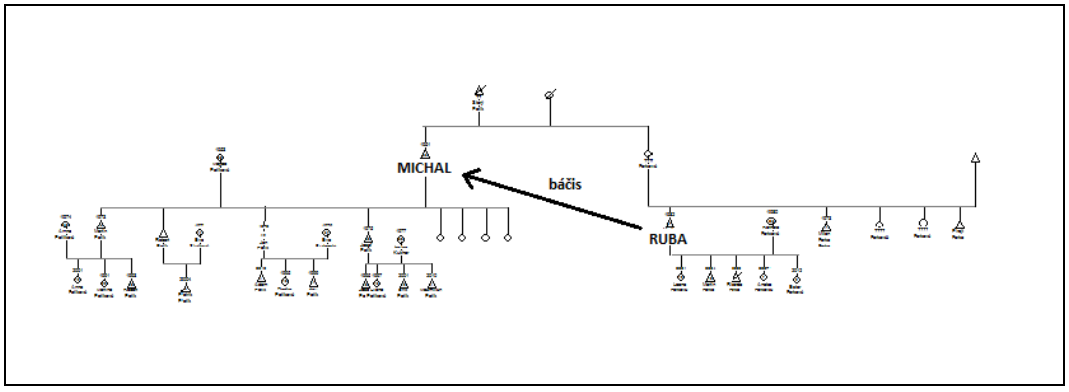
After Waleri left the Márov congregation, he focused more on another location 30 kms away from Márov. He had been going to this place since 2010 when the Márov congregation organized an evangelization meeting there and slowly started a new congregation. It had one important local Roma as a "keeper", however he was not considered prepared enough to be a pastor so Waleri was commuting with Márov preachers every week to their services. Most of the members were children, with several promising boys from ages 15 to 17. Waleri turned his attention, money and other resources (such as a vehicle, German teachers or religious materials) to this new place. Still, he was in desperate need of assistants for several reasons. First of all, the local "keeper" knew neither Sinti nor German, and Waleri did not speak Czech or Romanes (he had not learned it during almost ten years of working in the Czech Republic). Second, in Márov he had a team of preachers, deacons and people working with kids and youth; all of them were more or less

[55] For example, I would be informed about several court cases the family members were involved in, and translated, or tried to seek legal advice, a role that could be defined as an informal plenipotentiary.

similarly trained in a Bible school that Waleri had brought to them. In this new place there were no such trained people. Thirdly, he needed financial and clerical assistants who would handle all the practicalities around the congregation, but he did not have people whom he could trust there. It was thus quite reasonable that he turned to some people from the Márov congregation and offered them posts in the new congregation. He would immediately start collaborating with one "Hungarian Gypsy" couple who was part of the Márov congregation but unrelated to the main *fajta*. Marty would travel and interpret for him, and his wife would help with practicalities and also work part-time in a charity shop run by Waleri. Thanks to this work/help, both were better off than , the rest of the Márov congregation, who were struggling sometimes with extreme poverty. Many times I heard rumours that people from the Márov congregation would beat Marty up because he was working with Waleri, but this never actually happened.

Waleri needed more people, especially someone who would be able to preach. Marty was a good interpreter, but his reputation had some stains, such as that he liked to go to discos and drink, which disqualified him from preaching. Neither was he a very big expert in the scripture. Ruba was, and he was also a very skilled preacher, pastoral worker, keyboard player and singer. He had been excluded from the main stage in Márov for some time (according to him, due to a rivalry between him and Míša), so he was a perfect choice for becoming a preacher in the new congregation. Waleri offered him a fixed position in the new congregation. The problem was that he was part of the main *fajta*.

Figure 11: Ruba, his báčis (uncle) Michal and their families



Michal was the oldest man in the *fajta*, and he assumed authority over the younger ones. When he learned that Ruba was starting to cooperate with Waleri, he warned Ruba (his nephew) that if he helped Waleri, he would be cast out from the family and would never again be allowed to call Michal *báči* (meaning uncle, but also "patron").[56] During this time, Ruba actually started to help him. He played music at the services, counselled other congregation members, acted as a translator and sometimes preached. Once again in his life he was playing the role of an important religious leader to whom people were coming for advice. Following his involvement with Waleri, Ruba was warned again, if he kept helping the pastor he would be expelled from his mother's family and be considered only as part of his father's family. It can be seen from the figure above that Ruba was connected to the *fajta* through his mother, and now he was being told that this connection would be erased if he did not behave; he would not be considered a part of the *fajta* anymore (he would be expelled from the circle of Michal's cognates). Ruba commented to me that he found it very offensive to his father, and he insisted that congregation life and religion should not be mixed with family affairs. By that time, he also started to generalize about his *fajta pal e daj* (*fajta* after his mother). He would distance himself from them, stating that they never worked properly, that they were immoral, that their wives were not decent women and that they would unwisely spend money and make debts, disregarding everything. According to him, his father and brothers on the other side always worked whereas the *fajta* members were drug dealers and pimps. Ruba helped Waleri and travelled to the other city, but he would not accept salary for the service and intended to stay low-profile.

Later on Ruba's brothers, who were not members of the congregation, also got into quarrels with Michal's family. One of Ruba's brothers who used to play in a music band with Michal's sons thought one of them disrespected his musical abilities, and so he left the band and played with other Roma who were not relatives. The other brother got upset when Forta commented on a Facebook photo of the Pope that the Pope was similar to Ruba. As a Catholic he felt offended. The

[56] It would be appropriate to include a direct citation here, but I was not present at this situation; however I was told by Ruba it happened in Czech, not in Romani, and possible wording o fit.

misunderstandings and anger between Michal's family and Ruba's family deepened until they errupted in a violent clash in the spring of 2012. Ruba's father was celebrating his 60th birthday and both families came together. Michal, also in his sixties, got very drunk and attacked Ruba's brothers, his own nephews, by slapping them. According to him they were not obedient enough to the family and they needed a lesson. Both brothers were dominant to him physically, but they just sat and received the slaps without a word. He was their *báči* (uncle), the oldest in the family, thus they were not supposed to do anything against him, as Ruba explained me later. Their cousins, Michal's sons, were actually the only ones who could have intervened to stop him, but they did not. Ruba shared all these events with his close friend, a *Gadjo*, who subsequently called me to Prague and expressed his concerns and his disapproval with what happened. He said it was symptomatic of the kind of despotic society to which Roma Fortang. He encouraged Ruba to adopt this perspective too. The violence did not have any direct outcomes, so all parties involved maintained their previous positions. Ruba continued helping the pastor (even more visibly than before), and the brothers did not change their minds a lot.

My relationship with Ruba shows that there is a model of constructing membership in a kin-group (*fajta)* based on loyalty. When Ruba was not loyal to his uncle's family, he was warned that the kinship tie could be erased or forgotten and he would become an outcast from the *fajta.* I, on the other hand, was incorporated to the *fajta* when I was seen as loyal to them, and I was designated a kinship position of a son. The actions of Ruba and his brothers demonstrate that the rules and obligations connected to one's membership in a certain *fajta* are passable. At the same time, attachment to the pastor Ruba reconfigured relatedness and pushed it towards the domain of a mundane and despotic tradition that should be overcome, according to him.

Shared substance and code of conduct

The idea that there is more to kinship than blood is not new in anthropology; however, there have been different ways of dealing with it. Ernst Gellner started an ongoing discussion in 1957 when he defined kinship structure as a "correlation of social roles (which are not logically entailed by biologically-defined relation-

ships) with kinship roles", given by biological constraints and the mating principles of people in a given society/culture. "Kinship structure in this sense specifies which roles, with what rigidity and to what extent, are so to speak functions of the biological kinship position of the agent (or vice versa)" (Gellner 1957, pp.235–236). For Gellner, these were general rules which involved additions, distortions and omissions. instances could be found that diverged from the rule (he lists as an example the consequence of an undetected infidelity) and kinship concepts that may not be related to physical kinship, but do not predominate (Gellner 1960, p.193). For Gellner, however, procreation remains an indisputable base of kinship.[57]

David Schneider has called for empirical testing/grounding of this assumption, and has come to the conclusion that it is characteristic of Euro-American cultures that blood-ties are understood as more important than social relationships. Schneider differentiates on a more general level between substance (in the Euro-American case it is blood, but there are other instances, such as eating from the same bowl as a base for shared heredity) and code of conduct. Biogenetic heredity is seen as *natural substance*, whereas *relationship* is a pattern for behaviour and code of conduct. The opposition between these two is built mainly through differentiation between relatives (by blood) and in-laws (by marriage) (Schneider 1980, p.25). Within the Euro-American model we also have relationships with blood relatives, but first we are related to them by common biogenetic heredity – a natural substance. Furthermore, it is not possible to erase or sever this. According to Schneider, it is not possible to have an ex-mother, or ex-son, but it is possible to have an ex-husband (Schneider 1980, pp.24–25).

It is probable that a person will be counted as a relative if he or she has a common genealogy and behaves as a relative, i.e. plays a given role. According to this model, there are other people who are not related by blood but can count as rela-

[57] I am aware of the fact that the following debate has been quite extensive, however in the chapter I shall limit myself to the parts which I need for my argument. Interested reader should consult (Gellner 1957; Needham 1960; Gellner 1960) followed by (Barnes 1961; Gellner 1963; Barnes 1964; Schneider 1964; Beattie 1964; Buchler 1966)

tives – in-laws. However, the Euro-American model hierarchically ranks such ties:

> "If a person plays a kinship role or undertakes a kinship relationship (as a code for conduct) lacking any substantive element, or vice versa, he may or may not be counted as a relative, but he is more likely to be counted as a relative if substance rather than code for conduct is present; with both elements present, he is most likely to be counted as a relative" (Schneider 1980, p.63).

Let us look back at the case of Ruba: He was threatened that he would be cast out of the *fajta* if he was not loyal, i.e. if he did not follow the expected code of conduct. The common blood-ties were not questioned in this case, it was just said that he would belong only to the family of his father, not to the *fajta* of his mother. This could be seen as a boundary case of membership in the *fajta* – membership could be inherited through mother, but it should not be taken for granted. Code of conduct must be followed in order to stay inside the *fajta*. On the other hand, common biogenetic heredity was not challenged; the interlocutor did not exclude him from it. Thus, this example can still be seen as being in line with the Euro-American model of kinship.[58] It is necessary, therefore, to ask what kind of formation the *fajta* is – is it a group of people related by blood, or is it a group defined by a common culture?

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[58] What made the difference is the moment when Ruba's uncle told him he would not be allowed to call him uncle again if he was not loyal. This was already a threat of a different kind; one that actually meant to sever the common biogenetic heredity. Schneider has a sharp position on this: for him the "real", "blood" or "true" relationships (still within American kinship) cannot be severed. There are examples when parents disown their children or siblings split and they never communicate and act as if they were unaware of each other's existence, but to Schneider, the important thing is that to people who know the facts the two remain blood relatives (Schneider 1980, p.24). The problem is of course whether there is anyone who "knows the facts" and how strong is his voice in the negotiation. Interestingly, Schneider does not count with the possibility that even the blood relationship could be (purposefully or without a purpose) forgotten.

Kinship research on Eastern Slovakian Roma and non-Roma by Tomáš Kobes is of much use in this regard. Kobes shows that the *fajta*, a descendency group of the Roma, is different from the Euro-American kinship described by Schneider in the sense that it does not necessarily see substance and code of conduct as dichotomies, but it rather as realms of nature and culture. The *fajta* is a cognatic descendency group conscious of common ancestry defined through bilateral principle, or more precisely ambilinearity (*fajta* after the father or *fajta* after the mother) (Kobes 2010, p.241).[59] The question remains how and to what extent the in-laws are incorporated. In the case of matrilocality, the partners of female members of the *fajta* (*pristaša)* have to learn certain conduct to become incorporated into the local *fajta*: there the kin group moves from the realm of nature towards the realm of culture. They have to learn to behave, talk, and look like the *fajta* of their partner (Kobes 2010, p.251).

Fajta as a kinship group is a complex collectivity; it is both a group of relatives by blood and a group of people participating in a similar way of life. Membership in this group can be limited in cases of disobedience, and loyalty can be a basis for the incorporation of an individual who is not related by blood to this kin-group. Having reviewed the twofold relationship between loyalty and membership in the *fajta,* I can now move on to the second kinship controversy that occurred in the congregation. It is directly related to the issue of kinship and loyalty.

Second kinship controversy: United in diversity

The second problem is connected to the departure of the German Gypsy pastor Waleri as well. Following his exit, Forta stopped coming to church, always looking for a good excuse as to why he could not attend. The rest of his household did likewise. Fewer and fewer people were coming to the services. Yet, the sons of Michal and their families (including the sons who once converted, but stopped coming to the church because of Waleri) started to appear again. Míša, the senior preacher, was getting worse and worse about the situation. When he preached, he

[59] According to Kobes, the term *fajta* has an identical meaning to the category of *vitsa* (Sutherland 1986).

talked only about himself, constantly justifying his position in his quarrel with Waleri. He was thinking about how to build the congregation again, but on firmer bases. He started to invite people from the past, from times before the Gypsy pastor, to speak at the services. One such a person was a German preacher Frederik, who was invited to give a talk during Easter 2012. My understanding is that he had been instructed about the situation in the congregation, and so he prepared a speech for that purpose.

The sermon was called "The Eighth Wonder of the World", and it was about the identity of congregations. The preacher stated that the diversity of the congregation is the proof that its members are not meeting only because of some (mundane) commonalities, but thanks to the fact that God is between them. And this unity (*Einheit*) is what has the power to evangelize other people.

According to Frederik, congregations based on mundane unities (*weltliche Einheiten*) or identities in a sociological sense (such as belonging to a nation or a particular family; identities based on profession, education, hobbies, or fashion) do not have good prospects. As to the unity within kinship relations, he explained that families are bound by common grandparents and so they gather once a year, but that this is not strong unity, and so it cannot exist as a foundation for the unity of the congregation. It is only the unity between Jesus and the God that can be considered a model for the unity of the congregation: "So all are one as you, father, in me and as I am in you. So that they are in us".[60]

The overall argument of the sermon critically focused on the ideology of the congregation held by the German Gypsy pastor, who strongly promoted the ethnic

[60] Kinship ties were used as an archetype of the relationship between possibly alien people in the congregation. It is tempting to consider that the relation between God and Jesus is shifted from the realm of kinship through the notion of Trinity and Oneness (and this would be supported by the insistence of the preacher on the fact that Jesus was not only a son, but he was a son who was in harmony with his father, having the same aims as he had); however on other occasions, such as Bible school or other sermons the congregation members were encouraged to build their kinship relations after the God – Jesus model, but also to obey Jesus as he obeyed his father (because he was a son and had to obey). The relatedness of Jesus to God as son and father was physical and spiritual at the same time, and it was not divided.

Gypsy church with Gypsy leaders for Gypsies. But the preacher challenged this position with the notion of unity in diversity, the congregation as a group of people who have nothing else in common but God (as opposed to a sub/cultural group (*christische kulturverein*) forming the congregation). He suggested that the fact that membership in the congregation overlaps with membership in a cultural group creates barriers. To summarize: the only criterion in accepting or declining people in the congregation must be their attitude towards Jesus. If Roma converts are not interested in other people because they are not Roma, then they have a serious problem with God.

Besides being closed to non-Roma, the congregation had to deal with relations between the families. The preacher knew something had happened in the church, thus he extended his argument about the congregation as a diverse group of people who have very little in common but God to family relations. He made the point that kinship relations that produce love and loyalties towards others are counterproductive to the operation of the congregation. He mentioned two examples from his pastoral practice that involved bringing family affairs into the church:

> "Sometimes it is also important to dismiss people from this unity. We had such a case in Norway when one person was showing off in the congregation; he was calling his siblings devils and he was doing some other things. And we intended to speak to him but it was even worse. So finally we had to dismiss him.
>
> Sometimes there is no other option. Sometimes we even have to dismiss a person we love. For some congregation members it is difficult because he is a relative. "I cannot dismiss my relative from the congregation!" But here we can see that relatedness must not be an obstacle, either when we admit people or when we dismiss them. This creates so many problems because people are not able to differentiate between family and the congregation. And many injustices arise.
>
> I will present another example. The son of the church leader gets drunk and beats his wife. What are we going to do with him; he is the son of the

> church leader! And the worst is that the church leader closes his eyes to it. Yet the daughter-in-law, the bride who comes to us with the bruise around her eye and seeks help because her own husband beats her, is responsible". This is a situation that can divide the whole congregation because justice no longer reigns. Family adherence is placed higher than adherence to God. And these are things that can destroy congregations. It can happen that our love, our loyalty towards other people will destroy the church. Actually the things which should be good, the love and loyalty, become problematic. Sometimes we have to dismiss a person we love from the congregation. But the opposite is also right. Sometimes we have to accept a person we hardly love to the congregation."[61]

In these exemplary stories, belonging to a family was more important than belonging to God, and love and loyalty towards one's family became a disaster for the congregation. So, according to him, the audience should think about how to approach people who are hurt, how to dismantle the barrier which family ties and ethnic belonging constitute for the newcomers, and how to approach other congregations.

He concluded by questioning the listeners about whether they were "Roma" or "people of God", and they chose the people of God option. He encouraged them to come one to another and to have the desire in their hearts to serve their neighbours, talk together and reconcile. All those who had been hurt should be reapproached, and congregation leaders should bring them again to church. Family should not be a barrier, the congregation must be diverse, and kinship should be assigned the same role as occupational, subcultural or other diverse identities in the congregation. Kinship is one of many identities, but adherence to God is what is most important. According to Frederik, if most people from the congregation left because of family affairs, the ones who remain should come to them, and humbly ask how they were hurt and what could be done so that they come to church again. The congregation should also be open to other congregations in the city and be open to crossing cultural barriers.

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[61] Excerpt from Frederik sermon in Márov, Easter 2012

Division

Two weeks after this sermon, the senior preacher Míša held a long talk in the church. There was almost no one present, only the preacher's closest family. He remarked that very few people were present and he did not understand why they were not coming, as he had personally gone to invite many of them. In the beginning it almost seemed as if the preacher was humbly asking about the needs of those who were not coming, and that he was prepared to learn a lesson from what they were saying. This is what I expected, given the long crisis of the congregation and the main conclusion of the Easter sermon from the German preacher. However, very quickly the talk turned to the hateful placing of a clear moral division between the ones who were coming to the services and the ones who would not come and who showed they did not agree with the conflict between Míša and the Gypsy pastor. This is what Míša said:

> "I am happy about my life, I did not expel anyone; it was me who was expelled. The people who are not coming are hypocrites. They make excuses that they have other things to do, but they do not come because they do not want to have fellowship with us."

At this moment the atmosphere in the church was not very good. Míša was smiling hysterically and was too loud, but he did not admit any problem outwardly. The female part of Míša's family was sitting together in the front: his mother, wife, and two daughters. One of them, his younger daughter, quietly cried. Míša continued:

> "If someone takes off his shoes and his legs stink, they will stink even if he moves elsewhere. He will stink in other congregations he joins. Those who are not present are not good salt anymore. Any congregation they arrive at will get corrupted. Those who are not present expelled themselves alone."

Míša actually took some portions of the German preachers talk and turned them against those individuals who felt hurt and were not coming to the church (which at the time meant almost everyone except his brothers).

My question now is what can we learn from such a development? Why didn't Míša just follow the advice to humbly approach those who were hurt? In a way he followed it because he was able to overcome the importance of kinship with those who were not present in church that day. On the other hand, those who were present were his closest blood relatives – the sons of Michal. So by getting rid of his kinship obligations towards the other family, he could sustain a congregation of even closer kin. I am not speaking about the intentions of Míša at that time (because I don't know them), but I am looking at the outcomes of his actions. His hateful discourse actually produced a boomerang effect – the other part of the family learned about it and decided to start coming to the services again.

After this occurred, I felt very puzzled. On the one hand, I understood that Frederik had placed family identity or membership alongside any other identity, but the congregation members did not believe that it was the same as professional identity or anything else. It was the blood and emotion towards one's relatives! Frederik tried to persuade the congregation members to see that kinship is just a cultural construct, something mundane, while one's relation to God is something divine. And he failed to deliver the message. On the other hand, I could see that the most important and underlined message of Frederik's sermon was that Míša should humbly go to see the ones who had left. I asked myself how it was possible that Míša could be so unreflective that he instead forced them to leave, Even more importantly, why did they start to come back again after this pressure? Only after redrafting my paper again and again did I realize that the one who did not understand was Frederik.

In his sermon, Frederik spoke exclusively about kinship as a substance that determines conduct, whereas in practice it is a status made both by substance and conduct. He did not take into account the specificities of the *fajta* – when he talked about families, he was thinking that kinship worked the same for Roma as for Norwegian families. He viewed Roma as a pre-modern culture that is bound by obligations based on blood-ties, while in fact the local Roma were even more "modern" than him in the sense that they perfectly understood there was a difference between blood and conduct. He supposed that loyalty (political structure) was a superstructure to biological kinship, and he tried to show it should not work

this way in the congregation because God should be above all "mundane" ties. But as I showed in my case and Ruba's, loyalty can easily form the base for kinship, so Frederik' appeal to forget about this loyalty in the name of God was not as strong as he would have expected.[62]

The boomerang effect of Míša's hateful discourse also has a good explanation. Those who were not coming to church understood that when Míša said that "they do not want to have fellowship with us", he actually meant that "they do not want to be related to us" in the sense of kinship. In that moment, relatedness was more important to them than the conflict between Míša and Waleri. This is what made them come back again.

Conclusions

I started this chapter by recalling the work of Patrick Williams, who presented the case of Tchirklo as being beyond the traditionalistic approach to kinship (as a set of rules and limitations) and introduced us to a quality that conversions actually share with technological innovations in assisted reproduction: they offer new tools to reconfigure kinship, thus kinship becomes a realm of new possibilities (Carsten 2004, p.9).[63]

I have differentiated three levels of interrelation between kinship and conversion. The first level is the strategic use of kinship relations by missionaries to proselytize effectively among populations whose strong organizing principle lies in kinship ties. However, both Roma and non-Roma missionaries have also proselytized

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[62] He also stayed in line with Christian discourse that uses images of kinship ties for the construction of a relationship between individuals and God (and vice-versa). According to the local theology (which was transmitted mainly by the Bible school), Roma had been urged to replace the authority of their biological father with the authority of God, and of course there was a clash of loyalties!

[63] The idea that kinship involves not just rights, rules and obligations, but also a realm of new possibilities, is apparent when we look at mundane rituals of everyday life (...). The sense of infectious excitement, as well as anxiety, afforded by new possibilities emerges clearly when ordinary people engage with technological innovations.

among non-relatives. In cases where relatives had been proselytized to, kinship was seen as a medium for proselytization. The second level concerns how and to what extent relatedness can be a factor, catalyst or mediator of conversions (and de-conversions). To date, it has been treated as a factor: successful conversions are explained by likely family, unsuccessful ones by unlikely family, and when some cases had different inputs and outputs, kinship was not be involved in the analysis. I have shown that it makes sense (and the ethnographic situations can force one to do so) to turn to logic and start asking how come one converts *despite* the fact that his relatives have already converted. I briefly sketched some ways in which this tension can be overcome. On the third level, I was interested in how and to what extent kinship is the organizational principle of Charismatic and Pentecostal congregations. The missionaries who use kinship for proselytization have learned that the same thing can be threatening to the cohesiveness of the congregation.

In the case of the congregation in Márov, I have illustrated the types of tensions that can arise as well as the kinds of misunderstandings that develop about kinship between missionaries and Roma. Missionaries tend to regard Roma as belonging to a pre-modern society where kinship obligations are so strong, that they can supersede one's religious convictions when it comes time to make a choice (the same applies to "tradition"). The problem is that they do not know about the kinship of Roma, and they suppose it is the same as that of non-Roma. The concept of the *fajta* is a good example, where the traditionalistic view on kinship does not work because the membership in the *fajta* can be not only a source, but also a consequence of loyalty. I have shown this to be relevant in the case of Ruba, who was threatened to be kicked out from the main *fajta* of the congregation if he was not loyal. It is also germane to my own experience, when my supposed loyalty towards the *fajta* gave rise to my incorporation into it.

Finally, I have focused on a misunderstanding between a German preacher who was giving a guest sermon in Márov and the congregation members. There was a clear logic in the speech of Frederik, and in the approach of missionaries towards Roma: they suppose that Roma form a traditional society bound by kinship obligations and loyalties, which follow blood relations. Frederik was thus trying to

neutralize this view by insisting that kinship does not matter more than any other (mundane) identity. He was not radical enough to realize that kinship does matter, and that it operates in a very different way. One of the flaws in his viewpoint is that kinship (membership in a *fajta)* can actually be an outcome of loyalty, while non-kinship can be the result of disobedience. The local Roma are aware of the principles of membership in a *fajta,* which is a combination of substance (not necessarily only blood ties, but also embodied practices) and a code of conduct, and they behave according to this knowledge. This is exposed in a sentence uttered by one Roma preacher (directed at his relatives): "They don't want to have fellowship with us". From my perspective, his relatives understood this as meaning: "They don't want to be related to us", so they acted according to this interpretation. The same missionaries who use kinship for proselytization among Roma have learned that it can be threatening, yet they still do not understand its functioning.

For sure, an effect of this kind of mission is the promotion of the traditional family among Roma. By taking for granted their binding along blood-ties, the missionaries prevent the Roma from reconceptualising their imagery of family and kin according to their actual lived relatedness. Instead, the Roma are instructed on how kinship among Roma should appear. The discourse on Romani conversions and kinship ties is constructing the Roma as some traditional, non-Western society. Patrick Williams has noted that in the French case, Gypsy Pentecostals construct Gypsies as people. This also involves the reinvention of tradition – for some, converts the study of Romani (which their parents did not teach them). It is through the ideology of kinship that missionaries re-traditionalize Czech Roma.

Postscript: Various forms of relatedness in Márov

Figure 5: Congregation made of families?

Let us now have a look at a photograph of practicing members of one branch of the Márov congregation in neighbouring city. They could be members of one family, or of several nuclear families, or possibly even unrelated. We could try to group them into households, as grandparents with couples and their children. The men are in the rear, while the women with children are in the front. We could suppose some of their relatives did not convert, such as older men, and thus are missing from the picture.

In reality the picture is slightly different one. I do not claim that Roma in the region are all like this, but let me begin from the front left. The lady with three children is their mother, but she is raising the children without their father, because at this point he is imprisoned. Next to her is the mother of several children, most of which live or lived in institutional care. She is not living with their father. The children live in institutions, but quite often they come to the town and stay with her. The older ones who already have partners stay with the families of their partners. Next to her is a woman whose life partner is standing behind her. They met during their teen-age and have remained together since then. Their first baby, a daughter, was born in mid-80s, and immediately removed to an infant home, be-

cause the mother was too young and the father was serving in the army. Once the mother went to visit her child and found out she was illegally adopted against the will of the biological parents. They never saw their daughter again until one day in 2012 when she visited them. However, the blood ties were not recognized again, and they remained unrelated to each other. Aside from the stolen daughter, the couple has had two children whom they kept. Next to them stands a Roma woman who is taking care of her grandchildren. She was named a foster parent to them, because their mother is missing. The man behind her had his two children institutionalized because he lost all his money gambling and was not able to take proper care of them. There is one man who recently came from prison, but quite probably will return to the prison again. His children do not really live with him.

What I intend to show is that formations like a nuclear family that lives together in one household were rather exceptional in some places of the Charismatic mission among Roma. There were some nuclear families, where parents lived together and raised children, but most of the household and kinship settings were quite different.

The state policies of re-education of Gypsies and child protection would drive a large portion of the local Roma children into the state institutional care. Some of them would regularly come to see their parents in the town, but others would be adopted or placed in foster care, or would live in the institution, but without contact with their parents. They would, however, keep contact with their institutionalized siblings, many times thanks to the fact that the state system would preserve a group of siblings together, or they would meet with other relatives. Some of them would regularly come to see their parents in the town, but others would be adopted or placed in foster care, or would live in the institution, but without contact with their parents. So there would be people in the congregation whose biological children were not present, and others whose biological parents were missing or unknown to them. During my fieldwork there were two cases of actual or former congregation members who, for the first time in their life, met with their biological children who were removed from them or put by them into state institutional care some twenty years ago. These people were seeking reunification of the biological kin in their new life of converts, but they were not very successful in it.

Other Roma children were raised by their grandparents, who were either legally assigned to them as foster care parents or just kept their grandchildren, because their biological parents would be elsewhere: in jails, working in England, going to Western Europe, being homeless on drugs or too young to have a family. Early pregnancies, together with poverty and discrimination in housing and employment markets, would also give rise to settings where grandparents would be living in a flat together with their children and grandchildren, and childcare would be divided among biological mothers, aunts, and grandparents.

Many Roma girls and women got married to Germans who bought them from their pimps, or just met them through other channels, often criminal activity. These women were not present in the town; in most of the cases, they would live in Germany, but they would come back from time to time (for example for life-cycle rituals in family) and their husbands would be considered part of the family. But there were also families who "kept their German", mostly a middle-aged man who would come and financially support the family while somehow co-habitating with the girl or woman from the family. I am still not sure what kind of relatedness was built with these men: on one hand they would be very involved in the life of the family and household, on the other hand they were many times totally disrespected and ridiculed (without knowing it, because they would not understand when everyone else was making jokes about them).

Additionally, there would be different people living in the households who would not be related by blood to the rest of the residents, but who would be incorporated into the life of the household, and sometimes also incorporated into the family later: young boys who left institutional care and who were on the street when someone took them home; sexual workers who worked for the family and lived with them; me as an anthropologist, who would be asked to call the head of the family "uncle" and so forth. To further complicate the matter, the members of the household did not necessarily have to be physically present, but through the media of communication they would take a very important role in the life of the household. For example, one of the nephews in the household I was staying with was in jail, but he would call his uncle and whole family very often, spending many hours in talk and entertainment with them, or sitting at the table with the rest of

the family when the mobile phone was on loud. He was there, knew about everything, and acted through the phone. Children would be allowed to live with the family of their uncle or aunt for a while whenever they wanted, so some of the children would actually feel more attached to their uncle or their grandparents than to their biological parents. Of course, biological parenthood would many times not coincide with the actual partner of the mother or father with whom the children lived. So the picture of the traditional nuclear family, a bounded unit which raises the children, or of a traditional Roma family, would not work here in most of the cases.

10. Conclusions: Theory of Autonomy through Conversion

In 2012 I presented a part of my research at a conference of Religious Studies. The topic of the panel was empowerment through religion. I had read some accounts of empowerment of marginalized populations of Latin America through their conversions to Pentecostalism, but the point of my paper was different from these accounts. In Márov, religious empowerment came hand-in-hand with disempowerments. On one hand the converts found talents and charismata. On the other hand they became disempowered economically: the older converts who were used to incomes from the criminal activities became poor when they left their "old lives". From one day to the other they had to start to live on social benefits, or look for regular jobs. Furthermore they were cheated by a charismatic non-Roma leader who baptized them, but forgot to mention, that it was against the rules of their denomination – the United Protestant Church. Later on the Roma congregation was empowered by a missionary activity of the new pastor Waleri, who brought whole development toolkit with him including a Bible school. This school was supposed to train future local Roma religious leaders. Where I expected empowerment through education, and very careful way of teaching, I found imposition of hierarchy over the attendants, supported by divination of the pastor, and spread of a theology of resignation. I found all this quite disempowering, and I claimed that Roma in Márov were oppressed by the new religion.

My paper received a lot of criticism. How could I call the people who rejected criminal activities disempowered or oppressed? They broke the vicious circle and perhaps for the first time in their lives they were living under some rule, and they started a way towards social inclusion! Only later I learned that the concept of empowerment is generally understood in the hegemonic form promoted by governments and international development organizations. Empowerment in this framework means a project offered to the poor and powerless to become rational (economic) agents. It is not a liberation strategy, but a technology of self-governance. In this framework to become empowered means to gain rationality. The logic of the claim, that people who convert and give up crime get empowered

by definition, follows the hegemonic use of the term as well. People who decide to quit anti-social behaviour and integrate into the society are seen as more rational, empowered. If this change occurs in the framework of conversion, than it is the conversion which brought the empowerment.

The Roma in Márov rejected crime, but they became extremely poor, more indebted, some of them became homeless. And the mission did not seem to help them in this regard. Moreover some of them were sentimental about the good old times when they had money. Was it really anything empowering that they became dependent on the state benefits and the mood of their employers and creditors? It was perhaps improving certain measures of their "social integration", but I was not sure if they were gaining any more power by doing so.

During the course of my project a second strand of arguments about the conversions and empowerment/social inclusion of Roma through the conversions came about. My Slovak colleagues Tomáš Hrustič and Taťána Podolinská published a research report about the social inclusion of Roma through religion in Slovakia. The first key finding of their research is that:

> "A religious change has a high potential of social change. The set of 14 social inclusion indicators showed a minimum of 80% success rate of subjective perception of social change" (Podolinská & Hrustič 2011, p.42)

The indicators of the social inclusion which the authors used were the increased school attendance of children, decline in indebtedness, reduced usury, increased activity in seeking a job (not finding a job sic!), higher capacity to stay on the labour market, decline in petty crime, less problems with alcoholism and other narcotics, less gambling and less addiction to hazardous games, increased literacy rate (elimination of analphabetism), enhanced communication skills, enhanced social skills, increased frequency of positive contacts with other Roma, increased frequency of positive contacts with the general population, and elimination of common stereotypes. (ibid 20). Apart from getting rid of some addictions I do not see any scale to measure oppression. The social integration operationalized this way has nothing to do with the structural position of the people who are measured. It is mainly a measure of self-governance. The Roma in Márov who gave up

crime could also score in this test, but it gives no account of the oppression they were facing. The inculcation of (economic) rationality can be seen even better in the open question "other" in the same social inclusion scale. The respondents would list changes such as change in consumer behaviour, change in family finance management, and change in value orientation, activation, improved behaviour or inclination to longer-term life strategies (ibid 21).[64] My point is that while measuring social inclusion we actually measure the new techniques of self-governance and the inculcation of dominant rationality.

Our research has political implications. The report by Hrustič and Podolinská is clearly oriented to policy makers: it gives recommendations to various actors including the Slovak government. The first recommendation is that the government should support pastoral care among Roma as "one of several effective social tools" and should "create systemic and transparent models to promote an effective implementation of this instrument in practice" (Podolinská & Hrustič 2011, p.44). This means that the churches should get state money to integrate the Roma. Such policy recommendations resemble a process in the US discussed in the third chapter, which started in late 70s by stressing that the churches are mediating structures (Berger & Neuhaus 1977), and recently resulted in massive support of Faith based organizations in the international development. While in 2001 the USAID funds for Faith based organizations "amounted to 10.5% of aid, by 2005 it had reached 19.9%" (Stockman Boston Globe 2006) cited in (James 2009, p.7), out of which 98% went to Christian groups. These resources have been used both for development projects and for direct or indirect proselytization. Faith-based organizations and churches are seen by some as better suited for the development than the traditional NGOS, because apart from (or instead of) addressing the big issues such as inequality, injustice, poverty, pandemics, or lack of drinking water, what was the focus of NGOs in development, they also (and sometimes instead) change the subjectivities of people (Freeman 2012). [65]

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[64] The open question also includes responses which point to the improvement of relations between partners and among members of family, and increased self-respect.

[65] For early, but still very influential critique of the clash between Pentecostalism and development see (Gifford 1991; Gifford 1993).

10. Conclusions: Theory of Autonomy through Conversion

In the case of Roma, we have seen a call for greater involvement of churches in the government policies towards Roma lately from Hungary which recently led to fostering the segregation of Roma children in schools through the involvement of church (Balogh 2014). In Spain the Faith-based organizations became also very popular as recipients of government funds. They started as NGOs attached to local congregations of Gitanos and then founded a federation called FACCA (Federación de Asociaciones Cristianas de Andalucía). FACCA started in 2001 with a budget of 9 000 EUR, in 2005 it was already 427 000 EUR and in 2010 two millions EUR. FACCA does not have trained personnel, so most of the time the non-Gitano social workers who had previously worked for other NGOs are now contracted by FACCA to do the same job, because FACCA has the resources. The difference is that now they serve almost exclusively the members of the congregations, and do only the work that the pastors allow them to do (Cantón 2013).

In my opinion we should be very careful in evaluating the effects of the missions, and making recommendations. The empirical realities and narratives about the change cast doubt on the easy account of radical change through the religion. The Roma in Márov did not give up crime because of the conversion; it just happened at the same time. The converts did not originate in the ghetto, but after they converted they started to visit the ghetto and to help the people there, so that the contrast between the Roma from the ghetto, and the Roma converts who were helping there, was apparent. The point is that it had existed prior to the conversion: they did not improve their economic situation or housing situation by converting. They did not give up drugs thanks to the church, but as I showed in the seventh chapter they used the practical identity of the convert who gave up drugs to suit their needs. There is clearly a need for ethnographic detail.

Because the study of empowerment and social inclusion through the conversion leads to the promotion of hegemonic discourses and omission of structural constraints and oppressions I propose to turn our attention to the question of autonomy. The recent debate in moral philosophy (Veltman & Piper 2014) equips us with the tools necessary to account for change, adaptation, and oppression.

I will now summarize the argument of the thesis whose main aim was to discuss the possible uses of the concept of autonomy in the study of conversions of Roma to Charismatic Christianity.

i) Patrick Williams stated that the conversions allow Roma to present the change of their behaviour as their individual decision, and thus downplay the interpretation that the conversion is an outcome of structural constrains (Williams 1991). They can present themselves as being masters of their lives. This way Roma gain autonomy or sense of autonomy through the conversion. I found an extreme case of this autonomy in the narrative about the miraculous learning to read, which lead me to a research question concerning Roma in Márov. There was a tension between the respect for autonomy and the need to transmit religious knowledge to students in Bible school. I was interested how this tension was overcome. I took for granted the assumption "*Je me suis mis dans le Seigneur*"; that Roma avoid subordination, even in the form of recognition that they have learnt something from a teacher or a preacher, and they seek ways to downplay the influence of others and of structural factors on their actions.

ii) Roma in the Bible school were told by the missionaries that it is their destiny to be oppressed, and that they should be humble, and submit to church and societal hierarchies. Humbleness was promoted as a divine principle and possible road to salvation, and the converts seemed to have accepted the submission. This was an antithesis to Williams, because the Roma were accepting the imposition of hierarchies. Autonomy was to be found elsewhere. I found that attending the Bible school the Roma were not motivated only by their love of God, as the missionaries suggested, but they found also their own use of the school. They were interested in getting a general education which would lead to erudition. They did not need any special teaching methods to be interested in the education. Their use of it was that by attending the Bible school they were learning a new speech code which they could then use elsewhere for their own purposes. Their model of autonomy through conversion contained the possibility of submission, while finding their own benefit in the situation.

iii) Political capital was reserved to kinship structures in Márov: however, the missionary Waleri found a way to become a political-religious leader (for limited

time). He did so by transforming the existing local political order from a kinship-based community with peculiarities of an individualistic structure, towards an ethno-religion of the Roma in Europe with him as the ethnic leader. The possibility of becoming a leader was fostered, paradoxically, by the fact that he was not related to the local Roma. His leadership was also made possible by inculcation of the hierarchical cosmology in the local Roma through the Bible school.

iv) Roma in Márov remained intact to the effort of the missionaries to influence their concept of kinship. Once the kinship facilitated proselytization and served the mission. When the kinship became threatening to the congregation in the eyes of the missionaries, it showed that they never understood how it worked, and that the Roma were not willing to change it. For them, fellowship in the congregation with relatives by blood was a code of conduct expected from them. If they were not loyal to the family and to the congregation in the same time, they could be expelled from both.

v) The most important autonomy, in which the Roma in Márov were socialized, was the respect for the subjectivity of an individual. Roma among themselves deeply respect the right of decision, and do not inquire into the rationalities or motivations of other people when they make their decisions. By doing so they acknowledge the subjectivity of the others. Autonomous work was not performed in Márov, with the exception of prostitution, drug business, and widely spread practices of "fucking up" Germans. There was an ideal of easy money the Germans bring and throw around them, and it was common to take and use this easy money. Even in situations of severe economic problems Roma were aware of the morality of credit, and avoided asking for it at all, and especially from certain people with whom they did not want to be related.

vi) The conversions did not change the structural position of Roma in the Czech society and did not address the main problems which the local Roma were facing, be it racism, heavy indebtedness, drug addictions, or lack of education, qualification and decent work. There were ways by which one could gain recognition and attain charisma, but the status achieved had a very limited sphere of force, and was mostly reserved to a very specific field of Charismatic Christians. The Roma were generally silent about their past and avoided telling too much in their testi-

monies, because it could always come back to them. During proselytization personal beliefs of Roma were not challenged by the missionaries, but they were invited to the church and told that they should not be alone, which resonated with a more general preference for society.

vii) On the case of a former drug-addict Muddy I have shown that he gave up the credit for abstaining from drugs to the church in exchange of a practical identity of a convert. Thus his drug history and change could be viewed as an effect of conversion, instead of being seen as his own attainment. He is a counterexample to the thesis of autonomy through conversion.The Roma converts presented by Williams (1991) and Fosztó (2009) assumed the merit of their attainments just themselves, and ignored the influence of others. On the contrary Muddy handed over the credit for his abstinence from drugs to the process of conversion. Once he will perhaps tell his testimony how he converted and gave up the drugs. Why he did it? He would be autonomous even if he did not convert and even if he did not hand over the credit for giving up the drugs. But by converting he also gained agency as a rational actor. My suspicion is that this was the case also in the conversions of other congregation members. The story which missionaries put forward was that Roma converted from being pimps and drug dealers. I suggest they took the practical identity of a convert while or after leaving the business, which allowed them to remain autonomous and become seen as rational actors.

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