

Romanistan is everywhere

Tracing Treacherous Terrain

Ed.: IG Kultur Österreich

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Oh, my – ROMANISTAN!

Hamze Bytyci

For as long as I can remember I have had a hard time with all kinds of abbreviations. Maybe that's why I was so bad at chemistry. As time went on, it kept getting worse. They're everywhere. Talking PC is the only way to definitely not offend anyone. If you don't know what ERIO, IRU, ERRC, ERTF or OSI means, you're not going to get very far. I used to be a rotating European with MH, but I recently found out that I am also a POC.

Who would not be overwhelmed by all of it?

There is another kind of abbreviation, a kind that goes beyond the classroom. ROMA and SINTI, meaning GYPSIES, meaning FOREIGNERS, who STINK, STEAL, GARBAGE!

These are the kind of abbreviations you want to get away from, ideally to a safe haven.

Oh, my – ROMANISTAN!

The longing for ROMANISTAN is nothing new: the contemporary Roma movement began on April 8, 1971. Since then, we know to officially call ourselves ROMA, we've got a flag and an anthem. But it would be an act of audacity to claim that all ROMA identify with the term and with the insignia of a new "people". In 1971, the representatives were not elected by the "people". And there are

still no democratic elections today. How could that be?

Something's missing here.

Oh, my – ROMANISTAN!

What is that . . . ROMANISTAN . . . what does it want to be . . . ?

The answer is certainly not India, for even though I view that country as my Gyrbet, it is foreign to me. ROMANISTAN is much more a symbol. A symbol of a dream, a safe haven for each one of us to have, something like a SAFE SPACE, to stay with the language of the POC. At the moment it's only an interactive ART SPACE, where individual artists can fully realize their potential as artists without having to deal with all these abbreviations.

ROMANISTAN stands for a longing for a self-evident existence – and for the hope that someday everything will be all right.

ROMANISTAN is not dead.
Long live ROMANISTAN!

ROMANISTAN

Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe was established upon the initiative of the Roma Kultur Zentrum Wien. For many years before this project, there had been attempts to receive funding from the City of Vienna, to no avail. Because the city's funding programs are structurally discriminatory, we tried to get through to the EU Cultural Program, which bases its decisions on content and quality. Because the Roma Kultur Zentrum Wien did not possess the necessary credentials (bank guarantee, a specific number of people in the association etc.), the board decided that IG Kultur Österreich, the umbrella organization and special interest group for independent cultural initiatives in Austria, should take on the role of project coordinator.

The cornerstones of the project span political antiracism, cultural work, self-determination, artistic production, and attribution. With the help of Guillermo Ruiz, we got in touch with our project partners Amaro Drom e.V. in Berlin and the Federación de Asociaciones Gitanas de Cataluna (FAGiC) in Barcelona.

Throughout the course of two meetings in Berlin and Barcelona, the project was developed along the lines of the cornerstones mentioned above. Hamze Bytyci, who was chair of Amaro Drom at the time, (not only) gave the project its name. Already at the kick off conference in Vienna, the term ROMANISTAN resulted in heated, yet extremely interesting, debates among the representatives of several Roma organizations. Now, at the closing of this project, the end of the discussion is still not in sight.

The tasks and interests of the participating organizations revolved around artistic work that is understood as both contemporary and committed to an emancipatory agenda. In addition, each organization invited scientific experts to accompany the project as "satellites", who commented from their own areas of expertise throughout and at the end of this project. This publication includes their final commentaries on questions of artistic production, self-organization, and legal foundations, in addition to texts that were written within the context of and in relation to the activities of *Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe*.

For more information on the productions, workshops, and conferences that took place throughout the project, visit the project websites: romanistan.net, romanistan-berlin.de, romanosmose.wordpress.com, romakult.org, fagic.org, amarodrom.de, igkultur.at.

Finding One's Own Bearings in a State of Exception

Europe, as we know it today is a modern construction, which after two world wars, accompanied by destruction, expulsion and annihilation, has yet to deliver on its promise of democracy, undivided human rights and social justice. There is hardly any other instance in which this is as visible as in the realities of the Roma and Sinti. Their trajectory over centuries, marked by marginalization and persecution, has not been reversed even as institutions for all of this Europe are being created.

Racially motivated attacks and diatribes are part of everyday life in many EU member states, a phenomenon described by Giorgio Agamben as a state of exception in his book *Homer sacer*. The Italian philosopher sees in this the “bio-political paradigm of modernity” and thus a place “that opens up when the exception begins to become the rule.” By doing away with the legal system the individual becomes “bare life” which – in Agamben’s radical formulation – may ultimately be killed. The historical experience of Nazism and genocide undoubtedly remains unprecedented. Yet even decades later there is still exception. The havoc wreaked by international finance speculation has entailed a global decline of democracy, rule of law and social foundations, all of which has also had a (lasting) negative impact on the realization of freedom and basic rights.

This terrain is certainly treacherous – and it remains invariably difficult for the Roma and Sinti to overcome the patterns of perception that prevail in the majority societies, while general stereotypes are reinforced by scientific disciplines. To this day, culture and media draw from this with a pseudo-folkloristic romanticization always joining the ideas of elimination – as the backside of the same medal.

The trivial romanticism of “Gypsy music”, flamenco and other exoticisms distorts the reality of Roma and Sinti life to the point of non-recognition, relegating it to the margins of society. As a result, even their trauma of the Nazi genocide has largely fallen into oblivion and has thus failed to find a lasting place in Europe’s collective memory. The social marginalization – this no doubt intended to be a technique of suppression – has resulted in an invisibility that makes finding one’s own position and identity while taking into account the diverse backgrounds and perspectives seem almost impossible. To make things even more difficult, projects expressly focusing on clarifying one’s own culture or even identity and capturing it in its entire complexity are in danger of continuing to inscribe the common patterns of stereotypes. What ultimately remains is just “otherness”, an image of victims in need of assistance, as is, in many instances, also found in the rift of power marking the well-meaning gaze of the inside and the outside.

At this juncture, *Romanistan*, the final publication of which is now being presented, must find special recognition. Even the initial circumstances confront the project with a challenge. What should it be called to do justice to the difficult initial situation? What should be done to prevent it from becoming yet another festival that elevates the Roma and Sinti to a spectacular stage? And perhaps even more important: How can one enter the treacherous terrain if most of the necessary funding stems from an institution that represents the problematic understanding of European culture just described above?

As the co-organizer, IG Kultur Österreich can draw from the experience of its many years of work on political racism which expressively distances itself from the psychologizing and moralizing concepts that seek to explain the phenomenon of racism only on the basis of individual causes and the responsibility of usually socially marginalized classes. In a position paper it is clearly stated that up to the present day structural racism makes for a hostile environment promoting social marginalization, which cannot be countered with dialogue alone but must also involve political self-empowerment. It thus makes sense that *Romanistan* is be backed by a partnership and self-organized unions and institutions, which in Vienna, Barcelona and Berlin have long been struggling for the recognition of Roma and Sinti rights.

As the following texts and blog entries will show, this compilation creates a basis for a reflection the diversity of which is also automatically mirrored in the conceptual process of defining one's position. Terms such as "identity" and "people" certainly require critical scrutiny. At the same time they also mark the terrain, a treacherous one that cannot be tackled by means of simply superficial interventions in language use. "Porajmos", a term borrowed from Romani for genocide committed against the Roma and Sinti, can thus also be found in the anthology. The question as to its aptness has again and again been the subject of heated debates, but in the publication it finds just as much use as the term "Holocaust", which was popularized by the film industry in the late 1970s only to then be refuted as illegitimate by the Jewish survivors of Nazi terrors and in large quarters of contemporary historiography. The examples here, arbitrary as they are, confirm by their appearance in *Romanistan* that a project focusing on the self-empowerment of the Roma and Sinti cannot take place on the outside. Even this dissonance should be seen as an incentive which provides hope for a lively continuation of the discourse on the development of theories and the closely related cultural work – even after the project has officially ended.

By tracing the terrain *Romanistan* speaks about a Europe that should not be left to the rule of a state

of exception. The continuity of invisibility, exclusion and persecution requires effective ruptures. The confrontation demands a strategic stamina, giving the Roma and Sinti the necessary space to negotiate their own position. Europe's terrain today may seem treacherous but it is certainly not cast in stone. And what is more, democracy, human rights and social justice are not things that have fallen from the sky – and *Romanistan* also has something to say about this.

Romanosmose ^{satellites}

Notes from the project blog

Romanistan included a scientific evaluation project. Three researchers – Ljubomir Bratić in Vienna, Teodora Tabački in Berlin and Pedro Aguilera Cortés in Barcelona –, a group called the “satellites”, had the task of accompanying the project activities and informing the participants about the reactions that resulted from them. In the process signals were passed on which influenced the continuation of the project. Moreover, the “satellites” were directly involved with knowledge production related to the contents of the project, which strengthened the subject-position of the Roma beyond culturalization. In the Blog *Romanosmose* the observations and thoughts about the project were made public. In this reader selected contributions to this blog will be presented.

1

The discussion on the emancipatory potential of culture/art production must be based on a reflection on the requirements of this production. *Romanistan*, in this sense, had several fields of observation and action:

The discriminating societies: what are the – also structural – mechanisms of exclusion? How could they be counteracted?

Actor-positions of the Roma: What is being done to strengthen these positions? What are the forms and tools of self-organization? What obstacles areas is one confronted with?

Art and emancipation: How can the special function of culture and art production be established and how can its visibility, reinforcement and growth be promoted?

Continuities, Breaks and Break- throughs

Traditions of Anti-gypsyism in Recent Austrian History

Erika Thurner

It's no longer possible to imagine the socio-cultural and political landscape without the Austrian Roma associations.¹ Today, it's no problem for Roma representatives and organizations to go public. Famous Roma activists are regularly invited to national and international gatherings: Holocaust and concentration camp memorials in other countries, national commemoration, information, and entertainment events.

From time to time, the Austrian federal government shows special reverence and invites Roma representatives to the Parliament, in an attempt to demonstrate that integration has been success-

1 "Roma" is the politically correct umbrella term for this immensely heterogeneous ethnic group. In Austria and Germany, it is common to use the designations "Sinti" and "Roma", which they use to describe themselves; however, when speaking of the persecution during the Nazi era there is no way around the negatively connoted exonym "Gypsies" ["Zigeuner"].

ful and Austria does not have a “Roma problem”. This is also why the contact with the media works so well. Journalists know their contact persons within the Roma community, and it’s easy for them to get an interview or a statement on current or historical events.

Perpetuation of Exclusion and Stopping of Roma Existence

This almost makes us forget that things were very different just one generation before, a third of a century ago – but even also as recently as 1995, when a Roma settlement in Oberwart, Burgenland was attacked.² Back then, politics and the majority population’s mindset were dominated by ignorance, rejection and disinterest regarding this group that had been persecuted for hundreds of years and was nearly decimated in the Nazi Holocaust.³ The lives of the few Holocaust survivors and their descendants were governed by fear, exclusion and daily harassment. In the post-war era – in particular since 1948 –, the Austrian officials’ attempts to deport as many “foreign Gypsies” as possible and, in general, to stigmatize, denounce and silence them as “falsely claiming to have suffered in concentration camps” were extremely effective. The post-war bureaucracy not only refused to provide them with immediate aid after the war ended, for decades, they also refused to acknowledge their demands for restitution.

At the same time, the efforts of Roma and Sinti to make a life for themselves and establish their livelihood were thwarted, since they were barred from pursuing any legal trade. This ban had not only to do with the fact that many Roma were stateless, it also clearly had to do with the perpetuation of discrimination and traditions of bias. During the interwar era, middle-class tradespeople had successfully stamped out the “Gypsy competition”. The introduction of new trade regulations and laws banning certain people from working in certain trades destroyed the livelihood of numerous trades- and craftspeople. Until 1952, these restrictive ordinances, set up during the era of the corporative state (*Ständestaat*) and the Nazi regime, were effective in banning Sinti and Roma from any legalized forms of making a living.

Those labeled as “Gypsies and vagrants” were still stigmatized, ghettoized, and relegated to the social periphery. They perfected their skills of blending in and masking their identity. In many families the past was simply hidden away, and silence became a mechanism of self-defense, while in other families their past was ever present, stories and nightmares of concentration camps and persecution casting a long shadow over their children’s lives. Consequently, it has also been extremely difficult to find survivors willing to speak about their experiences. Doing so required a great amount of care and empathy, and until far into the 1980s, it was not a good idea to encourage those affected to resign from “living a life in hiding”. The old and renewed prejudices were still too close. Officials and politics still reeked of the Nazi era, and the fact that Roma were still approached with general suspicion, even after 1945, sat deep in their bones.

2 On 4 February 1995, four Roma were killed by a pipe bomb near their homes in Oberwart, Burgenland.

3 Before 1938, there were about 12,000 Austrian Roma living in Austria (Burgenland Roma, Sinti and Lovara), only approximately fifteen per cent survived the Nazi Holocaust.

Traces of Memory – Safeguarded Knowledge

Only in the late 1970s and early 1980s was there a noticeable change in conduct, which was partly due to a new generation. In order to find a new way of addressing this extremely heterogeneous minority in Austria, it was absolutely necessary to come to terms with the past. It took a substantial amount of time before historians did any work on this Holocaust, pointing to a delay and a lack of interest. It remained in the shadows of the murder of millions of Jews, which had had a higher priority in terms of planning and execution, leading to the fact that crimes against “Gypsies” were rarely mentioned in the perpetrators’ files. The small number and the comparatively low social (economic!) standing of Roma have rendered their history a lower priority and more marginal issue. A combination of a lack of sources and the precarious social status of Roma and Sinti long impeded academic research on the topic.

In fact, the critical engagement with this history began earlier in Austria than in Germany. In contrast to Germany, where research on the issue was still dominated by works that perpetuated bigotry and criminalization, the Nazi persecution of the “Gypsies” began to be considered racist genocide in the early 1980s in Austria. However, the initiative did not come from the institutionalized areas of history research, but rather from circles outside the university and from students working on their diploma theses – in addition, focusing on this topic sometimes meant working off the beaten path.

Selma Steinmetz, a historian at the Documentation Center of the Austrian Resistance in Vienna,

laid the groundwork with her monograph *Österreichs Zigeuner im NS-Staat* (Austria Gypsies under the Nazi Regime). The researcher, a resistance fighter who had been persecuted under the Nazi regime as a communist and a Jew, was not only interested in putting this history in writing, she also sought to include Roma and Sinti as one of the communities that survived the concentration camps and assist them in applying for restitution as victims of the Nazi regime. Interviews conducted with survivors served as an important basis for her study, which appeared in 1966 (cf. Steinmetz 1966). This was followed up by the 1983 study *Nationalsozialismus und Zigeuner in Österreich* (Nazism and Gypsies in Austria) (cf. Thurner 1983). This PhD thesis included an analysis and outline of the overall structure of the Nazi Holocaust of Roma and Sinti and others persecuted as “Gypsies” (e.g., the Yeniche⁴). The central focus of the analysis was on the living conditions in the two main “Gypsy camps”, Salzburg-Maxglan and Lackenbach in Burgenland, both of which were called “internment” or “work” camps, thus masking their function. Structurally, they strongly resembled the concentration camps, prisoners also died there – especially in Lackenbach, due to its catastrophic conditions –, and they also functioned as transit stations en route to the extermination camps.

Vilifying the Victim

It was clear to the author that it was necessary to continue along the path Steinmetz’s work had forged. This meant not only conducting research,

4 The ancestors of the Yeniche (Jenische or Kärner, literally “carriage-pullers”) do not hail from India, as in the case of the Roma, but are indigenous Tyroleans who began to travel to escape a life of poverty hundreds of years ago.

but also actively engaging in the social and political struggle for the rights of this persecuted group. In 1983/1984, a small group of sympathizers came together to fight for the recognition of Roma and Sinti as victims of the Nazi regime. It was a tedious process, accompanied by numerous setbacks. Many Roma and Sinti who had been through the concentration camps died long before their claims went through and were actually paid out. There were others who – despite being offered assistance – did not want to put in a new claim. The hostility and rejection they had experienced in the post-war era left a lasting effect.

The Austrian state was generally extremely petty toward all the persecuted groups, and showed a greater interest in establishing itself as “the first victim of Hitler’s barbarianism, and as a country that had been occupied by the Nazis.” Little by little, the state began to pay out modest amounts. The first payments only went to those who had been active in the resistance, and from 1949, payments also went to “racially persecuted” Nazi victims. The entire process was very slow – the victims had to be satisfied with claims being paid out in installments –, and improvements were only made when a great amount of pressure was exerted from the outside.

There were a number of reservations and disagreements regarding restitution for Roma. Since they were stigmatized as “asocial” and criminal, their claims were repeatedly rejected. Officials on both the regional and national level carried this out; there were also a number of medical examiners who did not play by the rules. Doctors and psychiatrists – some of whom had worked under the Nazi regime, but were quickly “de-nazified” and reinstated as expert witnesses – often humil-

iated the victims with outrageous medical assessments. The files on the welfare of the victims were filled with inconceivable stories about decades of suffering due to the “immoral acts by some of the highest-ranking academics in the country.”⁵ The two cases briefly outlined below can at least convey a sense of this scandalous scenario.

Example 1: A Rom from Burgenland who had been seriously injured and survived the concentration camps in Auschwitz, Ravensbrück and Sachsenhausen, put in a claim for restitution payments or pension. His claim was denied for three years. Instead of offering social welfare or aid to help this terminally ill person survive, they sent the local police to his home. They came to check the data that the applicant had provided regarding his employment, family, assets and income. In 1952, when his heart condition and asthma had become so acute that there could be no doubt about how detrimental his time at the concentration camp had been to his health – his medical results even estimated how long he had to live – he would have received the pension. The man died at the age of 46, only five days after receiving notification that he was eligible to receive pension.

Example 2: A young Romni with a baby, emaciated, weighing only 45 kilos. Diagnosis: cardiac arrhythmia, myocardial defect. In the rural countryside of Burgenland, the single mother had virtually no means of finding gainful employment to secure her livelihood. Despite this, the “decision” after assessing her claim was negative on the grounds that she was “not willing to work”. Her application for a restitution pension was

5 As described by the Austrian-American doctor and psychoanalyst Kurt R. Eissler.

denied because “she did not seem willing to work in order to make enough money to support herself ...” The outcome: decades of suffering – a life of illness, poverty and destitution until the day she died in 1983.

Breakthroughs – Consolidations

In the “commemorative year 1988”, certain improvements occurred: on the one hand, there was an official recognition of Roma victims of the Nazi regime by former Federal Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, and on the other hand, an amendment regarding the restitution for victims of the Nazi regime was announced. The amendment should benefit the survivors of the “Gypsy camps” Lackenbach and Salzburg-Maxglan.

During this time, from 1988 onwards, an active Roma movement emerged from the small Roma civil society. Associations were founded and, in 1993, there was an official recognition as an ethnic minority, the sixth recognized minority group in Austria. These events tremendously improved the social status of Roma in this country. Nonetheless, anti-gypsyism – aversion and hate directed at the Roma minority – continues to persist and is still very difficult to combat.

Literature

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Thurner, Erika (1983): *Nationalsozialismus und Zigeuner in Österreich*, Vienna/Salzburg.

Romanose ^{satellites}

Notes from the project blog

The Gadje do not know Roma, or better, they know them by looking through one specific pair of glasses, because they have an advantage with this kind of knowledge. It is a form of knowledge that guarantees them power, therefore making the ruling position appear natural to them. If we want to break out of this situation, we have to break through this power structure. How? This is exactly the question that such a project dedicated to the emancipation of Roma must ask. The first step towards reaching the goal of knowing each other in a political sense is to broaden the shared common spectrum, in other words to make space. It is to focus and to make known the power mechanism of society in terms of its justifications and genealogy. To begin with, the racist prejudices are not self-evident or natural, but are established as a result of social battles.

“Gypsy” vs. “Farmer”

The Social Dimensions of Modern Antigypsyism*

Markus End

* Corrigendum, September 2013: In the first version of this text, the words “antigypsyism”, “antigypsyist”, “antisemitism” and “Antisemitismus” were mistakenly written with a hyphen. As the author deems it important to emphasize, that there is no real substance relating to “gypsyism”, that it’s but a construct of the majority society, we corrected the terms in this updated version.

Levels of Antigypsyism

Antigypsyism is a social phenomenon with effects across multiple social dimensions. The term refers to past and present antigypsyist discrimination and violence as well as to stereotypes and images. Because antigypsyism is such a complex concept, I will begin by distinguishing five different levels: (1) the concrete social interactions of antigypsyist discrimination and persecution; (2) historical and political framework; (3) stereotypes and images; (4) the underlying structure of meaning; (5) and associated social norms and values (cf. End 2011).

In this article, I have chosen to focus on the link between the fourth and fifth levels of analysis presented in the model above, connecting the structure of meaning of antigypsyism to social norms and structures. This structure of meaning consists of a combination of abstract meanings that remain constant across a variety of contexts and, to some extent, can be understood as the

preconceptions about “Gypsiness”. The antigypsyist structure of meaning must be understood as a component of the majority society’s culture and as a pattern of explanation familiar to all members of a given society.

The structure of meaning is made up of several separate meanings, which form a contingent meaning when viewed together. While the structure itself is not openly apparent, it becomes evident in various stereotypes and patterns of prejudice (cf. Holz 2001: 133f). Its pervasiveness is ensured through social norms and structures encouraging individuals to view social relations in ways that are shaped by antigypsyist perspectives and to reproduce social norms that are based on marginalizing people as “Gypsies”. Within the structure of meaning, a “we-group”, which adheres to specific social norms, is distinguished from “Gypsies”, who are condemned for not conforming to or even attacking these norms. Projecting these images – and the resulting persecution – serves to secure and stabilize the norm. Each mention of “Gypsy” – and in one case, the term “Sinto” – in this text must be understood as a result of this projection, as a construct that is not dependent on the realities of those stigmatized by it.

Procedure

In the following, I will elaborate on two core meanings that are central to antigypsyist thought. These examples represent the core elements of antigypsyism, but do not by any means cover the complete range of prejudices and stereotypes or the structure of meaning in its entirety. I will attempt to substantiate these elements using quotes by German “Gypsy researcher” Hermann

Arnold. Arnold stands like no other for the continuity of the Nazi regime’s antigypsyism within the Federal Republic of Germany. His publications are based on Robert Ritter’s writings, and Arnold also acquired part of Robert Ritter and Eva Justin’s estate. Ritter headed the Nazi’s Research Institute for Racial Hygiene (*Rassenhygienische Forschungsstelle* or RHF), which, among other things, compiled 24,000 “race assessments” of people suspected of being “Gypsies” within the territory of the German Reich. These assessments were used as the basis for the deportations that later followed. Justin was Ritter’s closest associate.

In the 1950s, Arnold was an important consultant and advised ministries, unions and churches on “Gypsy issues”. At the same time, he served as an expert for – or rather against – the restitution processes, actively defending Ritter and the RHF. Only in the 1970s, due to increasing pressure from the civil rights movement, was Arnold’s “expertise” first called into question (on Arnold, see Hohmann 1991 and Severin 2009: 84f). As late as 2000, he published a pamphlet that attempted to prove that the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma had utilized the Nazi crimes for their own means, accusing the Council of creating a dictatorship within the public discourse (Arnold 2000).

Rooted Nationality

Non-identity is an important meaning within the antigypsyist structure of meaning. The following two sentences summarize this point: “Gypsies don’t have a stable identity. On the contrary, their characteristic is non-identity, ambivalence.” “Germans, on the other hand, have a stable, rooted and fixed identity.” “Germans” are used here, because according to antigypsyist imagina-

tion in Germany, they are the polar opposite of “Gypsies”. This meaning of non-identity is based on prejudices and stereotypes that define “Gypsies” as “homeless” or “nomadic”. In 1958, Arnold announced that he had “discovered” the “Gypsy gene” and writes: “This study has determined that ‘instability’ [*Unstetigkeit*] is the most prominent trait of the ‘Traveler’, who predominantly carries this hereditary gene. It determines an individual’s behavior. There are only two possible behavioral poles: ‘traveling’ or ‘sedentary.’ In terms of their behavior, those who possess the former trait are Gypsies and those who do not are ‘farmers.’ The trait of ‘instability’ is a hereditary ‘radical gene’” (Arnold 1958: 95f) Arnold directly links “traveling”, “instability” and “Gypsy”, rendering these attributes, together, as one coherent concept. The logic of these stereotypes and prejudices aims to highlight the fact that “Gypsies” neither have an identity, nor are they rooted like “Germans” – or, as Arnold calls them, “farmers” –, but are rather unstable and ambivalent. Although “Gypsies” are always perceived as a folk, an ethnicity, or a nation within the logic of antigypsyism, at the same time they are also always defined as ambivalent, never as stable.

In this way, the alleged “Gypsy” is denied a stable and fixed nationality, one of the most important characteristics in the identity formation of the “we-group”. Within this mode of thinking, nationality does not merely pertain to citizenship; it includes a combination of having a long history of national traditions and culture, a national space, and a nation-state.

The social origin of this concept can be found in the religious and national identity politics and regulation policies of 16th century Europe. With

the rise of absolutist monarchies, a new characteristic of the territorial-state also emerged. Throughout the 18th century, the “nation” grew to become the most distinctive identity marker, assuming the function of an ego identity on a social level.

The mere existence of a non-identical nation questions this norm of a world that is divided into distinct national entities. It therefore also raises doubts regarding a constitution of identity that is based on the nation as such. At the same time, persecuting people perceived as standing outside of this order reinstates a fixed, stable national identity, because the threat is understood as a “foreign” threat that can be removed by combating and destroying it, instead of grasping it as a threat that comes from “within” the concept of nation and (see also Bauman 1992: 111f and Holz 2001: 225ff) is lastly derived from a non-contradictory identity principle.

The Joy of Work

A second core meaning within antigypsyism is the notion of a “parasitic” and “freeloading” life style. The most concise summary of this sense is the common opposing figures of the “Gypsy” and the “farmer” (see above). This constellation is found in countless antigypsyist texts. The majority society is ascribed the role of the “farmer”, responsible for producing food. According to antigypsyist logic, “Gypsies” live off of “farmers”, that is, off of the food the farmers produce. Hermann Arnold sums this logic up – with no intention of formulating any critique – when he writes: “He [the ‘Gypsy’, M.E.] lives off of people [. . .]” (Arnold 1965: 207). This logic is found in almost each and every prejudice regarding how “Gypsies” make a living:

by begging, stealing, fortune-telling, playing music on the street, huckstering and social fraud. What all these preconceptions have in common is that none are considered “real work” but rather illegitimate means of obtaining the fruits of the “we-group’s” labor. The meaning it conveys is always related to the “parasitic” and “freeloading” lifestyle mentioned above.

This kind of behavior is perceived as archaic because it implies that “Gypsies” ignore or seek to undermine the basic standards of civilization that are designed for distributing goods – property, law, and wage labor. This therefore suggests a kind of pre-civilizational – thus archaic – “parasitism” that is at the core of the prejudices and stereotypes mentioned above. In this respect, antigypsyism markedly differs from antisemitism and (neo-)colonial forms of racism.

The social background behind this concept is also found in historical and intellectual developments in early modernity (cf. Maciejewski 1996). With the emergence of capitalism in the German-speaking territories, a new social norm around work became prevalent. This was accompanied by the threat of internment in workhouses or other situations of forced labor as punishment for “idleness” (cf. also Scholz 2009). An extremely significant element of this work ethics, which Max Weber (1979) later described as “Protestant Ethics”, was identifying with one’s own labor and taking pride in one’s own hard work. This Protestant norm went so far as to prohibit the workers from enjoying the fruits of their own labor. (Here as well, Arnold accuses “the Sinti” of the opposite, of taking pleasure in consumption: “In general, the Sinto leads a hand-to-mouth existence. He never has any savings and is hardly able to set

anything aside, because of how he manages his money. Whenever his income increases, he has a good time and simply leaves things to take care of themselves.” (Arnold 1965: 206)) This lastly masochistic element plays a key role in the constitution of the psyche and social norm in German society. Here, too, a way to sanction a deviation from this norm is to single out a group of “foreigners” who embody this deviation, thereby simultaneously furthering the we-group’s discipline (cf. Hund 1996: 30f). Within this context, deviation from the norm – “idleness” and consumption for pleasure – is incorporated into the image of the “Gypsy”.

Conclusion

In the final section of the sixth thesis of the elements of antisemitism, which had originally been planned as the conclusion, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno included “reward without work” and “homeland without frontiers” (165), among the things that individuals living under an antisemitic illusion desire but are forced to reject. In doing so, they pinpoint modern socialization as the source of antisemitism. In this same way, these social relations must also be seen as the source of antigypsyism. Antigypsyism and antisemitism are not competing phenomena, but are rather complementary in their relation. It is nonetheless absolutely necessary to acknowledge that it is not simply a form of bias or xenophobia, but a resentment that is historically and intellectually intrinsically linked to the realization of bourgeois society.

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Romanosmose satellites

Notes from the project blog

The first step towards changing the present situation of discrimination is the recognition of its functional mechanism. Political antiracism raises the question of normality in this regard. In general, normality is what is accepted as a social consensus. Discrimination is a part of this normality. The structural discrimination of minorities is based on consensus in our society. The term “understanding normality” means questioning its matter-of-course status. What historical background has this implicitness? Which instruments are used – for example exoticism, pathology, diverse attributions, education? What are the main preconditions for the discriminating behaviour shown by various social actors? Along which lines are the different groups discriminated (because not every group necessarily loses its rights with the same socio-political mechanism)?

Self-Organization and Self-Historicization

Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche Strategies for Dealing with Majority Society

Simone Schönnett

Author's note: I am releasing my paper for the final publication. However, I must say that the name of the project is pretty strange, not to say extremely silly. Romanistan? What is that supposed to be? A country in a "Roman" [novel]? Or even a country for Roma – how absurd is that? Also: placing Roma under the observation of so-called "satellites", what kind of a horrible idea is that? In my opinion, this isn't just an example of the usual carelessness or even just an anachronistic approach, it also displays a lack of confidence – on all sides.

What is not laid out in writing is deemed as having no historical authentication. Or vice versa: written sources are considered reliable. It is much more difficult for knowledge and history that are not based on writing to gain recognition: they

are often viewed as speculation, non-knowledge, as strange. This is especially the case with social groups and societies that have only passed on knowledge orally. In the case of Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche communities that used to be travelling peoples, history was passed on orally – in and through storytelling. In particular, knowledge, skills, traditions, music, etc. were passed down to members of the group. Carrying knowledge of culture and history in one’s memory is central to oral tradition – and it continues to play an important role in Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche everyday culture to this day.

Since the first written sources about these travelling peoples from about 1418 and until the first associations of Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche were registered in the mid-1970s – that is, over 500 years –, there is a long period in which there was no documentation of their self-organization. This could lead one to think that these groups lacked any form of organization. After all, they were considered “Gypsies” and “vagabonds”. In the Middle Ages, they were viewed as “outlaws”, as heretics, as witches and sorcerers, as “asocial”, and their strategies for dealing with the hostility of authorities were understood as indifference towards all bureaucratic regulations.

Despite these stereotypes, they did not lack organization. Otherwise they would not have survived so many centuries: this era saw revolutions, the emergence of nation states through bloody conflicts, a steady increase in bureaucratic control, the idealization of the “homeland”, and a number of wars, including two world wars. In these eventful and dangerous times, for Roma, Sinti, and Yeniche the most important social and cultural institution was the extended family, in

which elder men and women held the highest authority. Everything that needed to be regulated was regulated within the clan.

Apart from the family, a central form of self-organization for Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche was the *kumpania*. The *kumpania* is a temporary alliance of representatives from different families and clans to realize a common undertaking. There is no written record regarding the content of the different *kumpanias* which evolved: in an oral culture, the spoken word is what counts – since, among other reasons, it can’t end up in the wrong hands. Therefore, no books were “kept” about this old form of self-organization, all that is known about it is preserved in stories. A great deal of the knowledge of the *kumpania* and numerous other traditions, such as music and the art of storytelling, was destroyed and nearly erased through the deportation and murder of entire extended families, clans, and tribes during the Nazi regime.

Now, more than sixty years after the Nazi reign of terror, the deep impact that this loss of the mother tongue, music, knowledge of healing practices, and the tradition of story-telling continues to have an influence on the everyday lives and realities of Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche. The loss of people, traditions, culture, and identity, compounded with the later emerging and still ongoing pressure to assimilate has had a lasting effect.

Contradictions of Self-Organization

The post-Nazi, European self-organization of Roma is a process that began in France. In 1959, Ionel Rotaru founded the Roma World Committee (CMG) in Paris, with equal representation of French Roma, Manouche, and Kalé, taking from

the *kumpania* tradition. It was still twenty years before the first World Roma Congress took place – on April 8, 1971 in London. The Congress participants chose the umbrella term “Roma” along with a common flag.

In the spirit of the civil rights movements of the 1970s, European Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche founded a number of interest groups. During this phase, in contrast to former modes of self-organization, the issue of the legal structures, and thus also the written word, had to play a significant role in forming the organizations, because the bourgeois administration requires the written form. This movement led to the founding of associations, which also meant registering the organization’s bylaws (statutes) with the *Vereinspolizei* (which is actually a branch of the police in Austria that oversees the register of associations). The new associations aligned themselves with the extensive bureaucracy in order to represent themselves. The self-organization of different groups in the 1970s thus also meant turning away from the original intention behind the *kumpania*.

The paradox here is that the motivation behind founding these Roma associations was a desire to no (longer) hide one’s Sinti, Roma, Yeniche identity or be pressured to adapt to majority society. These associations demanded of majority society to recognize and respect Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche. However, in order to make these demands, the interest groups were first required to take on the legal forms set up by bourgeois society.

There was also the challenge of explaining Roma history and culture from a Roma perspective and making it accessible for non-Roma at the same time. “Making it accessible” was a problem for

many – not only traditionally-minded – Roma, Sinti, and Yeniche. Not just because this meant breaking a taboo. It was also because of the deep-seated mistrust and apprehension toward the written word – especially when it took on the form of an administrative paper.

It must be noted that conservative and patriarchal ideas were prevalent. Nevertheless, contradictions continue to exist. Roma associations have contributed a lot to increasing the social acceptance of Roma. At the same time, the male conservatism, let’s say, of these associations still plays a part in perpetuating majority society’s stereotypical and traditional views of Roma.

Common Positions, Differentiations, and Dissociations

The question of self-organization is intricately linked to questions of solidarity and dissociation. The various Roma, Sinti, and Yeniche associations and interest groups all agree that they have a shared European identity. However, this agreement has not prevented numerous associations from creating a legal structure based on national affiliation (for example, Sinti in Germany). In this manner, some associations have dissociated themselves from “immigrant” Roma from south-eastern Europe. Such differentiations establish a ranking order and are bound to emphasize a hierarchy. Viewed from the outside, such differentiations are interpreted as discord among Roma, Sinti, and Yeniche, or as a sign of a lack of organization. Paradoxically, unity and diversity are both subsumed under the notion of “lacking organization”. This rehashes age-old stereotypes. Another very common widespread position of understanding is that hardly anything can be initi-

ated or achieved without the benevolence of the majority society. In order to hold on to the already sparse sympathy, the old cliché of “Gypsy music and romance” is too willingly and often employed. Even in 2012, many political Roma representatives still believe that it is still almost impossible for Roma issues to be heard without the employment of “passionate” music.

These ambivalences can be seen in the example of the *Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse* (“The wheel cooperative of the country road”), which was founded in 1975, as a neutral, non-denominational advocacy group working for the freedom to work in all trades and for “the right to residency, or to work and education within the established way of life.” The *Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse* came out of Yeniche resistance to the inhuman practices of the “Hilfswerk für die Kinder der Landstrasse” (“Relief organization for the children of the country road”). Between 1926 and the mid-1970s, authorities systematically removed Yeniche children from their families and raised them according to the values of the “Hilfswerk für die Kinder der Landstrasse”. At the same time, at public events, the old world ideals and horse-drawn carriages are still what is presented.

The *Radgenossenschaft* is one of many national and regional organizations belonging to the umbrella association of the International Roma Union (IRU), the most important international interest group, which was founded at the second World Roma Congress in Geneva in 1978. As an NGO with a consultative status, the IRU has belonged to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 1979, and also functions as a consultant to UNESCO. The IRU has been a member of UNICEF since 1986.

More radical or progressive positions on self-representation can be found especially in the work of some independent artists. Yeniche poet Mariella Mehr and Romni filmmaker Marika Schmiedt are but two examples. Both of them give insight into Sinti, Roma, and Yeniche society and culture. In their works, they tackle the issue of the disintegration of the community’s social structures. Offering such ruthless insights is an effective way to prevent history from repeating itself. However, what happens in art doesn’t necessarily have to work in reality. Nonetheless, fictions or visions are still extremely important.

Social Media or the New *Kumpania*

The Internet is a new and popular platform for Roma self-organization. New communication technologies and especially social media have helped Roma, Sinti, and Yeniche to network beyond national borders. In a way, the Internet is the postmodern pendant to the pre-modern market place: both are home to bustling “travelers” and their twenty-first century ancestors. Internet forums, chat rooms, and communities are indeed reminiscent of the old *kumpania*. From a minority point of view, they fulfill their purpose: to ally diverse “tribes”.

The flipside of Internet-based communication is, of course, what philosopher Jean Baudrillard in 1982 termed the “ecstasy of communication”. This hyperactive state of constant communication can also lead to gruesome self-portrayal. And, in all the digital candor, often no more is shown than superficial, age-old stereotypes.

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Romanosmose satellites

Notes from the project blog

Politically, in terms of categories of power, all elements of power form a compromise, an accepted consensus. The question intrinsic to a consensus is how long it can last. Those in power work on its longevity and its perpetuation, whereby the lines of this perpetuation include methods of naturalizing injustice. The oppressed struggle to counteract this strategy by replacing it with a historicized point of view. This point of view means that the situation of the minority is a product of social development, a construction that could have been different. This is the beginning of a movement from passivity to activity, to a position as actor. The central element of each battle against discrimination is the renewed discovery of equality for all with all. Equality is not the fulfilment of the goal, but rather a prerequisite of every political process in which the goal is to produce this condition.

A New Social Movement?

Spanish Roma and Their Forms of Organization

Pedro Aguilera Cortés

The first document that gives us evidence of Roma presence in Spain dates from 1425, when King Alfonso V granted passage to Juan, “Count of Egypt Minor”, allowing him to make his way through the Iberian Peninsula from the north along the medieval pilgrimage routes to the city of Santiago de Compostela. In 1492, the Reyes Católicos (Catholic Monarchs) managed to unify the Spanish kingdoms with a process of social and cultural integration, which included the expulsion of the Jews. It is likely that the Roma were able to avoid expulsion due to their small numbers and nomadic lifestyle, which made it difficult to pin them down, in addition to the fact that they converted to the official religion of Catholicism. In Spanish, the word “egipciano” (“Egyptian”), which is derived from “Egypt Minor”, alludes to the name “gitano”, as Roma are called in Spanish.

Although, generally speaking, the Roma population in Spain is well integrated into Spanish

society, it is still necessary to strengthen our fight against racism, stereotypes and prejudices, all of which are deeply rooted in the non-Roma society in Spain. The Roma and Maghreb populations have the worst images of all the groups within Spanish society. The Roma are the most heavily discriminated group after those from Maghreb. Fifty-two per cent of the Spanish have little or no sympathy for the Roma.

Today, Roma live in both the main Spanish cities and in rural areas. There is no nomadism among the Spanish Roma. In 1991, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano conducted a study on the housing conditions of Roma, which concluded that 90 per cent of Roma have lived in the same city over the last fifteen years. There are no official statistics on the actual number of Roma living in Spain, but according to several studies¹ the number of Roma living in Spain is between 725,000 and 750,000, which means Roma represent 1.87 per cent of the Spanish population. Spanish Roma are the fifth largest Roma community in Europe and one of the most well integrated after 35 years of democracy in Europe.

Social, public, civic and political participation of Roma in Spain is strongly linked to the process of democratization in Spain and to the Constitutional Law of 1978. In 1978, after living on the peninsula for over 500 years, Roma were granted Spanish citizenship under the Constitutional Law, endowing them with the same rights and obligations

1 National Spanish Roma Strategy, 20/20 (2011) and Laparra, M. (coord.) (2007): Informe sobre la situación social y tendencias de cambio en la población gitana. Una primera aproximación. Madrid, Social Affairs Ministry Studies. See also the official statistics from the Council of Europe.

as other Spanish citizens. In spite of sharing the same rights legally, the actual situation of Roma in Spain is far away from being equal. According to the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (“Social Research Center”)², Roma is the ethnic group that is most heavily discriminated against in Spain: More than 40 per cent of the Spanish citizens would not like to have a Rom as a neighbour and one in four wouldn’t want their children to go to the same school as Roma children; the unemployment rate among Roma is 42 per cent, which is 17 per cent above the average unemployment rate on a national scale. There are “ghetto” schools where 98 per cent of the children are Roma. In addition, Roma have much less access to finding an apartment to rent than Spanish citizens.

The Spanish Roma Movement

The way that Roma can combat this situation is to work together in the so-called “Spanish Roma Movement”. The movement is made up of different organizations, religions (Protestant and Catholic), youth organizations, pro-Roma organizations, and public bodies working to improve the situation of Roma in Spain.

I would like to point out here that it is necessary for the Roma to be more active in the political and social arena and to take part in joint efforts so that they can have a greater influence on and build a stronger link to society and government agencies. The initiation of this strategy is linked to the idea of conceiving this Roma movement as a “new social movement”. Is the Roma movement actually a new social movement?

2 Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas 2010, gitanos. [org/areas/igualdad_de_trato_y_no_discriminacion/noticias/26701.html](http://areas/igualdad_de_trato_y_no_discriminacion/noticias/26701.html)

What is a New Social Movement?

According to Pedro Ibarra³, a social movement is a type of group action. They are large informal groupings of individuals or organizations, which focus on specific political or social issues. In other words, they carry out, resist or work toward bringing about social change. In order to be considered a new social movement, the following is also required: a certain collective identity, a certain conflictive behaviour, a sort of informal structure, a network structure. Does the Roma movement fulfill the characteristics described above? Can it be considered a new social movement? Let's have a look at each of the following:

A certain collective identity

"Identity" is a key word in the language Roma use when speaking about public, private, social and political issues. As Roma, we have built our own identity separate from that of the non-Roma members of society. Roma have a strong identity that is based on certain values, such as respect for Elderly. A Roma proverb that conveys this is: "when an older man/woman dies, a library burns down." Another element of Roma identity is that the family is positioned in the center of relationships to the outside, it also means that there is a lack of power of the individuals vis-à-vis the group. The Roma in Spain have developed their own identity, which may change depending on the region or groups. There are, however, values that remain the same across all regions and groups of Roma.

Another key point regarding the identity building process, in words of the Italian sociologist Melucci⁴, is: "Collective identity is an interactive shared definition produced by individuals or groups, [...] it is the result of a negotiation process between different elements and adjustments related to the purposes of collective identity." Therefore, according to Melucci, Roma have been building their own identity since 1425, and the process of negotiation has been impacted by the different anti-Roma laws, which have strengthened Roma identity over time and this strong identity is present in the Roma movement today.

A certain conflictive behavior

This is a key point of our analysis, given the fact Roma have a certain way of carrying out conflicts with society and among the different actors of the Roma Movement. I would like to comment on the conflict behavior in dealing with the majority society, which comes from the lack of recognition of Roma culture and identity within the non-Roma public sphere. Some examples are the lack of recognition of Roma culture and identity in schoolbooks and textbooks, and of Romani also being an official language⁵. Even more importantly, Roma are neither recognized as a cultural minority nor as a social minority.

There is the process of conflict among the different actors of the Roma movement because different actors take different kinds of action. For

3 Pedro Ibarra, *¿Que son los movimientos sociales?* Anuario Movimientos Sociales Icaria Editorial y Getiko Fundazioa. Barcelona, 2000.

4 Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

5 According to the Spanish Constitutional Law, Spanish language is the official language in all of the country but Catalan, Euskarian and Galego are co-official in Cataluña, Basque Country and Galicia, Romani is not considered a language in the Spanish law.

instance, there are some religions that work in close cooperation with civic associations; there is a Roma ethnic movement and a pro-Roma movement; there is a women's movement and a youth movement. Sometimes they are forced to compete with one another for resources and power, which creates conflicts among the Roma themselves.

An informal structure

In spite of the public and political establishment's strategy to develop a Roma movement that likens non-Roma movements, the Roma have maintained a sort of informal movement. The main reason is that sometimes the Roma movement is based on territorial and family concepts rather than the membership to a certain identity. So the processes of relations and participation are often based on family or other concepts, meaning that formal structures based on non-Roma standards and frameworks are avoided. Access to the Internet and social networks contributed to creating new forms of informal relationships between organizations and groups, to making organizations more well-known, and facilitating joint collaborations.

Network structure

Spanish Roma organizations have been created within a non-Roma framework, which is a model consisting of dispersed organizations based on a territory and/or target group. In this way, in the 1980s a large number of local and regional Roma organization set up their activities, some had to compete with each other for space in a certain neighborhood or town, which also hampered the outcome of their actions. In the mid-1990s, things began to change and a process of light collaboration among organizations was set up. This process

could be called the "collective action network", which is indeed a new social movement.

The Roma collective action network in Spain is composed of different organizations that can be identified as the following:

1. Social and ethnic Roma organizations including general Roma organizations, Roma women's organizations, youth organizations, organizations promoting Roma education, which are the current versions of the former, general local Roma movement. These new organizations are very well connected to the community and have profound knowledge of the situation from a grassroots perspective. They usually also have a high level of recognition within the local Roma community.
2. Pro-Roma organizations, which are support organizations for Roma lead by non-Roma, the main characteristic of which is that these consist of highly trained professionals, who sometimes lack deeper awareness and knowledge of the actual situation of Roma.
3. Religious groups: About 95 per cent of the total Roma population are either Protestant or Catholic, both religious groups are very well connected to the community, although there is virtually no mutual collaboration or recognition among the two religious groups.
4. Mass media. In Spain, the most important Roma media are produced by civic associations, such as *Nevipen Romani* in Union Romani, *Gitanos* in Fundación Secretariado Gitano or *cuadernos gitanos* at the Roma Culture Institute.

The Roma movement in Spain copies the main structures, rules of work and methodology used by other minority groups and movements. By considering itself an actual new social movement, the family structured social movement could move substantially further. In order to establish this new paradigm, it is necessary to think about a few things involved.

First, be patient, Roma movements usually want to see the results immediately, without taking into consideration that such processes take place step-by-step.

Second, negotiation without exclusion: The Roma social movement should include all the different Roma groups or target groups (women, youth, students, Roma immigrants, etc).

And last but not least, it is necessary to have real knowledge of the situation, in order to avoid counterproductive behavior, such as paternalism, over-protection or lack of interest for Roma concerns among the majority population.

unionromani.org
issuu.com/cuadernosgitanos

Roma Osmose satellites

Notes from the project blog

There seems to be a general consensus throughout Europe that Spain is an example to follow when it comes to the integration of Roma. There are numerous reasons for this. It is a fact that Spain has been implementing specific Roma-related policies for more than twenty years, and has been a pioneer in acts of institutional recognition of Roma culture. In comparison to some Roma communities in Eastern Europe, Spanish Roma live in socio-economic conditions that are relatively speaking better. Nonetheless, the situation of Roma in Spain is still far from idyllic. Social housing for Roma still leads to the ghettoization in peripheral districts, the life expectancy of Roma is far below those of the general population and illiteracy levels are extremely high (7 out of 10 Roma above the age of 15 are functionally or completely illiterate in Spain). Educational performance is disastrous, with high drop-out rates (especially among girls) and cases of school segregation can still be found throughout Spain. Finally, Roma continue to be the most discriminated community among the Spanish minorities population, much more than other immigrant communities.

Establishing mechanisms for Roma participation often aims at merely legitimizing the policy rather than at empowerment or potential decision-making possibilities for Roma. Anna Mirga

Perception, Fortune-Tellers and Truth

Images of Roma in the Media in Between Majority Society and Self-Organization

Gilda-Nancy Horvath

9/11, the day the Twin Towers in New York came tumbling down: everyone can remember where they were, what they were doing, and what communication channel or device they had been using (TV, radio, Internet, cell phone) when the inconceivable happened, or when they heard about it. For everyone, even for those far away from the catastrophe and without any relatives in the city, this memory is linked to an emotion. This emotion crystalized into a collective perspective of this day, a collective pact, regarding this dreadful moment's place in history. To a great extent, this is an effect of the mass media.

In the 21st century, the mass media shapes the perception of significant developments and phenomena. Our perception depends on how – and through which channels – we receive information. Of course, 9/11 is a drastic example. It is, however, an excellent illustration of the media's reach, as well as its capacity to influence our views in everyday life.

In a nutshell: the media shapes our perception of reality. Aside from its function as a tool for interpersonal communication, it is the primary filter through which we perceive an event. Therefore, the media also shoulders a great responsibility. The proverbial “mirror” that the media holds up to society is meant to present images that are as “objective” as possible, while also factoring in demographic and social developments.

However, the truth is more complicated: the media responds to environmental stimuli in very different ways; from a vast array of events and themes, only a few are selected and become focal points, while others are downplayed; it decides what aspects are important and casts events in a certain light; it interprets and forms contexts. There are actors who do all of this (consciously or unconsciously) for their own interests, like strengthening or weakening a specific political position. On top of this, there is a strong tendency to spread negative rather than positive reports (or: *Bad News is Good News*).

The (Media’s) Warped Image

Already in 2010, OSCE established that in Hungary “Jobbik¹ officials and representatives have been particularly effective in using mass media to disseminate anti-Roma rhetoric as a central element in the party’s political platform.” This is not an isolated case, as scholarly research has shown: in a study conducted from 2005-2006 in Italy, Sigona (2006) observed that the extreme right had taken advantage of the local media’s focus on “nomad camps”, rendering the Roma merely an instrument in their power play. Strauß (2005) also

showed the detrimental impact of “negative images in the media based on press releases issued by the police, despite a ban explicitly mentioning a certain ethnicity.”

While migration, and those who belong to this category (“migrants”), is one of the big themes of our time, only very very few people belonging to minority work in editorial offices in this country. The result is a rift between their lived reality and the majority society’s representations of this in the media. The result is what we call “clichés”. This already distorted image of a minority, combined with a specific political agenda can incite pure hatred against a minority – as in the example of Hungary.

Roma in the Media & Roma Media

All of the above-mentioned phenomena clearly apply to representations of Roma and Sinti. This group has no political lobby, no media clout, and in addition have borne bearing the brunt of conceptions based on pseudo-romanticism and their Holocaust history. The predominant themes featured in the media in connection with Roma are deportation, panhandling crisis, and criminality. The media also continues to convey images of the “wandering Gypsy”, despite the fact that over 95 per cent of Roma in Europe are sedentary. These circumstances are tragic considering the media’s role as a sounding board for public discourse.

An increasing number of Roma have recognized this imbalance between what one sees/hears about Roma and what is really true. Fortunately, this has led quite a few people in Europe to create their “own” media, which is closer to reality.

¹ Right-wing extremist party in Hungary (editor’s note)

The “Traditionalists”

The oldest print media publications by the Roma community in Austria (with four to five issues annually), are Romano Centro’s (bilingual) magazine, and the magazine of the Cultural Association of Austrian Roma, *Romano Kipo* (German). Both associations have been in existence for over twenty years. Another magazine worth mentioning here is *Romani Patrín* (Roma wheel), published by the Roma association in Oberwart. It announces events and discusses current themes; the proximity of the editors and writers to the Hungarian border is also noticeable, in a positive way. It’s a good mix of the motto “act local, think global”. All of these print media pioneers have also managed the transition to Web media extremely well, and each association has its own website.

The “Digitalists”

dROMa (a play on the words “Roma” and “Droma”, which means paths) is a media portal of the association “Roma-Service” based in Burgenland. Their quarterly print magazine *dROMa* can be downloaded, and their online blog offers worldwide news coverage (on themes relevant for Roma). Since 2011, the quarterly *dROMa* TV in Burgenland-Romani provided Roma in Europe with an online source of information. In terms of content, the program approaches highly charged political issues in a serious and sensitive manner. On the cover of the print version, one finds pictures of community role models rather than images of slums. There is, of course, also a lot of news on Facebook and Twitter. As a small service, they also provide a long list of links to pages on Roma, media and politics. So much for the idea that Roma are not into new media . . .

The “Public Media”

It would be a disservice not to mention the airtime the ORF [Austrian broadcasting corporation] sets aside for Roma. Radio Burgenland dedicates a ten minute-slot every Monday to the program *Roma Sam*, hosted by Burgenland-Romni Susanne Horvath. Ö1 Campus hosts a twenty-five minute long weekly online format called *Radio Kaktus*. They report on a great variety of topics: from deportations in France to the annual Roma Ball in Vienna or Burgenland. All of the programs are partly in German and partly in Romani.

There is no Roma television program on ORF. The (bimonthly) Burgenland region TV journal *Servus, Szia, Zdravo, Del Tuha* does however cover issues relevant to the Roma community. The same can be said of the national weekly TV program *Heimat fremde Heimat* on ORF 2.

The “Migrants”

Over half of the Roma living in Austria are migrants. Many are from Serbia. So, it’s no coincidence that the show *Ex-Yu in Wien* (Ex-Yugoslav in Vienna) on the Community TV channel OKTO has such high ratings. Weddings, fun evenings with live music and portraits of restaurants encourage the Serbian (Roma) community to tune in. People who appear on the show are seen. The concept is simple – and it works.

Gipsy Radio/Gipsy TV also offer live streams, music programs, and a chat function to a mixed range of users from all across Europe. They organized a singing contest, *The Gipsy Voice*, that was streamed on the Internet, where viewers could call in to vote for their favorite candidate.

The “Watchdogs”

What is still missing in Austria is the next logical step in the evolution of media: not only producing one’s “own” media, but also documenting and evaluating the representation of one’s own minority group within majority media. What’s more, it also means going public and pointing out cases where the media presents images with no regard for human dignity or incite hatred towards a certain minority through biased representations. “Watchdogs” is the new media term for those who monitor the mirror that is held up to us, and check if its angle is not tilted so that it becomes impossible to get an objective view.

On the European level, there are a few institutions that, at times, have taken on the task of the “watchdog”. For instance, in Hungary, Romedia makes films about the situation of Roma in many different countries, which stand out thanks to the facts they include, rather than sentimentality. Nobody knows for certain how much their work has been impacted by the recent developments in Hungary. MECSEM, an online news portal for Roma in Slovakia, also regularly points out misconduct within the majority media.

Why Do We Need “Watchdogs”?

Philipp Gut (assistant to the editor-in-chief of *Weltwoche*) did a piece on “bands of robbers”, “roving criminals”, “bands of panhandlers” and “criminal clans” in April 2012, and the controversy around it led to the newspaper being reprimanded by the Swiss Press Council. The author was recently invited to take part in a roundtable discussion on TV. One of the most devious things he had done was to illustrate the article with a

manipulated photograph that showed a little boy holding a toy gun. The author defended his piece at the discussion, claiming that it was “well-researched” and “based on facts”. Not even in precedent cases, such as this one, does the majority media ask Roma – even symbolically – to give their opinion.

We should put an end to this. We should finally have an opinion of ourselves that we create – an opinion about the media’s opinion of us.

Literature

Sigona, Nando (ed.) (2006): *Political Participation and Media Representation of Roma and Sinti in Italy*. OSCE/ODIHR/CPRSI. Florence.

Strauß, Daniel (2005): „Ziele – Zeichen – Wirklichkeit“. In: Matter, Max (ed.): *Die Situation der Roma und Sinti nach der EU-Osterweiterung*. Göttingen, pp. 113-125.

Roman Osmose ^{satellites}

Notes from the project blog

In addition to the history of development of the dominant position there is the position of the oppressed, which exists despite the attempts to cover up discrimination and society's refusal to accept its perception, the perpetuation of which emanates from socio-political and cultural developments. It is a question of how those who are withheld a certain position react. How do they act and react in the face of the fact that they are discriminated? Different behaviour patterns may be observed: first of all that of taking on an inferiority complex due to discrimination. Secondly, pragmatism that implies: "society is this way, and therefore we must conform to it." And thirdly, offensively going against it.

Culture Work as an Opportunity?

Possibilities of Having a Social Impact in the Field of “Sinti and Roma Art and Culture”

Hamze Bytyci

Art is here to provide individuals the freedom to express their own feelings, views or identity without having to heed too much to social conventions. Yet when it is about the art and culture of Sinti and Roma, the situation seems to be a bit more complex. Here there are a number of prejudices, stereotypes or simply certain expectations that come to bear, be it on the part of the majority society or that of members of this minority itself. They influence not only the everyday life of many Sinti and Roma, but also, possibly their artistic production, be it only through the compulsion of having to react to and reflect on it.

In order to be able to assess the social effect that the art and culture work of Roma and Sinti has it is necessary to first take at least a cursory look at the situation of the Sinti and Roma in Germany. This, however, proves difficult since there are no official studies on the situation of the non-German Roma in Germany. The following information is



Exhibition *The Roma Image Studio*
 Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de

thus based on two studies that focus only on the situation of the German Sinti and Roma. It can be assumed that the situation of the non-German Roma – in particular among the Roma who have moved to Germany from Romania and Bulgaria – is even graver especially in the field of education and in terms of economic and social factors. With regard to discrimination and racism, we can, by contrast, assume that the experience of the German Sinti and Roma is not much different from that of the non-German Roma.

The representative survey of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma on racism against the Sinti and Roma in Germany was carried out in 2006, with about 309 persons respondents. 76 per cent of the participants responded affirmatively to the question on whether they had been discriminated often – in the workplace, by neighbors, in restaurants or in other places. 40 per cent of those interviewed believed that their children or grandchildren were not sufficiently supported in school. The study also drew attention to the discriminating practice of the media in reports when references were made to delinquent or criminal acts being committed by a member of a minority. 90.3 per cent of the respondents affirmed that this media coverage elicited a fear of prejudice among them as members of a minority.¹

The more recent study on the present-day education situation of German Sinti and Roma, carried out by RomnoKher GmbH between 2007 and 2011, questioned 275 German Sinti and Roma

1 Representative survey of the Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma über den Rassismus gegen Sinti und Roma in Deutschland, zentralrat.sintiundroma.de/content/downloads/stellungnahmen/UmfrageRassismus06.pdf (Dec. 26, 2012)

from three generations about their educational situation. Compared to the older study, the findings here are even more shocking. 81.2 per cent of the respondents had personally experienced discrimination. The study concluded: “Experience in school is strongly informed by open and hidden discrimination in the form of every day anti-ziganist insults and prejudices on the part of other schoolchildren. The teachers here do not seem to intervene in a professional way.”² Moreover, according to the study, 13 per cent of those interviewed did not attend any school, with this percentage among the majority population probably being lower than 1 per cent. 44 per cent of those questioned have no school diploma (as opposed to 7.5 per cent among the majority population.)³

These two studies show not only the current situation of the Sinti and Roma in the field of education and the widespread racism. They also elucidate two important ways culture and artwork by or with the Sinti and Roma can have as social impact. First, culture work represents an opportunity for the Roma – in particular the Roma youth – to develop personally. It enables them to acquire new skills and experience success. This way a contribution is made to making them interested in (non-) formal education and including them in meaningful, positive activities. Second, art and culture work has the potential to reach a larger public, i.e., also the majority population, to refute the images of Sinti and Roma that are common in the media,

and to thus reduce prejudices and stereotypes and counteract exoticizing representations.

Taking these aspects into account, I would now like to take a closer look at several Roma art and culture projects.

André J. Raatzsch: The Roma Image Studio

The case of the first, and probably most topical, project is an exhibition and long-term photo-platform. The project was curated by André J. Raatzsch in collaboration with Lith Bahlmann and Emese Benkö and opened at the Galerie im Saalbau in Berlin-Neukölln in 2013. “The Roma Image Studio is an artistic and critical platform which links the representation of the European Roma with the re- and deconstruction of Roma-identity, taking into account photography, photo-archives and the related photographic discourse. [...] On the basis of iconographic imagery from international photo-archives and collections, photo albums and artistic photographs, the exhibition initiates the over-due inter- and transdisciplinary discourse on the de- and reconstruction of the historical and social memory of the European Roma.”⁴

Raatzsch sees his art as an instrument to de-exoticise and de-romanticize the “Sinti and Roma image”. “In my artistic work I have been focusing since 2007, when I participated in the First Roma Pavilion at the Biennale in Venice, on the question of Roma depictions of the present. To this end, I

2 Strauß, Daniel: Zehn Ergebnisse der Bildungsstudie und Empfehlungen, stiftung-evz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/EVZ_Uploads/Handlungsfelder/Handeln_fuer_Menschenrechte/Sinti_und_Roma/06_zusammenfassung-bildungsstudie-sinti-2011.pdf (Dec. 26, 2012)

3 Ibid.

4 André J. Raatzsch: “Ein Interview mit mir selbst” (An Interview with Myself), eu-infothek.com/article/andre-j-raatzsch-ein-interview-mit-mir-selbst (April 6, 2013)



Nihad Nino Pušija: *Zyklus Roma Camps in Rom*,
45 x 30 cm, color print on FujiPearl, 2003,
Courtesy Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de



Nihad Nino Pušija: *Zyklus Roma Camps in Rom*,
30 x 45 cm, color print on FujiPearl,
2003, Courtesy Nihad Nino Pušija /
fotofabrika.de

present contemporary photography and photographic archives as well as sculptures in performative artistic contexts which do not belong to the conventional romanticizing and exoticizing exhibition practice.”⁵ The goal of having an effect on the majority society clearly moves to the foreground here.

Moritz Pankok: Galerie Kai Dikhas⁶

The Gallery for Contemporary Art of Sinti and Roma artists from all over the world, which was founded in 2011 and whose artistic director is Moritz Pankok, is located in the Aufbau Haus in Berlin-Kreuzberg. As one can read on the website of the gallery: “Apart from the Roma Museum in Brno (Czech Republic), which is not only specialized in visual art, there has been no permanent institution to date which is dedicated to studying, disseminating and presenting the art of Sinti and Roma to a larger public. The Galerie Kai Dikhas helps to remedy this situation.”⁷

Moreover, it has created a new free space, which enables Roma artists to develop and present their talents and skills. “The Galerie Kai Dikhas contributes to an inner and outer emancipation of Roma culture.”⁸ The attempt to bring about changes and positive developments within the “Sinti and Roma art scene” is thus clearly expressed.

As the curator of the (probably) only gallery for visual arts by Sinti and Roma in Germany Moritz

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ On the Galerie Kai Dikhas see also the text *Place of Seeing* in this publication

⁷ Ort des Sehens/Kai Dikhas/Place to see, kaidikhas.com (Dec. 25, 2012)

⁸ Ibid.

Pankok describes his goal of presenting the heterogeneity of this area of art to a larger public:

“I think the gallery shows quite clearly that there is a very large diversity and very different ways of thinking within the minority, that there are people who make small, moving installations out of recycled materials, just as there are painters who make 2 x 3 meter large oil paintings that have absolutely nothing to do with, for example, a nomadic art.”⁹

Nihad Nino Pušija: Roma é Roma – Roma in Rome

For nine years Nihad Nino Pušija has been visiting the same Roma families again and again – families that live in camps around Rome, following their life situation. In the process he has found “young gladiators, proud adolescents, disillusioned persons and those full of life, trying under the most difficult circumstances to secure their survival.”¹⁰ His photos were shown at the Galerie Kai Dikhas in fall of 2012.

In the press release on his exhibition he explains that his goal is to deconstruct the clichéd and homogenizing image of Sinti and Roma: “There where I live and work, I trace microcosms, document changes on a small scale and capture inconspicuous things so as to create a more all-encompassing image of my surroundings with the series I have created.”¹¹

9 Ibid.

10 Press release Nihad Nino Pušija. *Roma é Roma – Roma in Rom*, kaidikhas.de/de/exhibitions/roma_E_roma_1/text (April 6, 2013)

11 Ibid.

Hamze Bytyci and Rafael Badie Massud: Romeo rennt

Romeo rennt (Romeo runs) is a theatre piece that was rehearsed by 14 young people at the Akademie der autodidakten and performed at the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse in May 2012. “Following an odyssey from the Balkans to Berlin Romeo finally ends up in a circus: Here an impossible wedding takes its course, rituals go off kilter and the prism of perspectives keeps on turning.”¹²

The theater performance *Romeo rennt* was created together with young people who had the chance to give their input to the piece with their ideas and their personalities. An important aspect was the experience of success, which was additionally reinforced by the fact that the tickets for both performances were sold out. This is an effective method of non-formal education, which has the potential to influence the development of young people in the long term. Since the theater piece dealt intensively with the various “Roma traditions” and the stereotypes harbored towards the Sinti and Rima, it had an especially big impact on the audience.

Ivor Stodolsky and Marita Muukkonen: Perpetual Gypsy Pavilion

Perpetual Gypsy Pavilion is a “traveling pavilion” which was opened during the Venice Biennale in 2009. It was a spontaneous reaction to two things: the official Roma pavilion was canceled on short notice and at the same time Berlusconi’s govern-

12 Ballhaus Naunynstraße: *Romeo rennt*, ballhausnaunynstrasse.de/index.php?id=21&evt=610 (Dec. 25, 2012)



Romeo rennt
Photo: Esra Rotthoff

ment seriously violated the rights of the Roma living in Italy.¹³ The Roma pavilion became part of ten national pavilions as part of the Biennale – it had the form of a “postcard from Venice” on which one could leave one’s own fingerprint.¹⁴

As can be gleaned from the interview with Ivor Stodolsky, the goal of the *Perpetual Romani-Gypsy Pavilion* was mainly to address the worldwide scene of contemporary art and to (re-)present the “Roma art” to this audience. “At that time in Venice it was very important that everything came out via e-flux. At the last moment we convinced e-flux to do it free of charge, and it was revealed that all of the curators were still there. The Hungarian pavilion was part of it, the Swedes, the Norwegians – altogether ten countries. This was the first time that ‘Gypsies’ participated in the international art scene within the other pavilions. [...] This Perpetual Pavilion was very political, directed against Berlusconi’s politics – people were being killed on the streets, in Naples children were found dead on the beach. The audience at the time was contemporary art, because it was the largest and most important event of contemporary art, all eyes were directed at Venice.”¹⁵ The intention was somewhat different than in the other projects, for the idea was not just to reach a broad public but above all to have an influence on the Roma representation on a high political level. This could be called the third possibility of a social impact of art and culture of Sinti and Roma.

¹³ *Perpetual Romani-Gypsy Pavilion*, perpetualpavilion.org (Dec. 26, 2012)

¹⁴ Interview with Ivor Sodolsky, April 20, 2013.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Cultural Identity and Self-representation

I would like to begin by raising the following question. Is there such a thing as cultural Roma identity?

The answer coming from the studies and interviews I did is clear enough. There is no *ONE* cultural Roma identity. There are various heterogeneous identities, which are composed of regional and individual elements.

What strikes me as especially important is the question of self-representation. The Sinti and Roma must – and would like to – be involved in the decision regarding how they are to be represented.

In the press release on the exhibition *Roma é Roma* by Nihad Nino Pušija, for instance, the widespread representation of the Roma by others is questioned and also his Roma background is highlighted as an important advantage.

“The photographic image of ‘Gypsies’ has to date usually been shaped by outsiders, not from members of the minority itself – usually without consent or against the will of the portrayed persons. Thus the same, classical stereotype of otherness is passed on and addressed, without probing behind the homogenous surface. Given his background it is easy for him to become part of the photographed scene himself and thus to approach the portrayed person so closely as hardly anyone else.

As a wanderer between worlds, Nihad Nino Pušija seeks new aspects in the reality of his minority, thus liberating the self-image of the Roma from outside influences, from the gaze of the other. The

medium of photography thus serves to process identity and to re-assimilate the self-image.”¹⁶

Moritz Pankok who does not have any Roma background would like, as curator of a Sinti and Roma gallery, to provide Sinti and Roma artists a space in which they can present themselves. “I do not want to influence too much my artists by any thematic rules. Rather, it should be a space that is available to them for presenting themselves.”¹⁷

Pankok goes even further in his reflection when he says: “It is not the task or the duty of a minority to worry about being understood in the majority but rather the majority society has the means in its hands to inform and to approach people and give them space in communication and the media.”¹⁸

When it is about the art or the culture of the Sinti and Roma, the tendency to folklore or kitsch and the homogenization of the diverse minority is often discussed.

André J. Raatzsch points out that there is folklore in all nations: “This folklore is shaped, continued, newly formulated, newly commented on by institutions such as museums, galleries, cultural centers, educational centers. In the case of the Roma this entire movement, this entire change has been happening since the 1970s. [. . .] And we also have to see very precisely that this movement is very slow. Why? Because the Roma as a minority only have very few instruments, institutions that

16 Press release Nihad Nino Pušija. *Roma é Roma – Roma in Rom*, kaidikhas.de/de/exhibitions/roma_E_roma_1/text (April 21, 2013)

17 Interview with Moritz Pankok, March 29, 2013.

18 Ibid.

can define this very precisely, cultivate and communicate this in the long-term. And I believe that in the future in Roma culture there will simply be a separation between folklore, contemporary art and regional or local art.”¹⁹

Folklore is thus a legitimate part of the “Sinti and Roma culture”, but it should not be reduced to it. Rather the point should be to fight against the tendencies that exoticize and homogenize “Sinti and Roma art.”

Moritz Pankok sees in art the means that are available to art a possibility for addressing and eliminating stereotypes, for instance, through humor: “It is also so that art often also facilitates a humorist approach which, if when dealing with a theme such as racism in a scientific or media theoretical way, would be very difficult. [...] It would actually be very liberating. And precisely this is also the freedom that an artist has, for instance, in Damien Le Bas’ works where there are many very bad stereotypes. [...] But with the theme “dealing with clichés” one has to identify the intentions. As, for example, in Damien Le Bas one finds clichés again and again which are certainly used as a means of communication – but always with the goal of making them visible, revealing and breaking them. But that with humor.”²⁰

Again and again it is asked whether the name “Roma art” or “Roman artists” is not only used (or is abused) as a sort of “door opener”, a sort of “entrance ticket to the world of art”.

19 Jenseits von Folklore-Kitsch (Beyond Folklore Kitsch), dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/thema/2063875 (April 22, 2013)

20 Interview with Moritz Pankok, March 29, 2013.



Exhibition *The Roma Image Studio*
Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrikade

Responding to the question of the senior producer of Deutschlandradio Kultur whether the “Sinti and Roma art” is “also a label which can be used to protect oneself or even for promoting oneself – hey, look here, here comes the art of a discriminated minority but you are definitively not allowed to be against it,” André J. Raatzsch answered as follows: “[. . .] To be honest, it would, on the one hand, be stupid if one wouldn’t use that, while on the other hand, it is important what one achieves with it, what one can ruin with it. How can you structure it so that the emancipation processes, that the protagonists who participate here as Roma and want to participate, can later achieve this, as, for example, what happened to Black Culture in the USA, that they are recognized today, established in the international art world.”²¹

Moritz Pankok’s response is not much different: “The people here are not being exhibited simply because they are Roma and take a brush in their hand, their art also has to convince me and that has a whole lot to do with artistic or aesthetic quality.”²²

Similar to Pankok, what is most important for Ivor Stodolsky is the quality of artistic production. Moreover, he also makes sure that the works selected by him also fit into the current artistic concept: “Yes it is a ticket. But I think there are so many tickets here! You also cannot say: I am the new Beatles – then you don’t have a ticket! *[laughs]* You also have to do something that has not yet been done.”²³

21 *Jenseits von Folklore-Kitsch (Beyond Folklore Kitsch)*, radio.de/dkultur/sendungen/thema/2063875 (April 24, 2013)

22 Interview with Moritz Pankok, March 29, 2013.

23 Interview with Ivor Stodolsky, April 4, 2013.

Romanosmoses ^{satellites}

Notes from the project blog

The more egalitarian a society is, the bigger is the part that engages in activism for the emancipation of the group. But emancipation can be interpreted in different ways. The only common anchor that all emancipation subject-matter has is that the group which wants to emancipate itself no longer wishes to be the way it has been up until now. Nevertheless there are various efforts of emancipation. The emancipation effort of those who have internalized discrimination can be considered congruent with the effort of the predominant normality. Efforts to differentiate tend to place the emphasis on individuality, for example, one's own music, folklore, tradition, etc. It is a question of attempting to achieve equality through assimilation. The emancipation of the activists, however, aims at emancipation from discriminating attributions and implies for the most part characteristics of confrontation. It is a matter of affirming the role of protagonists and of an active participation.

The Big Knowledge Gap: The Roma

Why is it still difficult to learn more about the Roma culture?

André J. Raatzsch

Until now the practical examples of Roma art exhibitions have shown that the promotional programs or the simultaneously exhibited information about the artworks, video production or photography, seldom have an effect on the art objects or complement them. The role that this “additional information” plays in terms of changing the “typical Gypsy”¹ perspective would certainly be of utmost importance.

Until now “Roma folklore” and “modern Roma art” has been a blind spot in European art history. Books that are used in educational institutions contain no information about Roma artists. Of course there are numerous books that present the artists but they (with few exceptions as a later

1 Busch, Ines: Das Spektakel vom „Zigeuner“. Visuelle Repräsentation und Antiziganismus. In: Markus End, Kathrin Herold, Yvonne Robel (Hg): Antiziganistische Zustände: Zur Kritik eines allgegenwärtigen Ressentiments, Unrast Verlag 2009.

example will show) are not recognized by the hegemonic art scene. Roma may contribute to the cultural enrichment of the society but that is not a guarantee that they will be taken seriously or legitimized by art critics, curators, museums, galleries or other cultural and artistic institutions. I only know of one example where this process of legitimacy was at least partly realized. Omara (Mara Oláh) was exhibited in 2010 at the Liget Galéria in Budapest. This was a clear emancipatory statement and a deliberate decision made by the art historian László Beke and the artist Sugár János – both representatives of the modern Hungarian art scene. Their decision was based on several arguments as can be gleaned from the gallery's website. "Omara (Mara Oláh) continues to be labeled as an 'amateur Roma artist', even though she is one of the most important creators of modern Hungarian painting due to the radicalism of her painting and the strictness of her narrative. But this would provoke the modern art scene to change the way it thinks about itself. Mara Oláh's paintings show years of suffering and daily discrimination caused by poverty and a substandard life. Not fiction – her paintings depict powerless anger as well as the humiliating situations that she has personally experienced. In her powerlessness she begins to paint and doesn't necessarily let herself be led by an imaginary picture, but more by the magical strictness of her narrative. The content (or the narrative) is so central for her work because it means liberation through expression."²

A Roma art scene or a cultural hybrid – or both?

Despite the above-mentioned positive acknowledgment, there is still the question: What results from the changing artistic needs of Roma?

What would happen if a "Roma art scene" were to be established decades later? Could this new scene "claim" the emancipated artist again? Or should the entire process aim at producing a cultural hybrid where Omara in the future would be seen as the first emancipated Roma artist?

A scene from the documentary film "Kései Születés"³ from 1972, where among others Ágnes Daróczi and Bari Károly can be seen, as well as a video film by András Kállai (no title, 2012), where he symbolically marks with his blood Budapest buildings and public sculptures (Heroes Square, Monument of the Hungarian Revolution 1956, The Hungarian Parliament, Chain Bridge, Hungarian National Gallery). These films reflect their wish to be part of the Hungarian society and convey a message to society which should be self-evident: "I belong here, I want to belong here."

Two generations of Hungarian Roma artists make us aware of the fact that 40 years have gone by without the formation of Roma art or cultural institutions that they have demanded. The unanswered question remains as to what would have happened if the first generation of Roma artists (Daróczi is part of this group) had reached the

² www.ligetgaleria.c3.hu/376.html: (12 April 2013).

³ Kőszegi, Edit, Szuhay, Péter, Kései Születés (film részlet) / The Late Birth (film clip), Hungarian documentary film, 67 Min, 2002 / sz.nes, magyar dokumentumfilm, 67 perc, 2002 direktor / rendező: Edit Kőszegi, Péter Szuhay.

autonomous institutional basis necessary for the establishment of a Roma art and cultural scene. Is it imaginable that András Kállai and his artistic colleagues could simply grow into an established art scene?

Here I would like to mention the groundbreaking declaration of Anna Szász: "... through the repositioning of the Roma culture the change of power relations between cultures would be possible."⁴ As long as the claims of Szász are not met, the recipients, artists and curators must continually make new "critical observations" in order to question their own conceptions and avoid falling into the position of an observer who stereotypes that which is "typical Gypsy".

The Practical Value of Cultural Educational Programs in Schools for the Establishment of the Roma Culture

*"Given the fact that I am perceived as a Roma artist, a logical consequence should be the recognition of bricklayers who are Roma as Roma bricklayers."*⁵

With this statement in which Péli reveals a deeper truth I wish to show the readers the latest discourse concerning the problem of modern visual representation of the Roma. I hope by doing so that the "Roma artists" and artworks might be perceived in a diversified context.

At this point, I also wish to mention "coincidental" realizations in connection with my workshops and the exhibition *Die stummgeschalteten Bilder* that I presented in 2011 at Nürtingen Grundschule, Berlin: There are pictures that have been voiceless for 40 years. The pictures are very important historical documents and a decisive point of contact for the Hungarian Roma. They document important events. When the sound of the picture is shut off, future generations are unable to hear and understand their information and messages. This is what I wanted to change with my interdisciplinary art project and the exhibition. The project refers to the problems of contemporary visual representation of Roma in the production of media images and their effect on everyday racism (even in German schools). In the focus of the project are five photographs as objects of reflection. The pictures were provided by Ágnes Daróczy.⁶

In 1972 she participated in the Hungarian TV Talent Show and was the first Hungarian Roma to receive a special prize from the jury in the field of literature. The pictures document this rather unknown event. The project achieved the aim of providing a cultural educational opportunity to learn more about Roma art and culture. But without institutional support the project cannot continue. The educational gap in the school remains because those who did not take part in the program and future students will have no idea at all who the Roma are.

You want to ask if you can learn about a culture from photography, official art exhibitions or cul-

4 Szász, Anna, The role of contemporary visual Roma culture in relation to ethnic tensions in Hungary. Original title: A roma kortárs vizuális kultúra szerepe az etnikai feszültségek feloldására. Amaro Drom. S. 30-32, 2009.

5 Péli, Tamás. In: „Stations” – A film about the Hungarian painter Tamás Péli by Vanda Zsoldos, 1988.

6 The 56-year-old is part of a small Roma group that has risen to the elite of Hungary. She has been an active advocate for Roma emancipation since her youth.

tural education programs, and how relevant this is in terms of the Roma culture.

Counter-question: does the German or European education system provide enough educational material about the culture and history of the Sinti

and Roma in order to fight the present day anti-ziganism or racism? Do the Roma have enough instruments and institutional support to form a definition of themselves that is strong enough for them to be represented in Europe?



Àgnes Daróczi,
Photo: Lajos Nádorfi

Roman Osmose ^{satellites}

Notes from the project blog

Culture can be used as an instrument to achieve an observable public presence, an instrument to strengthen participation. Following this line of thought it is important to make visible the existing cultural capital of a community and to contribute to increasing it: film, art production and music can all play a role. The decisive aspect is contrary to exoticism, which means no enrichment for that which already exists (because this is founded on exclusion) or minority programs (because political corrections last only a short time and are subject to the existing social and ideological conditions), but rather the position of being right in the middle, of participating as the central theme.

2

Cultural representations that have been shaped over the centuries by the interests of the majority societies play a decisive role in constructing an identity.

Be it under the label “Roma artist” or not, be it at sites of commercial or self-organized art reception – there are a number of strategies and practices used to position oneself in the field of art and culture. A growing number of artists and cultural workers who are Roma themselves are using their work to deconstruct stereotype ascriptions from the outside.

Mapping Vienna. Barcelona. Berlin

Almir Ibrić

“More Gypsies had their houses burned, were expelled from their villages, and were killed in racist attacks between 1989 and 1996 than in all the time that has passed since world war II.” (Michael Stewart. *The Time of the Gypsies*)

The project Mapping Vienna. Barcelona. Berlin, which was part of Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe, focused on the lifestyles and networks of the Roma minority in Vienna, Barcelona and Berlin. The project sought to map existing systems of organization and the representation of Roma in the media. The idea was to get as many active organizations, associations and “key players” from within the communities as possible involved in the project. Video interviews and art shows featuring the work of Roma artists were meant to give visibility to everyday life within the Roma community. It was also important to show the changes within the structures of the Roma community and the impact Roma have on their surroundings.

The aim was to counter stereotypical images by showing that Roma have long been a part of and actively contributed to shaping society.

This (and other similar) project(s) are always confronted with questions concerning goals, impact and, most importantly, self-critique. How can a handful of interviews change the situation of an entire community within a society? Can one individual do something for the common good? The project *Mapping Vienna. Barcelona. Berlin* attempts to answer these questions.

The *small changes within the system* let us know that this is all not just a pointless endeavor. Just placing Roma at the center of attention and letting them speak for and about themselves creates “movement within the system”. The fact that people seek to *create movement, to do something themselves* is reason enough to support them. Theory is put into practice. When one’s personal value is affirmed by obtaining a different kind of position within the system of representation, it’s not just the psychological component that is important, but also seeing the representation of one’s active participation in shaping society and calling out the many prejudices that are to be combated. The fact that it’s up to certain communities – in our case the Roma community – to make this happen is a condition that must be questioned in a modern society. Can a world that frequently speaks of itself as *highly technologically evolved* in comparison to those who are underdeveloped be called anything else than *only-interested-in-itself*?

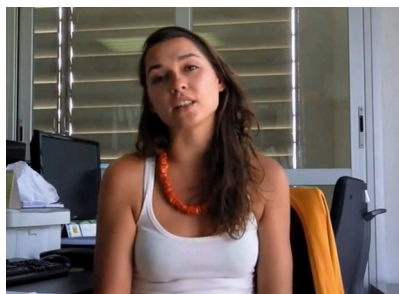
Supposedly everyone is equal! Reality has shown, however, that this approach does not always work or, rather, those facing discrimination don’t always

see it that way. This civilization perpetuates a class society, though classes are not intended, neither on the basis of religion nor of state theory. How does this happen? And what are the effects? The fact is that especially minorities struggle with this. Already the terminology has a negative air about it, that is: minority. Another question is why a minority should try to assert or position itself within majority society in the first place. Since this society is so highly evolved, wouldn’t it be enough to point to human rights? Are human rights even disputable? Just because it’s about people belonging to a minority? Just because it’s about Roma? But that is how it is. That, too, is happening in the midst of our twenty-first century world. That too is happening in the digital world, in the age of the iPhone.

Ultimately, theory and practice are not the same: although the people’s assembly of the United Nations establishes in a resolution (217 A III) that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” we still must see to it that this theory becomes reality.

So, the *Mapping . . .* project also provides an opportunity for us to position ourselves within this system, which otherwise only ever rarely happens. The results, experiences and stories should be used to sensitize society and as a way for Roma to attain self-knowledge and self-positioning.

Mapping . . . should definitely not be just another project that has used up its resources and whose results are only ever looked at on and off, by somebody somewhere. Work on these issues must be continued and updated. Recruiting new forces would be a good idea. In particular, youth should be concerned with questions of self-knowledge.



An important message it transports is: self-knowledge does not hinge on a project! Everyone who thinks they need to do something in this direction should do it. Ideally with, but if necessary without, funding. We cannot simply wait for society to take action – we are (also) this society. In this vein, refining the initiatives that already exist is by no means futile – on the contrary. Putting the results in writing could also be useful. A book? A documentary? A continuity!



The path to self-knowledge also entails self-critique. Cultivating self-critique leads to success. The project should also be examined from this perspective. Where did we go wrong? What could we have done better? What have we learned?



We can only hope that this initiative will carry on and be further developed, and that, in addition to creating self-knowledge, it might lead to the actual situation of Roma becoming more visible on the whole.

romakult.org/wp/mapping-in-vienna

Screenshots of
Mapping Vienna.Barcelona.Berlin

Place of Seeing

Thoughts, Suggestions, and Reflections on Galerie Kai Dikhas

André J. Raatzsch

Introduction

I am not going to write here about the so-called Roma artists and their works, nor about so-called Roma art and its reception in the European art scene, etc., as one might well suspect from the given context. Instead, I am interested in the question of how an art institution such as the still-young Galerie Kai Dikhas might be able to strengthen its position in the coming years. How does this “place of seeing”¹ wish to be perceived while establishing itself in the framework of local, national, and international art events?

1. Isolated places: classical galleries and other gallery types

For the sake of orientation, let us explore the following question. Which gallery types exist

¹ In Romani, Kai Dikhas means “place of seeing”.



Ceija Stojka: Ohne Titel, 2011
29,5 x 42 cm, gouache on paper
Courtesy Galerie Kai Dikhas



Imrich Tomáš: Drom, 1997
75 x 55 cm, hemp on wood plate
Courtesy Galerie Kai Dikhas

alongside the classical gallery?² As a basis for our discussion, we might turn to the documentation accompanying Anna Flach's 2011 project *Galerie-Einsichten*³, which investigates the "role of reputation and expert opinion in Central Switzerland's galleries." The activity of an art gallery might seem self-evident. There works of art are sold, artists presented, catalogues published. The gallery is a place for art lovers and curious passers-by.

But there is more going on behind the scenes. There is also the art market and its related economic mechanisms, in addition to the gallery's objectives and artistic orientation. As a result, different types of galleries come into being. According to "The Galleries of Central Switzerland", which catalogues and categorizes all of the well-known galleries in Switzerland's six central cantons, there are four different types. The first is the classical gallery described above. The next are the *off-space gallery* and the *producer's gallery*, both of which have a commercial focus. The fourth category is the *hybrid gallery*: "[...] which no longer figures among the regular galleries. Examples are publishing houses with exhibition space, simple exhibition spaces alone, art and cultural centres, museums, collections, auction houses, and art fairs."⁴

2 Anna Flach, Projekt *GalerieEinsichten*, 2011.

3 Ibid., p. 2: Classical galleries "[...] are characterized by their commercial orientation as well as by the presence of professional employees. The orientation of the classical gallery extends from regional, national, to international levels. They are looked upon as art dealers."

4 Ibid. p. 2f.

The Airport: The Passenger in Transit

The airport is a place of arrival and transit. The passenger knows exactly where he wants to end up. In a sense, it is an isolated place, since a passenger frequently gets lost there. But precisely the negative experience of losing one's way triggers a process of self-awareness, one that is necessary in order to perceive things in unaccustomed ways. And when the passenger in transit is sitting and waiting for the aircraft, this is a "special time" for reflection. About what? About whether he has in fact lost his way!

2. Public way station: gallery visitors of the future

The last type cited in Flach's list is the "hybrid gallery".⁵ Kai Dikhas belongs to this category. Describing a publisher's gallery in central Switzerland, the author reports: "Exhibitions take place in connection with publications, and represent a kind of quality control, even an added value. [...] Their survival on the art market is characterized by the quality of their work. [...] Admittedly, they cannot survive from sales alone. They are also dependent upon support, public and private financing."⁶ But there are other aspects, besides the economic one, which integrate the community and play an indispensable role in mediating between gallery and public, as well as between educational and cultural facilities. Here I am speaking of the gallery education program, an "exhibition space for theoretical and practical art education in conjunction with contemporary art – something that is almost never done in Germany."⁷ Carmen

Mörsch's investigation provides concrete examples, including the "rich tradition of activities of the Whitechapel Gallery London"⁸, the projects of the Chisenhale Gallery, and of the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) in London, etc. Here, she discusses the way in which "the above-mentioned institutions see broadly-conceived educational activities as the fulfilment of their public mission. They are intensively networked with one another and with local institutions such as schools, associations, and cultural, senior, and youth centres in order so as to draw as many people as possible through specific opportunities to view and think about contemporary art."⁹ Using such an approach, it has been possible for Galerie Kai Dikhas to fulfil its most important task: cultural and artistic education about so-called Roma art and Roma culture in the public sphere through "deconstructive and transformative art education."¹⁰ Gallery visitors of the future, then, might hopefully grow

8 Ibid.

9 Carmen Mörsch, "Gallery Education in Großbritannien: Beispiele guter Praxis für die Kunstvermittlung in Deutschland", in: *Kunstvermittlung zwischen Partizipatorischen Kunstprojekten und Interaktiven Kunstaktionen*, conference proceedings, Kassel 2002, edited by the Working Group of the deutsche Kunstvereine and NGBK Berlin, Berlin 2002.

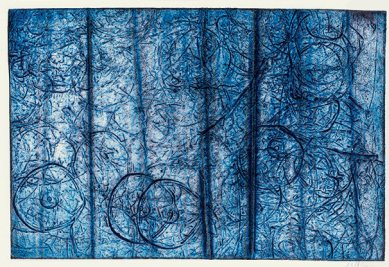
10 Same author: "The task of art education is to expand the functions of the museum/exhibiting institution and to position it as a protagonist vis-à-vis the active shaping of society (politically as well). Art and the museum are conceived as teaching organizations which are in a state of change, and which are concerned less with 'attracting' certain groups than with the necessity for involving the surrounding social milieu – for example the local community – and which must pose the question: To what degree is this active shaping of the most diverse public spheres necessary for our long-term viability?" iae.zhdh.ch/fileadmin/data/iae/documents/vier_funktionen_der_kunstvermittlung.pdf (5 Jan 2012)

5 Ibid. p. 3.

6 Ibid.

7 Carmen Mörsch, *Kunstkooperationen*. kunstkooperationen.de/vermittlung.htm (3 Jan 2012)

up perceiving gallery exhibitions against the background of their own habitus.



Alfred Ullrich: Ex und Hopp
monotype from embossed and folded lead, 2006,
Courtesy Galerie Kai Dikhas

The Passenger in the Café

Music, city noises, people everywhere. The café offers all manner of stimuli and pleasures. The passenger reads the local newspaper in order to learn more about this unknown land, while at the same time overhearing the other customers' conversations – what language are they speaking, what are they talking about? It's a funny feeling not to understand the language well, unnerving, the risk of misunderstanding. In such a situation, one needs help and support from someone in order to understand things accurately.

3. Galerie Kai Dikhas Berlin and the Studio Museum in Harlem

One is invariably compelled to take a look at the Studio Museum in Harlem – the big brother, so to speak, and doubtless a prototype for Galerie Kai Dikhas. The museum justifies its existence with its history of twenty-four years of activities. Let us compare the respective philosophies of the two institutions:

“The Studio Museum in Harlem is the nexus for artists of African descent locally, nationally, and internationally, and for work that has been inspired and influenced by black culture. It is a site for the dynamic exchange of ideas about art and society.”¹¹

“The Galerie Kai Dikhas shows temporary exhibitions of work by Roma and Sinti artists from all



Exhibition view:
Diary of a Mad Artist, Kiba Lumberg
Galerie Kai Dikhas 2012
Courtesy Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de

¹¹ studiomuseum.org/about/about (9 Feb 2012)

around the world. It is a 'place of seeing' [. . .]. It creates a new and free space which makes it possible for Roma artists to develop and showcase their talents and capacities. The Galerie Kai Dikhas contributes to the inner and outer emancipation of Roma culture."¹²

The term *descent* is used by the Studio Museum in the sense formulated by the anthropologist Wolfgang Kraus, as follows: "*Abstammung* or *Deszendenz*: English: *descent*, French: *filiation* (*descendance* is rare). In its most general and ethnologically relevant sense, the German word *Deszendenz* (regarded here as synonymous with the English *descent*) refers to the culturally recognized genealogical relationship between a person and some number of their ancestors, regardless of gender."¹³

In the context of Galerie Kai Dikhas, the word "Roma" corresponds to the definition of popular scholarship, as well as to the self-designation of the Roma people: "'Roma' is a generic term for a series of ethnically related populations having their origins on the Indian subcontinent [. . .]."¹⁴ "The choice of the word 'Roma' as an official self-designation is intended to overcome ancient prejudices and to generate new self-confidence."¹⁵

I would like to pose the following question to cultural anthropologists and ethnologists: Which

aspect of our physical context can be illuminated by the word *descent* or *Deszendenz*? What additional meanings are inherent in words such as "origin" or "background"? It might also be productive to reflect on combinations of terms: "artists descended from Roma and Sinti", a construction of meaning which even integrates their Indian origins. These reflections are put forward here as a challenge.

While conducting research on the Studio Museum in Harlem, I was fascinated by another term: "catalytic". The museum has achieved recognition in particular for its *catalyzing* role in promoting works by artists of African descent. What does this mean in practice? First of all, it refers to the museum's activities, including its artist in residence program, as well as a broad spectrum of projects involving public and cultural education – activities Galerie Kai Dikhas also plans to develop in the long-term. Moreover, this encompasses the philosophy already formulated by the Berlin gallery, namely to contribute to efforts "for the inner and outer emancipation of Roma culture."¹⁶ Both the art world and society at large need institutions like the Galerie Kai Dikhas and the Studio Museum in Harlem as "catalysts".

The Passenger in the Gallery

In the gallery, the passenger stands before a photograph which depicts a "young Roma" who has become lost in the metropolis. The image would be little more than an occasion for "routinized pity" except for the fact that he has just had the same experience earlier in the café. As a consequence, the passenger is able to recognize himself in the

12 Galerie Kai Dikhas kaidikhas.de (9 Feb 2012)

13 Wolfgang Kraus, "Zum Begriff der Deszendenz. Ein selektiver Überblick", in: *Anthropos*, 1997 (92), pp. 139-163.

14 de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roma_%28Ethnie%29 (30 Jan 2012)

15 First World Roma Congress launching this international human rights movement in London in 1971, romani-uni-graz.at/rombase/cgi-bin/art.cgi?src=data/hist/current/self-inter.de.xml

16 Cf. Galerie Kai Dikhas kaidikhas.de (29 Jan 2012)

photograph in the gallery, to regard it against the background of his own experience.

The gallery is a place for arrival and continuing travel. The passenger knows exactly where he wants to end up. In a sense, it is an isolated place, since a passenger frequently gets lost there. But precisely the negative experience of losing one's way triggers a process of self-awareness, one that is necessary in order to perceive things in unaccustomed ways.

kaidikhas.de



Lita Cabellut: Changing Perspectives III
50 x 90 cm, video still on aluminum dibond panel,
2011, Courtesy Galerie Kai Dikhas



Delaine Le Bas: Gypsy Power 1/15
Edition Galerie Kai Dikhas 2012
50 x 40 cm, etching
Courtesy Galerie Kai Dikhas

Organizing Activism

Romedia Foundation – Acts Through (Social) Media

Katalin Bársony

Established in 1992, the *Romedia Foundation* has more than 20 years of experience as a Roma non-governmental organization. Providing new, fresh information from a different perspective on Roma to policymakers has been a key element of the foundation's activities, which include producing films, videos, international multi-media campaigns as well as public events.

Researchers have shown that Roma are the most negatively portrayed minority in Europe. In order for society to progress peacefully and democratically in the midst of a severe global economic crisis, there must be a more humane representation of one of its largest and most ignored minorities. The foundation works to promote the self-representation and empowerment of Roma activists and ultimately tackle and challenge the ingrained, centuries-old prejudices and misconceptions about Roma.

Mundi Romani

In 2007, the *Romedia Foundation* launched the project *Mundi Romani* under the slogan *The World Through Roma Eyes*. The project entailed the production of dozens of films on Roma in Europe and beyond, which were broadcast every month on the Hungarian *Duna TV Channel*. The monthly news documentaries were co-produced by the *Romedia Foundation* and *Duna TV*. Having won the competition organized by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as part of its 2010 International Year for the Reconciliation, the project carried the UNESCO logo.

The documentaries covered a very wide range of issues concerning Roma and its fresh look at some troubling human rights situations caught the attention of the film community across Europe. To illustrate the role of *Mundi Romani* in promoting the Roma in a positive light and ultimately serving the aims of the *Romedia Foundation*, here are three films profiled below.

Last Days of Sulukule: For thousands of years, the Roma neighborhood of Sulukule in Istanbul's Old City was world famous for its unique culture, dancers and musicians. In recognition of its historical and cultural importance, UNESCO named Sulukule a World Heritage Site; however, this did not stop the Turkish government from demolishing the neighborhood in 2008. *The Last Days of Sulukule* was shot in the final weeks before bulldozers destroyed the historical district.

The documentary offers a glimpse of the now demolished community, exploring Sulukule's amazing music, people, and the complex mechanisms which have led to the destruction of minor-



Screenshots of *Faces of Change*

ity cultures based on the interests and power of city developers and short sighted public officials. The documentary chronicles the all too common story of human and cultural destruction at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

Faces of Change: In this episode, we explore the stories of ten exceptional Roma women from all over Europe. *Faces of Change* works to break the trend of depicting Roma women as “victimized victims” by presenting them as responsible and active stakeholders who readily provide their own answers to the questions raised by the situation of Roma today. The documentary challenges the way Roma women are viewed, by playing with the question of social identity and forcing the audience to question the artificial divisions on which our social perceptions are founded.

Trapped – the forgotten story of the Mitrovica Roma: Mitrovica is the sparking point of many Balkan wars. It is an ethnically divided town in northern Kosovo where the country’s independence from Serbia is a victory for the south yet an illegal aberration in the north. The town is also the scene of the gravest public health disaster in modern Europe. For nine years, hundreds of Roma have been trapped in refugee camps built by the UN administration in northern Mitrovica on the tailing sands of the biggest lead mine in Europe, next to a toxic slagheap of 100 million tons. In these camps, if the children don’t die by the age of six, they have irreversible brain damage for the rest of their inevitably short lives.

Mundi Romani reports from Mitrovica, Pristina, Skopje and Belgrade and provides an insight into the ethnic, economic and health dimensions of the current situation. Trapped between the fires of

Albanian and Serbian nationalism and ignored by international organizations, the Roma, a formerly prosperous minority in Tito’s Yugoslavia, remain the forgotten people of the newest country of Europe.

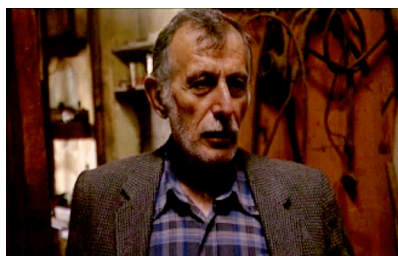
Campaign I’m a Roma Woman

During the twentieth century, women’s struggle for gender equality has proven itself to be the best investment our societies could make towards world economic and social development.

Ninety years ago, could Europe have imagined that women would one day flood the workforce, gain the right to vote and even lead nations and prominent multinational companies? How do you see Roma women today? How do the women of Europe’s largest minority see themselves?

These questions had been on our minds for years when we started the Campaign *I’m a Roma Woman*. We lead a Roma media advocacy NGO based in Budapest, Hungary, and decided to start searching for our own answers.

At the beginning of 2009, we decided to release a campaign video together with Amnesty International Hungary for the International Women’s Day, focusing on Roma women’s activism. I gathered four of my friends and fellow activists living in Budapest, Hungary, and talked to them about the idea of participating in a common campaign. We five young women from all over Europe had met through years of common action and participation in the international Roma movement. They all agreed to participate in the video and talk about their experiences as Roma women. The next step was to organize a film shot without any financial



Screenshots of *Last Days of Sulukule*

support. The *Romedia Foundation* had been producing the *Mundi Romani* news documentary series in co-production with *Duna Television Hungary* for more than two years at that time. That meant we already had the experience, the contacts and access to the studio at *Duna TV* for the shooting.

I developed the video's concept and storyline together with Marion Kurucz, the *Romedia Foundation's* producer, and *Mundi Romani's* director of photography Csaba Farkas, an award-winning Roma cinematographer. The footage shown in between the women's "confessions" is taken from several *Mundi Romani* films we shot in Italy, Macedonia, Ukraine and Romania.

The video was released on YouTube on 8 March 2009 and screened on public screens all over Hungary; in metro stations, shopping centers, post offices, bars and restaurants for several days following the International Women's Day, reaching approximately 80,000 people in a few days. Growing interest from broadcasters and online media, as well as social network sites and word of mouth spread the campaign video around the world beyond all our expectations.

French MSN Messenger users could see the video pop up each time they connected to their MSN page. In the US, the more than ten million viewers of the famous blog for women jezebel.com could watch the campaign video and hear, many for the very first time, about who the Roma are.

A month after the release, in April 2009, the women featuring in the video held a common press conference in Sofia, Bulgaria, where the campaign's message was again brought to the fore, leading to increased coverage of the confer-

ence they were attending. The success of the campaign video led *CARE International North-West Balkans* to show interest in creating a follow-up featuring women activists involved in their Roma Women Empowerment Project. An outstandingly successful cooperation began between the *Romedia Foundation* and *CARE International*, which led to the release of the regional Campaign *I'm a Roma Woman* at the II. European Roma Summit in Cordoba, Spain, on 8 April 2010 (International Roma Day). The video features Roma women from Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia and was shot in a week of intense traveling through the Western Balkans using state-of-the-art filming technology and some of the very best camera, sound and lighting technicians of Hungary.

CARE International campaigned with the video throughout the Western Balkans and reached unprecedented coverage for such an issue. Many hours of television broadcast and TV appearances by some of the featured activists put the issues that Roma women in the region face into the media spotlight. The music for both the first and the second *I'm a Roma Woman* video was composed by one of Hungary's most famous jazz musicians, Gyula Babos. The lyrics were written for each video by fellow Roma activist Ágnes Daróczi, in Romani.

In both campaign videos, the women featured are real, flesh-and-blood activists who have fought their way through many obstacles to reach a level of self-confidence and dedication to Roma empowerment that is inspiring to us all. During the creative development process, we always looked for those women, those stories, those situations which came most naturally and reflected the

activists' self-awareness, acquired through years of social activism. When we began to produce videos and films focusing on a gender perspective, we had already been inspired by the hundreds of hours of audiovisual material we had shot across the world for the *Mundi Romani*. These women had shown us the fruits of their dedication and had opened up to our cameras about themselves, their lives, their identities, their goals and their dreams for the future.

We decided it was time to share all these experiences so that Roma women could inspire each other and the next generation. With the support of the *Open Society Foundations* (program *Roma Initiatives*) on International Women's Day 2011, we launched a campaign for all Roma women to speak out and be part of the transformation!

The Future

In the digital space of social media, the possibilities for non-professionals to do journalism and become representatives of their communities and bearers of both progress and discrimination are significant. Civilians can play a crucial role in exposing human rights abuses and keeping a check on anti-discrimination measures on a local level, by recording video and reporting on these issues. NGOs must help in the creation and support such activities, despite ever decreasing funding. Our goal has always been for our films to not simply document but to also engage and to bring about change.

In order for us to be able to create effective outreach and engagement, we must be creative in finding all the outlets where we can channel our coherent, information-based messages and



in trying out all the new possibilities to address audiences.

Independence and objectivity are the two most important assets that we must guard fiercely so that changes in financing structures and reigning political ideologies of the day cannot easily influence us. In order to keep up such independence, both our sources and instruments must be diversified.

romediafoundation.org
mundiromani.com
romawoman.org

A longer version of this text was first published in migrazine (migrazine.at), issue 2012/1.

Screenshots of
Trapped – the forgotten story of the Mitrovica Roma

Float Like a Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee

*On Gypsy Stop Dancing, a
performance by Romano Svato*

Marty Huber

The fact that sports has always been more than an arena for testing one's (physical) powers is obvious. However, for some time now, it has also been analyzed as a site where masculinity is also produced and examined in relation to nationalism and identity. Sports is not only an arena for the powerful, the hegemon, but also for those whose claims to power have been systematically rejected and denied. There are many examples of interventions throughout history, such as the polemic term "muscle Jew", which Max Nordau introduced in an attempt to counter the image of effeminate Jewish men within anti-Semitic discourses. Nordau's call for physical fitness led to the founding of numerous Jewish sport clubs, such as Hakoah Wien (hakoah means power).

I would also like to recall one of the perhaps most well-known pictures of an Olympic awards ceremony, the raised fists of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, shortly after Martin Luther King Jr.

and Bobby Kennedy had been murdered, a symbol of silent protest and of Black Power. Both athletes were subsequently suspended and sent home. The third person on the award platform, Australian Peter Norman, wore a badge from the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) out of solidarity.

A boxer's story as a historical template

Here, there would be a lot to be said about the different kinds of Capoeira, a martial art form disguised as dance. Even though it is a totally different story, it does create an opening to introduce *Gypsy Stop Dancing*, since the piece is a call to leave the dance floor of clichés of music-making and dancing Roma and Sinti, and enter the boxing ring. It is the first production by the theater group Romano Svato (which means Roma language/tongue), founded by Sandra Selimovic and Simonida Jovanovic, which utilizes political engagement and emancipation as a means of addressing discrimination and prejudice.

At the opening of the piece, the audience hears the story of Sinto Johann Rukeli Trollmann, a German boxer (trained by the Jewish boxer Erich Seelig), who held the German title for middle-weight boxing in 1933, before the Nazis seized power. The boxing association was already permeated with Nazis, who in turn revoked his title, claiming his “dance-like” style was a thorn in their side (“too un-German, too gypsy-like”). In a fight set up and refereed by the Nazis between Trollmann and Gustav Eder, Trollmann was forbidden from boxing in his own style, avoiding hits through swift movements and taking hits from a distance. Out of protest, Johann Rukeli Trollmann appeared with dyed blond hair and his body covered in white powder. He not only lost the match,

which was set up to prove the superiority of the “Aryan master race”, but his boxing license was also revoked shortly after. In the Second World War, Trollmann was sent to fight in the war under the Wehrmacht, was arrested in 1942 and sent to the Neuengamme concentration camp, where he was beaten to death by a kapo (a concentration camp prisoner appointed by the SS to oversee other prisoners) whom he had beat in a boxing fight.

When history repeats itself . . .

These historical events are the template from which the play further unfolds, telling the story of a Hungarian Romni who wants to become a boxing champion. Only that Hungary does not seem to be the right place for a Romni to launch her boxing career, since the situation for Roma in Hungary is becoming increasingly worse. As if it were not difficult enough for her as a woman and a lesbian . . . The boxing association attempts to bribe and blackmail her. She resists their attempts to blackmail her, and ultimately wins the championship title. Does history repeat itself? – that is the question posed by the founders of Romano Svato, who wrote the text together with Nehle Dick (director). Is Hungary heading towards a catastrophe as it tries to stigmatize Roma by labelling them incapable of integration, asocial, a group of people posing a threat to the “state body”?

The piece unfortunately only briefly links the play's theme – the struggle for recognition – to the recent attacks on Roma in Hungary (using videos by Alexandra Reill).

In spring 2011, the extreme right-wing political party Jobbik, whose proposals about building

ghettos for Roma or forced labor for Roma under the supervision of retired members of the police force caused a stir, marched together with the “militia for a better future” into the Roma settlement Gyöngyöspata, spreading fear and terror until they were called off by the government party Fidesz. In the meantime, a member of the Jobbik party now holds the office of mayor in Gyöngyöspata. The video shows the vigilante group marching in uniforms, the images could however use a bit more mediation and contextualization within the piece, for the graveness of the situation and

the rampant intensification of anti-romaism are beyond the shadow of a doubt.

The play misses out on this intensification by largely placing the focus on the boxer’s personal fate. Speaking in boxing terms, they had an opportunity to execute a swift upper-cut, to deliver a punch from below to an opponent coming at them from straight ahead – or, like Muhammad Ali, as quoted in the title, to “sting like a bee”.

romanosvato.at



Photo: Rosmarin Fraendorfer

Repeating and Reclaiming

WienWoche as a Platform for Romni and Roma Self-Representation

Aylin Basaran

In the two projects *Unser Weg – Amaro Drom* (Our Way – Amaro Drom) by Saša Barbul and *Roma Attack* by Susita Fink, Simonida Selimović and Sandra Selimović, the artists and activists focus on negotiating and positioning Romni and Roma within Austrian and European society. The projects took place within two separate thematic divisions of the WienWoche 2012 program, “Re-writing History” (*Unser Weg*) and “Acting” (*Roma Attack*), which corresponds to the wide range of discursive themes these projects cover. The titles of the projects already reveal the various focal points. *Unser Weg* deals with collective memory and seeks to initiate discourse about it within the Roma community. The project *Roma Attack* addresses stereotypes and ascriptions placed on Roma and Romni from the “outside” and actively works to dismantle them – within the public sphere – through irritation, re-interpretation and provocation.

Establishing Awareness and Thinking Further

Saša Barbul's video installation *Unser Weg – Amaro Drom* is about forging links between the spaces, and therefore also the themes, of the past and the present. Three monitors were set up in the room – each of which presents a documentary or artistic-documentary work (*Bitte nicht vergessen*, *Unser Weg* and *Romanisand*) –, thus framing the works in a common context. Therefore, a connection is made between the genocide of Romni and Roma during fascist rule, the practices and politics of commemoration/memory, up until present-day persecution in Europe, and finally the counter-movements of various community activists, and the ways that Roma and Romni youth position themselves.

The installation at the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art (Museum für Volkskunde) can also be viewed as a strong appeal to their “own” history being written about and included within the museum’s spaces of representation. The title of the first film, *Bitte nicht vergessen* (Please don't forget), demands that historical continuities are perceived as such. The statement made by the film's main protagonist, Marika Schmiedt, has a similar effect. She explains that she is constantly repeating herself and always pointing out these continuities in her political and artistic work. This pointedly shows the extent to which dealing with the past in a conscious and attentive manner in Austria also hinges on the incentive of Romni and Roma who are willing and able to reflect upon and name these continuities. Barbul's project, however, does not stop here. His video breaks the



Amaro Drom, photo: Saša Barbul

continuity of historical representations, by using them as a backdrop for searching for new paths, without which it is nearly impossible to grasp the present-day persecution of Roma and Romni and address the difficulties of dealing with this.

In *Unser Weg* (Our Way) – also the title of the overall project –, Barbul takes the living conditions in a Roma settlement in Serbia as the starting point for introducing a variety of actors and their strategies for actively fighting against the manifold exclusionary mechanisms that Roma and Romni face.

In addition to the installation, the project also included a podium discussion with the title *Amari borba thaj strategija adjes – Our Struggles and Strategies Today!*, which was a controversial

debate among Marika Schmiedt, Gilda-Nancy Horvath and Suzana Milevska, three actors/representatives/activists working at the borderlands of art, culture, journalism and politics.

Performing Integration Discourse Until it Collapses

In three highly frequented public spaces in Vienna, Fink, Selimović and Selimović staged interventions inspired by agit-prop theater, with the aim of confronting a broad spectrum of society with their issues.

The first stop was Praterstern, in close proximity to Vienna's Wies'n (where Oktoberfest takes place in Vienna). Here, a group of people in Wies'n-style costumes with a folk music brass band stood at



Roma Attack, photo: Pramatarov

the entrance of the “beer fest” where they began to play *Das Lied von der Ordnung* (The Song of Order). The song deals with the destructive powers of an exploitative system of “order” and the self-destructive habit of not aiming to achieve anything besides being part of the system. While this was going on, the group went around collecting donations for Roma families who had received their deportation notice.

complementary, together, they provide a glimpse of how multi-layered the debate can be when those impacted by it have a say and take action themselves.

wienwoche.org (Dokumentation 2012)
romanosvato.at

The next day, outside of the Stadium Center, a performance drawing on Jura Soyfer’s play *Astoria* addressed the absurdity of state’s repressive disciplinary measures, which especially target Roma and Romni. There was a long line of people in front of the shopping center, but they are not waiting to get their hands on the latest sale items. Instead, they were waiting to apply for visas at a table with a sign reading “*Magistrat*” (local authorities), only to be sent away by the “public officials” for increasingly absurd reasons. On the third day, the same group that was dressed in folk costumes a few days before was on the most popular Viennese shopping street (Mariahilfer Strasse). They played Roma songs for money on the street for the shoppers of Vienna. In this way, *Roma Attack* playfully went beyond discourses on social, economic and cultural integration, by using symbols and various modes of performing the act of “othering”.

The diversity of methods the artists employ demonstrate the variety of the discursive fields in which Roma and Romni act – dissociating from mainstream society, affronting it, reflecting on historical and contemporary everyday, structural problems, destroying or challenging the meaning of symbols, and repeatedly reclaiming “their own” images. The two projects are not only

Alle bleiben!¹

A Roma Renaissance

Marty Huber

A young man in a leather jacket, white shirt and red tie walks into a stadium overgrown with weeds. He opens with a speech about longing – longing for his Jewish fellow citizens who were murdered and forced into exile during the Shoah. They are missed in this society, a society that, when it looks at itself, is like a white canvas that only has white paint on it. He vehemently insists that the 3.3 million Jews must be able to return to their country, Poland. This is how Yael Bartana's 2011 contribution to the Biennale begins. In this video installation, she transforms the Polish Pavilion into a propaganda machine. With her provocative installation, which was shown in November 2012 at GarageX in Vienna, she seeks to establish a Jewish "Home in Poland". By envisioning another (Polish) world, the artist's piece challenges the ever-growing antisemitism throughout Europe: the right to be at home in Europe. In the manifesto of the "Jewish Renaissance Movement", which she founded, she goes even further, when she has

¹ Alle bleiben! [Everyone stays!] is a Roma self-organization that campaigns for the right to residency for Roma.

the man say: "With only one religion, we cannot listen/With only one color, we cannot see/With only one culture, we cannot feel/Without you, we cannot even remember/Join us, and Europe will be overwhelmed!"

Yael Bartanas's employment of pathos and propaganda aesthetics is, I believe, a calculated attempt to rethink claims regarding one's homeland. Does it really need a nation to ensure protection for certain groups, however they may be defined; or can a peaceful society that is built on solidarity be created by establishing an awareness for the diversity of its communities? I found the video's openness in the way it dealt with ambivalences especially touching, since I had seen it only a few days after the conference *Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe*. Even there, there were heated debates on the question of creating a nation-state

for Roma, Sinti, Lovara, etc. On the one hand, from the perspective of a group that has repeatedly been declared "stateless" and denied their rights, this longing for a collective state is understandable. On the other hand, there has been vehement criticism from within the community that these demands would only increase anti-romaism, pogroms and forced displacement. It was only in 1993, that the Roma who had been living in Austria for hundreds of years were officially recognized as a minority, which is – given the fact that the Austrian Roma were nearly completely annihilated and obliterated during the Porajmos (Romani for "the devouring"), the persecution through racist Nazi ideology – an important, even if tiny step.

What if we were to take the intervention of the "Jewish Renaissance Movement" seriously and



Participants of the conference *Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe* with a banner of *Alle bleiben!*

Photo: Patrick Kwaśniewski

apply it to the migration of Roma from “third countries”? During the Porajmos, between two and five hundred thousand Roma and Sinti were murdered in the Nazi machinery of annihilation. Nobody can replace those who were killed, but as post-Nazi countries, Austria and Germany must take responsibility – for these groups and for European Jews – and change their immigration policies and structures to combat the growing anti-Semitic and anti-romaist sentiments in a way that allows for more fundamental participation of Roma.

alle-bleiben.info

Romanosmose satellites

Notes from the project blog

In addition to the autochthonous (indigenous) Roma, there is a much larger number of Roma living in Austria – those who came in the course of labor migration or as refugees from Kosovo during the destruction of Yugoslavia, and those who have attempted to flee the poverty of Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia and other countries. For these allochthonous (immigrated) Roma, nothing has been done, to put it mildly. They fall under the same restrictions and discriminating sanctions that apply to other third-country citizens and citizens from peripheral countries of the EU.

A real solution to the problems of the Roma can only be decided on and implemented together with them, and cannot exclude a specific group of Roma, which would be affected by discriminatory legislation.

We are Against the Word “Zigeuner”

Gilda-Nancy Horvath

The word “Zigeuner” (“Gypsy”) is derived from the Greek “*athinganoi*”, meaning “untouchable” and refers to the position of Roma within the Indian caste system. Already in the thirteenth century, this exonym was applied to “asocial elements” – for example, within the context of the first European “edict against the Gypsy plight”. For the Nazis, the term was synonymous with “*unwertes Leben*” (unworthy of life) and was widely circulated in Nazi mass propaganda. Even today, the word is still often used without thinking about it.

The aim of the campaign *Ich bin gegen das Wort ‘Zigeuner’* (“I am against the word ‘Zigeuner’”) is to knowingly present the term as what it actually is: a negative and clearly discriminatory term, which is offensive to Roma. At the same time, the



Co-initiator Harri Stojka with his sisters Sissi (right) and Doris Stojka
Photo: Reinhard Loidl



Co-initiator Gilda-Nancy Horvath
Photo: Reinhard Loidl

project aims to dismantle and fight prejudices against Roma and Sinti.¹

The campaign was initiated by people closely associated with the Gipsy Music Association, and demands that “Zigeuner” disappear from media reports, product names, and ultimately from everyday use all together. They also point out that the majority of the Roma community in Austria does not want to be called “Zigeuner” and demand that this wish finally be respected. The correct term is “Roma and Sinti”.

It is true that some Roma do indeed call themselves “Zigeuner”. There are many reasons for this, the most important one being that the word “Zigeuner” means different things in different languages. Roma in Hungary and Romania proudly call themselves “Zigeuner”, while in Slovakia the same word means “thief”. However, even Roma are often unaware of its meaning and negative connotations. For this reason, the initiators stress the importance that the campaign target everyone: Roma as well as non-Roma.

A central element of the campaign are photos of people from politics, media and other fields, holding up signs with the hand-written words: “Ich bin gegen das Wort ‘Zigeuner’.” Support for the campaign has been surprisingly broad: over 1,000

people have allowed their photos to be taken. These photos have been displayed in various exhibitions, a book and a video, in addition to their use in public relations and media co-operations. The campaign also includes workshops, for example in schools that aim to dismantle the prejudices around the values, culture and images of Roma.

“Ich bin gegen das Wort ‘Zigeuner’” is supported by many Roma and non-Roma organizations.

gipsymusic.at (Projekte)

¹ Roma and Sinti are the largest ethnic minority in Europe. There are between ten and twelve million Roma living in the EU member states. They have been forced to remain in migration by laws that forbid them to settle, by being marked as outlaws, by persecution and by being banned from certain trades. Today, around 95% of Roma and Sinti are sedentary. Although the reality of the “traveling Roma” is largely a thing of the past, the idea – along with a score of other, largely negative, stereotypes – persists today.

3

*Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.
EU-Framework on National Strategies for Roma
Integration by 2020.*

Many piles of (patient) paper have been produced.

Nonetheless, hardly any Roma are included in a discourse about Roma – claims are made on the basis of the assumption of lack. And so it is mainly about education, (“integrative”) compliance and not about emancipation.

The Beginning of Commitment?

Patricia Köstring

In the public announcement KOM (2011) 173, the EU presented its *Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, which served as an agenda for the EU member states to present their national strategies for making sustainable improvements regarding Roma access to education, employment, health care and housing. Although the Commission praised the “unprecedented commitment by EU Member States to promoting the inclusion of their Roma communities,” Roma representatives have remained skeptical.

The paper smells of “compromise”. There was even backpedaling in regard to the question if individual national strategies should be created or if a package of measures within the integration policies of each country is sufficient. One question that still remains unanswered, for example, is which Roma (citizens with rights as ethnic minorities? migrants?) are to be addressed as partners within this process. As part of the project *Romanistan*, the

IG Kultur's journal of cultural politics and policy *Kulturrisse* asked **Matthew Newman** (at the time of the interview spokesman for Viviane Reding at European Commission), **Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos** (Head of the Department for Equality and Civil Rights, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights / FRA), **Emmerich Gärtner-Horvath** (Chair of the organization / Farajn Roma-Service and member of the Ethnic Groups Council for Roma) und **Gilda-Nancy Horvath** (author, journalist, ORF programming for minority groups) for answers to a couple of questions, which have been compiled to create the interview below.

Kulturrisse: Does this EU Framework carry with it any legal obligations for the member states, or will it remain merely a list of political recommendations?

Dimitrakopoulos: The Council of the European Union has agreed with the conclusions of the Communication and encouraged the member states and the commission to take the necessary measures.

Newman: In May 2011, the *Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council* adopted a series of conclusions from the EU Framework. Those participating confirmed their commitment to the EU Framework and recognized it as being a significant step toward improving social cohesion in Europe. The conclusions were conferred to and confirmed by the Council of the European Union and, thus, also by the heads of the states and governments. In addition, the Council also stressed the urgency of realizing the EU Framework, particularly the adaptation or development of national strategies for the inclusion of Roma or of sets of measures – that were formulated within

more comprehensive integration strategies – to improve the situation of the Roma.

Horvath: Since then, the Office of the Federal Chancellor has organized several meetings of the newly founded Roma Dialogue Platform. The issues discussed thus far have been the labor market, education and health. Although the Roma community is cooperating in the process, they are still somewhat skeptical. The success of the Roma strategy will be measured by taking a look at the implementation of the things that have been discussed.

Kulturrisse: The Communication states that national strategies for integration must be coordinated. How important do you think this EU Framework is?

Gärtner-Horvath: It only lays out what the Roma should do in order to improve their situation – from the perspective of the majority society. How the majority society's prejudice, discrimination and racism are to be dismantled, is not clear. Due to centuries of persecution, there is little trust on the part of Roma. The majority population needs to know much more about Roma history, and it should be addressed especially within educational institutions. It is important that Roma gain access to education, but it is also *equally* as important that majority society be educated.

Kulturrisse: How is the implementation process supposed to be monitored?

Dimitrakopoulos: The Commission is responsible for monitoring the development and implementation of the national action plans. In order to achieve this, the European Union Agency for

Fundamental Rights FRA has been entrusted with measuring the progress, via regular surveys and data collection on employment, education, housing and health care. In addition, the FRA will work together with the member states to develop monitoring methods that will allow for a comparative analysis of the European-wide situation of Roma.

Kulturrisse: What are your recommendations regarding measures for involving civil society and the stakeholders from Roma organizations?

Dimitrakopoulos: Both the FRA and the Commission are aware of the need for Roma and representatives of Roma community organizations to play a strong role in all of the programs that affect them. Active participation of the Roma is one of the *Ten Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*. And although there are a number of promising approaches within the member states, they are not yet common practice.

Newman: It is crucial that civil society and Roma organizations play a key role within this process. The EU Framework provides a framework for the involvement of civil society and Roma organizations on all levels and throughout all phases of its implementation. The member states are expected to work in close cooperation with Roma civil society, and the design, implementation and monitoring of the national strategies is to be done in close cooperation and continuous dialogue with Roma civil society, as well as regional and local authorities. At the same time, the European Platform for Roma Inclusion provides the opportunity to give the Commission direct feedback on the progression of the national efforts.

Kulturrisse: To what extent are the Roma themselves involved in the struggle for equal rights for Europe's largest minority?

Gärtner-Horvath: Too little, hardly at all!

Dimitrakopoulos: Everywhere in the European Union, there are Roma organizations that have been active for many years, especially locally, and have been very vocal about their demands to play an active role in designing and implementing integration measures.

Kulturrisse: Are the Austrian Roma institutions sufficiently included in the process to improve the situation of Roma?

Gärtner-Horvath: Here again: too little, hardly at all!

Horvath: The good thing about the EU Framework is that it also takes migrant Roma into consideration. The current Austrian law on national minorities, the *Volksgruppengesetz* ("Ethnic Groups Act"), fails to do so. Otherwise, the *Volksgruppenbeirat* ("Ethnic Groups Council") is likely to draw up a paper that claims we in Austria are doing better than Roma in other countries.

Kulturrisse: To what extent is it even useful to speak of "integration", an extremely loaded term linked to discussions on values and pro-assimilation discourses, when the issues at stake are the "participation" and equal opportunities for minorities?

Dimitrakopoulos: Social and economic integration always go hand in hand with discussions around preserving the specific language and

culture of the Roma. In this sense, integration endeavors always pay attention to the specific culture and ways of living of Roma and Travelers.

Gärtner-Horvath: Education, employment, health care, housing and supply networks are necessary if we are to survive in Europe today. Everyone should have equal access to them. That has absolutely nothing to do with integration!

Kulturrisse: Will anything about the situation of Roma in Europe have changed by 2020? Does “a” situation even exist?

Dimitrakopoulos: No, “a” situation does not exist – for one, Roma are not a homogenous group. Another thing is that we have to bear in mind that not all Roma perceive themselves as being excluded or poor; and although there is a disproportionate number of Roma living in poverty, there are still many who are well trained, have good jobs and whose standards of living are on par with those of non-Roma in their country. However, if the “situation” refers to the socio-economic characteristics of many Roma, they are certainly far from satisfactory, something the FRA has also repeatedly pointed out. In addition, Roma often face discrimination due to their ethnicity and culture.

Newman: The situation of the Roma is just as diverse as the situation of other European citizens. Despite this, Roma are disproportionately marginalized, and many face prejudice, intolerance and discrimination, and poverty. The EU Framework aims to notably improve these living conditions. In the past, singular attempts have clearly not been successful, which is why the EU Framework proposes a comprehensive and

integrative approach capable of responding to this challenge. When all of the stakeholders in all of the member states, from regional and local authorities to civil society, put their plans, their commitments into action, by the close of this decade the fruits of our collective labor will be – and of this the Commission is convinced – clearly visible in the changes that have taken place.

Kulturrisse: What expectations does this Communication bring up? (How) Is it being discussed within Roma communities?

Gärtner-Horvath: It is being discussed that lots of papers have been produced, most of which consist of measures, but not of any *real* activities. There is a saying: “an empty stomach is not a happy student!” How are Roma families supposed to be able to choose to be occupied with education when they do not even know how they will feed their children? It is crucial to stabilize the social situation in EU countries where this is the prevalent situation. Once that is done, then we can take the next step.

Horvath: Cooperation is built on trust. Roma have written, sent and submitted their proposals. Now it is up to the public authorities and to politics to help see that these ideas are implemented by the people who developed them in the first place.

Romanosmoise

satellites

Notes from the project blog

European citizenship entails conferring rights, obligations and a sense of belonging to all people in the European Union, regardless of ethnicity, gender or social status. In theory, it exists to bring about equality and to ensure that we can all live and work wherever we like without fear of discrimination. Sadly, the reality for Roma does not reflect these ideals. Systematic discrimination towards the community continues to reinforce its social, economic and political marginalization and there are numerous examples of public bodies throughout the union that remain oblivious towards their obligation to prevent this. Forced evictions and deportations as well as discrimination in access to public services leave Roma unable to exercise their citizenship rights and do nothing to foster a sense of unity and belonging for all. ERIO (European Roma Information Office) Executive Director Ivan Ivanov states: "For Europe to prosper, it must stay true to its values and ensure that equality in every field applies to all communities, not just the majority."

Official Roma Discourses

From Exorcizing to Multiple Identities

Ljubomir Bratić

The content of the Roma decrees passed by Maria Theresia and Joseph II in 1761 is well known. At the time it had to do with a group being made sedentary, imposing a ban on using one's own language and on using one's own name except for the one granted by baptism, and with children who were taken away from their own parents to turn them into industrious subjects. It was the age of centralization, the beginning of industrialization and the urbanization of the Hapsburg Monarchy and thus also a period in which the people and groups living in a territory were considered the resources of the state. These areas thus became state territories and the people were turned into a population that was to be coopted, cultivated, controlled and promoted to the highest possible extent. The promotion was, of course, accompanied by a stipulation – namely that of being beneficial. The idea of usefulness in a material sense became the central element of human existence and all of the groups and individuals

living in a state territory were expected to adapt their life style to this expectation. What was beneficial at that time is what is beneficial today. Can it be that the Roma decade that was proclaimed by the EU and so many of its member states was nothing but a continuation of the old Josephinism – for the purpose of exploitation in keeping with re-education? In the following, I will study two documents – one written by EU bureaucrats and the other by the Austrian government¹ – and try to analyze this issue.

The EU Framework

The EU paper calls for a “dialogue with the Roma” and “resolute action”. The goal is integration as a “reciprocal process” in the context of which the “majority population” is just as much supposed to find a new way of thinking as the “members of the Roma communities”. Thus it is not just about structural measures but about measures that go in the direction of regulating the population. Who should conduct the dialogue with the Roma? The answer is: national institutions. The dialogue should be conducted between such unequal partners so that is clear to everyone that it ultimately boils down to a dictate. Good, but wasn’t that always the case? Within the national state hardly anything else is conceivable as realistic.

The direction that the intended action is supposed to assume is more interesting. The majority population and the “members of the Roma communities” should make concessions and thus facilitate the “social and economical integration of the Roma”. In this discourse, the latter is thus a question of the actions of the majority population and of the Roma themselves – and by no means one of the structural inequality of the system in which we live. It is also not one of the nationalist, ethnically regulated, national discourse. Everything is a question of interpersonal communication. Racism, classism, nationalism, anti-ziganism, etc. – all of this appears irrelevant in connection with the social and economical discrimination of the Roma. Already at the beginning of the paper written by the EU Commission it seems to be clear in which direction the efforts are going. Window dressing would be the realistic, apt term for this high-visibility, administrative procedure.

As one can read on the third page, economic integration should result in “eliminating discrimination based on race, skin color, ethnic and social background or the fact that one belongs to a minority.” Put plainly: whoever works will not have to starve. That it is precisely the economic system that dictates an inequality, which then perpetuates itself almost automatically in all other realms – that of class, “race”, nation, gender and culture is one of the lines of argumentation, which the prevailing discourses of the “EU integrators” have obviously not hit upon yet. Or – what is more likely – this fact should thus not be taken into account because the actual goal of such papers is obscuring the economic inequalities. The idea is to translate these inequalities into others and to thus combat the imaginary instead of the real. In this sense it can certainly be said that the EU strategy

1 European Commission (2011): Memorandum of the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, EU Framework for National Strategies on Roma Integration of the Roma until 2020, Brussels.
Federal Chancellery of Austria, Legal and Constitutional Service (2011): Roma in Austria. EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies until 2020. Political and Legal Measures, Vienna.

for combatting the discrimination of Roma thus has something Don Quichote-like about it. However, it does this consciously and not just out of a sympathetic naiveté which is typical of the hero of Cervantes.

The goal of the agenda is not to conceive of the Roma as citizens with equal rights who are emancipated with regard to the power structures of the majority but to make them through education into individuals capable of working. As is well known, they are although more capable of working the more embedded they are in various dependencies. The place that is intended for the Roma is the same one that was always reserved for them in the course of history. It is one of cheap and – in recent times – as qualified as possible labor force. To this end the member states are supposed to combat “discrimination”, with this obviously referring only to personal discrimination. Parallel to this, the “vicious circle of poverty” is to be broken. A legitimate question is: why “vicious circle”? It makes sense to assume that it is not just about combatting a systematically motivated poverty but a poverty that is depicted as being part of a perverted context, namely that of evil forces, of the devil, and that presumed to have to be combatted with similar means as those of exorcism.

Unfortunately, poverty is certainly a secular fact and it is hard to imagine that it can be ended as long it is not being combatted with secular means. The recommendation of the European Commission to nation states that are supposedly in charge of finding methods of fighting poverty is clear. It is about an additionally moralizing and in this case, also quasi-religious procedure. Here, finally, in the middle of a programmatic paper of

the European Commission we are in the same field in which political measures related to the Roma have been moving for half a millennium: the disciplining of the poor with the goal of increasing the potential of the labor force! The exorcising measures against poverty have the goal of turning the Roma into workers. This is precisely the intention, which already formed the very first laws that were directed at the Roma in Spain in the year 1500. This is also what Maria Theresia and Joseph II had in mind with their Roma decrees. Apparently, the only thing that changes is the language – and of course the methods are also becoming more refined. It is not about the emancipation of the Roma, not about the creation of a political subject of the Roma (for instance, the promotion of the idea of a Roma nation without a state). Rather, it is about increasing the potential of the labor force, in particular, in the new member states of the EU, since in Bulgaria and Romania more than 20% of the population is Roma in each of these countries – as the paper explains. At the same time, the Roma who belong to so-called third countries are excluded from the paper, which deals with the integration of the Roma in the EU. A separate memorandum on the European agenda is supposed to address their fate, but it has yet to be elaborated. For Austria this means that the measures that were planned for the integration of the Roma would affect maximum ten per cent of the Roma. A large number of them are not Austrian citizens but come – following the traditional “foreign worker routes” – from Serbia and Kosovo. Thus they are not covered by the measures for integrating the Roma but by those for members of third states. They belong to those countries that are not yet members of the EU and at the same time they are citizens of the EU by virtue of their presence. Said measures will also

only pertain to those who are “legal residents” of a “member state”. They thus have no validity for persons living illegalized in a country, for instance. So a paper that is supposed to serve to reduce the discrimination of the Roma is introducing a clear line of demarcation. It defines where in the future discrimination is legitimate and where it is not.

Even in this sense this paper offers nothing new. All laws that pertain to so-called minorities introduce these differences to the discourse. It is the well-known theme, the well-behaved vs. the fractious, which is being repeated here. From the perspective of discourse analysis the only question that remains is: well-behaved and fractious for whom? This “for whom?” relates to the actual subject of these postulates. In our case, the answer is clear: for the economy of the European Union and for that of the member states.

The “national Roma integration strategies” should be coordinated with this approach. It should focus on four core areas: “access to education, employment, health issues and living space.” The national Roma strategies should define “goals that can be reached”, which concentrate on “discriminated micro-regions” and provide “sufficient financial means from national budgets”, since “not all problems of the Roma can be solved with only EU funds.” Moreover, evaluation methods and centers should be created, a “dialogue with the Roma civil society” promoted and a “national contact center” established.

And Austria?

From these premises, the following has emerged in the position paper of the Austrian Legal and Constitutional Service. Just as in the memoran-

dum of the Commission, politics and rights are right at the beginning, but economic aspects overlap. In the introduction Austria immediately appeals to the “special circumstances” of the strategy, to “elaborate packages with political measures in connection with the broader policy of social inclusion.” This says nothing other than: things should continue as they have until now. And this is precisely what is presently happening in Austria. Ultimately, several people are selected in the ministries and entrusted with the task of fine-tuning the premises to fit the already existing conditions, which means at the end there will be yet another pile of paper. These are the regular tempests in the teapots, which are being staged here.

One sentence that is interesting for the discourse here can be found in the introduction to the Austrian paper, which is an expanded version of the EU paper. “Austria is aware of the fact that recognition and appreciation of the ethnic groups would be an important, supporting element for preserving ethnic groups and that this appreciation has to be conveyed through politics and the media.” An approach that completely makes sense, one would believe. But what happened in the second part of the sentence with “recognition”? Why should the ethnic groups only be appreciated and not recognized by politics and the media? Here the whole ambivalence of the official relations of the majority to the minorities in Austria becomes clear – in what these two terms mean in the text. While appreciation has a psychological meaning and can be given without great effort, “recognition” has been addressed differently in the past fifty years, namely as a structurally defined term. Recognition is, as for instance Charles Taylor has shown, that what must

be granted on the part of institutions and communal structures by means of legal and political measures. Irrespective of this, by means of this ministerial paper politicians and the media are supposed to contribute to appreciation, which will not be so difficult for them, as it is easy to say something – and with a few individual prizes geared to a few persons the necessary semblance is reinforced. Yet recognition – there where it is really about bringing about structural changes – is simply forgotten. Or not “*forgotten*” . . .

It is also interesting that the Austrian paper, as opposed to the EU paper, where this word does not appear, argues with “identities”. “Multiple identities” are postulated for the (autochthonous) Roma, so as if this would also not apply to the members of the majority population. Obviously, here a line of demarcation is to be drawn between the “we” and the “others”. This says something about power structures. The paper was written by members of the majority for members of the majority about members of the minorities – and this way only their perspective is revealed.

The game with shifting terms seems typical of the ministry’s paper in general. The title “Measures in the Fight against Racism and Discrimination” becomes a “battle against xenophobia and racism” in the next sentence. “Discrimination” vanishes and yields to “xenophobia”, paving the way for a psychological and moralizing interpretation of racism. Similar to “appreciation”, “xenophobia” can refer to anyone. The only difference is the orientation of desire. “Discrimination” is, however, when it is aimed at groups of people a phenomenon that is inscribed in the system, that is, one that can only be combatted on the level of the system. This, however, does not seem to be the

intention of the administrative level. How could it at all be, since this would imply that the government is calling its own practice into question. In Austria this is still something impossible, even though precisely this would be an important sign of mature democracy.

So what is happening in Austria on this count? From the documentation in the elaboration of which “representatives (unfortunately not named!) of many associations existing in Austria that are dedicated to the interests of the Roma were included” we learn – apart from sporadic and in part problematic educational measures² and a comprehensive research report of the University of Graz – that not much is happening. We find out about a lot of ongoing measures, which are aimed at social weakness and also about planned integration measures but nothing about the targeted support of the Roma. In this sense it must be stated that the report of the Austrian Constitutional Service has either missed its goal or deliberately attempted to obscure the fact that in Austria there is hardly anything that specifically supports the Roma. I am inclined to believe that the second assumption is correct.

The meetings that have taken place to date in the ministry where the paper should have been discussed seem to confirm this assumption. Whether more should be achieved this way than just letting time go by is up for debate. I would be happy to let myself be convinced that the opposite is true.

2 Having reliability, self-motivation and personal order as the goals of the Roma projects to be realized implies, for instance, that these qualities did not exist and thus that the group to whom these should be “imparted” is also seen as lacking them.

Romanosmose

satellites

Notes from the project blog

Society's definition of Roma is not based on a perceptible knowledge, but is a construction. This construction comes from a series of interest-oriented settings – settings that determine certain differences, and at the same time cover up certain similarities or analogousness. The structuring of the others, migrants, Roma, in general all minorities, takes place by stating that they lack something. This is the true meaning of the battle cry “integration”. The Roma should become regular workers, their homes should be similar to the homes of other workers, and they should be motivated to be better educated. This is the goal. This process is possible through the work with Roma and primarily on the Roma. These measures enable this population to become what it is, namely Roma. Furthermore, the fact that they receive charity causes them to remain the group that they have always been, namely the Roma, but now in a larger context. This is not questioned by the European Commission. The “Roma problem” of individual nations has thus become the “Roma problem” of the European Union.

Opening and Closing Doors

Radostina Patulova

The Roma Decade along with all its festive declarations is slowly drawing to an end. Originally proclaimed as the *Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015*, inclusion has apparently been “lost in translation” somewhere along the way, leaving us to wonder how far doors to social inclusion have been opened for Roma.

The opening of doors does, however, tend to have a unique and willful life of its own. I recently came across a booklet in a sleek 1980s design, with the following words on the cover: “Türe öffnen. Draußen und drinnen, ein Ratgeber für Ahnungslose” (Opening doors. Outside and Inside, a Guide for the Clueless). The makers of the booklet felt compelled to provide the following definition: “Doors are moveable elements of a surface, attached to hollow bodies, which, when engaged or manipulated, enable people or objects to enter or exit.” In order to fully appreciate the themes addressed in the book and to push the envelope

further, we must ask if there are only different kinds of doors, or if different kinds of doors are also open to (or closed for) different kinds of people or groups of people.

Some people grow up, go through life, and even reach a ripe old age without ever coming into contact with doors, sometimes without even noticing they exist. That is because they have been moving around spaces that are, figuratively speaking, equipped with automatic doors. As soon as they reach the door, the motion sensor (or light sensor or some other kind of useful device) comes on and – boom, the door opens, and they effortlessly find themselves inside the place they had longed to be, or that had simply been their goal. Then there are others who go through life gathering all kinds of experiences, getting to know all kinds of doors from the outside: hidden doors, invisible doors, doors with no handle or with hinges that don't move, doors that seem as heavy as a fortress gate, doors that cannot be opened and doors that suddenly burst open, doors that look easy to open, but turn out to be revolving doors, which – like in good old silent films – get a hold of you, taking you along for the ride until you find yourself trapped in the claustrophobic glass cell with no inside or outside, like being dangerously trapped in a horizontal hamster wheel . . .

So for whom are these doors open to and for whom are they closed? What mechanisms make it possible for some to simply pass, but impossible for others to even make it budge? What awaits them if finally they do manage? Before this is misunderstood as mere rhetoric, let us be more concrete. What mechanisms are involved in creating doors that say “Roma *inclusion*” at the threshold (e.g., in the English original version of

the EU's strategic paper) – meaning equal rights and access to resources –, but suddenly change to “integration” in the German version of the same strategic paper? When speaking of a minority (within a nation-state) that has been living in the German-speaking territories for 600 years now, the question is: who should be integrated, and how? How many generations must pass before one is considered integrated? Would it be enough to count back to Gutenberg, or, just to be on the safe side, back to Adam and Eva, so that the ominous door, like the legendary “open sesame” door may – and certainly only for those who are integrated in the secret of integration – actually be opened? The Roma Decade is drawing to an end.

Romanosmose satellites

Notes from the project blog

The division of the population into a majority, on the one hand, and the Roma as minority, on the other hand, appears to be so self-evident, so natural that it determines bodies and thoughts, but also influences places where people are, where their everyday lives and experiences unfold. Every minority group has its ascribed and naturalized characteristics within the defined society structures. For Roma the aspects of a-sociality and exoticism seem to be at the forefront. The order of the majority does not need justification; moreover, it does not need to be specially mentioned because it is the basis on which the order of all minorities is constituted. The cause of inequality therefore seems not to be part of a social problem, but rather part of a natural system in which society is grounded.

4

Thank You for Flying Romanistan was the title of the final conference in Berlin. The themes addressed were the legal and political situation of the Roma in Europe, the stereotypes and the construction of the “Other”, the self-organization and the cultural production of the Roma.

Other issues addressed were the funding structures and how “Roma projects” can be successfully carried out as projects of the Roma and not as majority-society projects for or on the Roma. Not just Roma industries in general were viewed critically but also paternalistic tendencies that were discussed by some of the actors in the projects.

The analyses of the project – those by Ljubomir Bratić und Pedro Aguilera Cortés remain in the form of texts. Here the sphere of activity and thinking of their scholarly work and their activism have merged with that of the project.

Roma in Spain: Culture, Vision and Rights

Pedro Aguilera Cortés

Romanistan is a project funded by the European Union within the framework of its programme “Culture”. Its main objective is to eliminate exoticizing stereotypes in regard to Roma culture (Roma artists are only recognized as representatives of Roma folklore, and thus the real artistic value of Roma art is underestimated). From the outset the project aimed at changing perspectives: an alternative approach to understanding “the Roma essence” from the perspective of folklore and traditional culture was to be developed, placing the emphasis on promoting a way of cultural emancipation through recognition and support. Under this premiss *Romanistan* has sought to achieve the following:

- To identify the Roma cultural work and political organization
- To explore the chances of cultural work in order to break down barriers and to redefine

spaces or to appropriate them: to design and implement concrete interventions and cultural projects.

- To analyse how Roma cultural work is defined as “exotic” and to develop strategies in order to counteract the continuation of those stereotypes.
- To initiate public discussions on anti-ziganism and racism, and to develop productive counterstrategies in cultural and political contexts.

Now I’ll speak about culture in general and Roma culture in particular. In doing so I will show to which extent the latter permeates the so-called “Roma universe” and at the same time argue that Roma culture goes far beyond artistic-folkloric manifestations. With this argument I am referring to a position contrary to that of the romantic *gachés*¹ who pretend in the majority of cases that they want to preserve what they call the Roma community subculture. However, with this position they make the cultural racism invisible, which the Roma community suffers, or they do not write about it – especially in Catalonia where I live. Like every other journey, this one has a beginning which is focused on culture. What is culture? How does culture affect a whole community? These are the main topics I will address in the following pages.

The Concept of Culture in its Broader Sense and the Roma Community

Throughout the two years of the project, among other things, a broader cultural concept was pursued, which presented a variety of cultural

and artistic forms of expression of the Roma community.

This approach was applied to all the projects that have been carried out in Catalonia. Most notably the project *Festival of Roma Music and Culture ROMANISTAN*² held in June 2012 in the Ciutadella park in Barcelona, which presented local groups, artistic movements as well as cultural and artistic performances. This festival is described on the FAGiC website: “Various artistic and cultural activities are offered for this day: musical workshops and concerts, artistic workshops, family activities and much more. The Festival offers areas for exhibitions and community games – activities that will be developed with other social organizations. Concerts with bands from the Balkans and other European regions form the core of the festival. Concerts will contribute to the support of Roma music groups and show their existence.” As we can see, music and artistic workshops are considered to be the highlight of culture in general and of Roma culture in particular. As a second example I would like to refer to the event *European Art Conference – XX jornadas Gitanas de Cultura Gitana FAGiC* held in December 2012 in Barcelona where personalities of cultural life discussed their professional experiences and their visions relating to Roma culture and its space within the mainstream of society.

These are only a few examples of how Roma culture is always generally associated with artistic forms of expression. We three “satellites” had intense und heated debates concerning this issue

1 Non-Roma in Caló, the language of the Andalusian Gitanos.

2 For more information, see fagic.org/es/quehacemos/eventos/303-festival-de-musica-y-cultura-gitana-romanistan



Pedro Aguilera Cortés, Guillermo Ruiz
Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de



Teodora Tabački, Veronika Gerhard
Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de



Gilda-Nancy Horvath, Ljubomir Bratić,
Nenad Marinković
Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de

– we were an intercultural and interethnic group and the respective visions are explainable through the different backgrounds and professional experiences.

As I see it, using the term “Roma culture” for artistic and/or visual expressions is similar to believing that an iceberg is only what you see on the surface. With this idea you ignore the fact that the great potential of discovery lies under the surface and that the artistic as well as cultural forms of expression of the Roma culture that we know are only those written in capital letters.

What do we understand as culture and what do we understand as Roma culture? This is a key question that accompanies us throughout this entire document. I find it necessary not only to understand the basic meaning of culture, but also what the concept of “Roma culture” means to us, the Roma. We will see that above all, values, customs, invisibility, strategies and other things have helped Roma women and men with their most important mission throughout their existence in Europe: namely to SURVIVE.

Culture and Roma Culture

Who knows whether it can be ascribed to my academic career, to my social and professional background, or perhaps because it is the idea that is in accordance to my own understanding of culture. But whenever I have to define the concept *culture* I end up agreeing with Anthony Giddens, who defines culture as a set of values, norms and characteristics of a certain group.³

3 Giddens, A., *Sociología*, Alianza Universidad, Madrid, 1994.

The simplicity and, at the same time, the depth of this description bring us to two key points in regard to Roma culture that we have always assessed very positively in terms of values and norms. From our point of view, these values are basic principles that individuals or groups have, about what is desirable, acceptable, good or bad, Roma learn these values as of birth, but even more in the “initial socialization⁴, so to say during the first seven years of life, when Roma women take on the role of transmitting Roma culture for their children. Here is an appropriate quote from *al-andalus.info*: “The Roma woman plays a key role as carrier of these cultural values (for example taking care of the family).” Roma men and women grow up with these values, which can vary depending on families, regions or historical moments, but there are also common elements everywhere in Spain.

For example, in this phase of life we learn the value of FAMILY and how everything we do as Roma people in the course of our lives, good or bad, also affects our family. A Roma man or woman will always stand under the influence of the family, because the socialization process and family support are defining factors for recognition as a trustworthy Roma.

Another value Roma men and women learn from their early socialization process is respect for the elderly. This value is nurtured throughout their entire lifetime.

The list of values of the Roma community can be as diverse as Roma are in the world, but one of

their best-known values is solidarity within the group. This solidarity is most present in situations which are seen by the community as “bad” or “negative”, like in cases of sickness or death. It is not my goal to give a detailed account of the values that permeate Roma culture, but I wish to show the significance for the development of self-esteem, first of all in relation to the Roma community, and then to the mainstream society.

Another element described in Giddens’ definition refers to the rules surrounding individual actions. For us, these rules are closely linked with the social control exercised by the community itself. Rules in the Roma community are part of an “unwritten code” which have differences depending on families or regions but which also have many common elements. Here an example: a behavior rule regarding the elderly of the community indicates that one should not disturb them, fight with them or confront them with contempt. Or another rule in regard to solidarity says that one should offer protection to people in need or one should give economic support in cases of sickness or death.

To delve further into the concept of Roma culture, I would like to recall a definition of the activist Agustín Vega Cortés: “The Roma culture is made up of language, rules, traditions, customs, rituals as well as the artistic forms of expression that are accepted and acknowledged by the Roma as their own as long as they reflect everyday life.”⁵

If we analyse this definition and follow the work of Humberto García, we can identify determinants of Roma culture in the broadest sense:

4 The concept of socialization refers to a social process by which children develop an awareness of norms and values and acquire a sense of the “self” in relation to their community. See A. Giddens, *op. cit.*

5 Vega Cortés, Agustín, *Los gitanos en España, Jóvenes contra la intolerancia*, Zafra, 1994.

- a) The feeling of being a people, an ethnicity and a minority:

The Roma agreed to be recognised as a people without territory by the United Nations in 1971. In 2003 we again demanded the same recognition from the UNO. Then in face of the fact that no special territory exists, ethnicity becomes the decisive factor that we feel as a folk. Ethnicity is to be understood here as a wide palette of cultural practices and perspectives that distinguishes one community from another. In this way the Roma community has developed its ethnicity parallel to the concept of identity – the identity of the Roma always developed itself in opposition to mainstream society and often totally excluded from it. For this reason the concept of the minority is frequently used to defend the Roma community as well as non-assimilation.

- b) Identity-building customs:

These customs are mainly celebrated at festive events like weddings or other traditional ceremonies where the family is at the center of attention. We also identify ourselves through certain rites like baptism, marriage or mourning.

- c) Language:

Language is one of the most important cultural and identity-building elements of a people. In Spain, Romani has almost disappeared due to numerous anti-ziganistic laws that have been enacted over the past 500 years on the Iberian Peninsula. These rules ban the speaking of our own language, among other things. The Roma community in Spain and Catalonia could therefore only survive by giving up the Romani language and developing their own

*pogadolect*⁶ called Caló, which would become the language of survival for the Roma community of the Iberian Peninsula.

The language is one of those elements that the young Roma generation tries to regain. They are better trained, more fully integrated and show a higher level of social participation than the rest of the Roma community.

Almost Invisible Culture

With a cultural concept which moves away from stereotypes and also from a pure link to musical and artistic elements we are able to judge the weight of the Roma culture in Spain.

The opinion that the mainstream society has about the Roma community is usually connected to folkloric elements or simply based on a false integrative discourse where mainstream society assimilates those positive elements of Roma culture and where disregard for other elements remains in force.

From a pedagogical point of view, it is very interesting that the Roma culture within the education

6 According to Jiménez González, a pogadolect is “an idiom that borrows its grammatical structure from a language A, in which a vocabulary coming from a language B is inserted. In linguistic terminology, this kind of phenomenon is called ‘mixed speech’, but I prefer the term ‘pogadolect’. Firstly, because I think that it is more accurate and secondly because it is a contribution by Romani linguistics to general linguistics and, from my point of view, this gives it an added value.” See Nicolás Jiménez González, “¿El romanó, el caló, el romanó-kaló o el gitaño!?, Cincuenta y tres notas sociolingüísticas en torno a los gitanos españoles”, in *Anales de Historia Contemporánea* 25 (2009), p. 152 [Translator’s Note].

system is totally invisible. According to Prof. Calvo Buezas Roma culture is neither in the textbooks nor in the curricula of the compulsory school system in Spain (6 to 16 years old). In this work, Prof. Calvo Buezas⁷ analysed the contents of textbooks from primary and secondary schools. Having reviewed 218 books, he points out that the Roma culture does not exist in these works.

The Roma community in Central and Eastern Europe is almost not visible. Teresa Sordé⁸ states: “When Roma students come to school they face the challenge of having to learn the language of the mainstream society from the country in which they live, a circumstance that leads to segregation in many ways. Invisibility manifests itself: in language, in the educational practice, in the inclusion of the family, in the decision-making process, in the calendar and in schedules, in music as well as in the conveyed traditions.”

Roma culture has gone through different stages throughout the history of the Iberian Peninsula, always closely linked to pro and contra Roma policies. It is clear that a community that has been present on this Peninsula for more than 530 years has had to suffer under almost every form of public policy in regard to its ethnicity and culture. Torrens’ classification includes seven types of public policies regarding ethnicity and minorities⁹ which he classifies as inclusive and exclusive. The inclusive policies are based on integration, and two important types are mentioned: multicultural-



Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de



Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de



Photo: Nihad Nino Pušija / fotofabrika.de

7 Calvo Buezas, Tomás. *¿España racista? Voces payas sobre gitanos*. Anthropos, 2000

8 Sordé, Teresa. *Reivindicacions educatives de la dona gitana*. Galerada, 2006.

9 VV.AA. *Ideologías y movimientos políticos contemporáneos*. Tecnos, 2001.

alism and inter-culturality. According to Torrens exclusive types include assimilation, expulsion and genocide. The main characteristic of all these policies which relate to culture is often the same: the achievement of invisibility, be it the annihilation of members of the culture, for example with genocide; or be it the lack of cultural presence due to expulsion or through suppression of culture by assimilation. Even in the context of inclusive policies such as inter-culturality or multiculturalism, elements of cultural racism are to be found embedded in mainstream society.

In Spain some attempts have been made to increase the visibility of Roma culture, one of the most important being the founding of the Institute of Roma Culture in Spain (Instituto de Cultura de España). This institute is a state foundation funded by the Ministry of Culture. It aims at developing and supporting the language, culture and history of the Roma. Through studies, research and publications the knowledge about the Roma should be improved and should contribute to their recognition. The Institute of Roma Culture in Spain¹⁰ wants to convey to the general public the legitimate aspiration of Spanish Roma to achieve full rights of citizenship with consideration of their cultural identity.

However, the focus of the institute during its first six years of existence was more on the promotion of “the organization of academic and cultural events and initial aid for Roma artists.” In my view, this institution should also develop a critical vision towards the betterment of Roma culture visibility within mainstream society.

Findings and Conclusions

1. The project *Romanistan* has set goals that require a long-term plan. The two project years were sufficient to establish a basis and achieve some objectives, but we were unable to develop a homogeneous discourse in order to promote the Roma culture beyond specific activities.
2. In my opinion, we should have prepared a definition of Roma culture, which is associated with our community rules and values, its visibility and its specific weight incorporated within the mainstream society.
3. Roma culture is not sufficiently recognized within our state legal system. It is true that some recognition exists at the regional level, as in the case of the recognition of Roma culture in the Catalan constitution¹¹. Article 42 states that social, cultural and religious cohabitation is guaranteed for all people living in Catalonia, in addition to the respect towards diverse ethical and philosophical convictions. Also the recognition of the Roma culture guarantees the preservation of the historical reality of these people. In spite of the legal recognition, there is neither a specific plan for the support of the Roma culture, nor a public institution run by Roma that is making their own culture known to mainstream society.
4. There is strong cultural racism on the Iberian Peninsula where, on the one hand, mainstream society takes on cultural forms of

¹⁰ institutoculturagitana.es/inicio.php

¹¹ Estatut de Catalunya, see full text in gencat.cat/generalitat/cas/estatut/titol_1.htm#a4

expression that it sees as excellent forms, assimilating and embracing them, while, on the other hand, they exclude and discriminate all for whom they have no interest. This cultural racism is particularly visible in Flamenco and bull fights.

5. It is crucial to promote activities for the visibility of Roma culture from the very start, for example, visibility of Roma in textbooks of compulsory schools, creating positive images of Roma and non-Roma children, as well as literature and art awards for this topic within mainstream society.
6. *Romanistan* is a good example of a project for the support of Roma culture, but we must make better use of planning tools, develop stronger visions, and find out more about what the participating stakeholders expect.
7. The Roma community is eager to give more visibility to its culture, but there is a lack of means to implement it. It requires serious and long-term calculated actions and proposals that integrate Roma men and women and make them protagonists.

Anti-discrimination and the Formation of Alliances

Ljubomir Bratić

Being against discrimination is not the same thing as actively acting against discrimination. The latter might require the former, but the former by no means implies the latter. If an act does not reproduce any discrimination, then this can be seen as positive but apart from this anti-discriminatory action also requires counteracting the normalcy of discrimination so as to ultimately succeed in overcoming it. Structures have to be transformed so that acts reducing the power asymmetry can emerge in the future.

The effectiveness of action against the discrimination of minorities can be increased by efforts continuously being made related to the following tasks: promoting (self) empowerment, grasping normalcy, naming asymmetries in one's own area of influence, developing alternative models, forming alliances and positioning or staging conflicts.

Promoting (self) empowerment means strengthening the common competences of action, decision-

making and intervention among the discriminated groups or individuals as economic and political entities, creating and maintaining economic cycles, promoting a political subjectification, self-representation and entities of meaning production, delegitimizing a politics by proxy and processing the internalized thinking and behavior of authority. To grasp normalcy means to make what is taken for granted and is thus not grasped conducive for discursive processing. It means extracting realities that have not yet been understood or are unnamed from the realm of the non-understanding, of the ruling normalcy. They are extracted through reflection, the creation of corresponding objects of knowledge and their introduction into discourses, by means of which they become an object of conscious political action.

To identify asymmetries in one's own area of influence means plumbing existing discrimination in one's own field and revealing one's own position in the racist asymmetry. It means striving for compensation, reproducing as little discrimination as possible in the existing and implementing egalitarian principles.

Developing alternative models means formulating inputs for over-arching social confrontations, contributing ideas for a better and discrimination-free society and working on this.

Forming alliances means, plumbing concrete motivations and interests of other political players, working on the appeal and comprehensibility of one's own position, entering into cooperation, infiltrating institutions through befriended pivotal persons and making resources accessible and readily available.

And, last not least in this by no means final list, confrontation, positioning or staging conflicts means seeking out rewarding confrontations with a high degree of diffusion, sharpening one's own positions

and effectively propagating one's own discourses in connection with widely observed confrontations.

Forming Alliances

The attempt to form alliances is based on the assumption that in certain social situations it is necessary to parallel the interests of diverse players (not just political ones) so as to be able to optimally use the potential resulting from commonalities and to be able to promote common interests.

The concept of forming alliances means those interactions in the political field in which an attempt is made to pull certain groups onto one side in a confrontation and to thus strengthen their position. This way, the asymmetries in power relations are to be distributed anew. In actual life, it is certainly not about regulated and continuous processes, which correspond to the necessity of the planned interaction of given partners in a long-term perspective. Rather, it is about temporary parallelizations that are rather fragile, depending as they do on skill, economic activity and constellation. What holds together alliances is the benefit promised by the development of the situation through the transfer of diverse types of capital, which can be acquired and activated in a given socio-political and economic situation.

The Alliance Along the Lines of the Romanistan Project

An alliance is a result of the analysis of forces, which in certain situations prompts the bearers of various ideological positions to believe that only by means of parallelization – not just of interests but also of possible effects – can they contribute



Photo: Matthias Reichelt



Filiz Demirova, Teodora Tabački, Veronika Gerhard

Photo: Matthias Reichelt



Photo: Matthias Reichelt

more to their own diffusion. Let's now take a look at the *Romanistan* project. It is an EU project in the cultural field, which has set itself the task of sounding out the boundaries of this field with regard to the possibilities of doing politics. The projects that were selected by a commission are not neutral but were granted funding according to certain logic. In our case it is the logic of the Roma Decade, which aligns itself with a century-old logic of the normalization of the "other". Roma who come from so-called third states are only marginally addressed in the discourse that deals with the "integration" of the Roma in the EU.

A considerable number of the Roma in Austria are not Austrian citizens – following the traditional "foreign-worker routes" they come from Serbia and Kosovo or from the eastern EU neighboring countries of Austria, i.e., Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary. These groups are not included in the measures for recognizing the Roma and Sinti as a group in Austria but only in those for the "integration of members of third states". These, in turn, only aim at those who are "legally" residing in a "member state". Thus, an implicit line of demarcation is introduced by means of the EU-wide discourse under the pretense of serving to reduce the discrimination of the Roma. It defines where future discrimination against the Roma is to be seen as legitimate and where it is to be seen as illegitimate. All explicit "Roma laws" in history and for all that matter all laws that refer to so-called minorities have introduced these differences in the discourse and, as a consequence, have also implemented them (or vice versa).

Romanistan breaks with this logic. The project was initiated by the Roma Kultur Zentrum Wien (RKZW), and commissioned and coordinated by

the IG Kultur Österreich (IGKÖ). The immediate interests of these two organizations do not overlap. The RKZW is an organization of Roma from Serbia, while the IGKÖ is an interest group of many cultural initiatives in Austria. The IGKÖ is thus in a sense the body representing the interests of the RKZW so that from the start there was a sort of power asymmetry given its representation and its legitimacy. This power rift was partly called into question in the course of the project in that a certain knowledge and certain skills were passed on to the RKZW and by the fact that a number of attempts were made to also secure the future of the organization. But this rift was certainly not done away with in spite of these efforts. The power asymmetry cannot be called into question in a small project since the two organizations do not exist by themselves but rather reflect the real social conditions in which these asymmetries exist and are passed on. However, the mere fact that an organization of the “other” Roma, that is, of the Roma and Sinti, which are not part of the Roma recognized by the Austrian law on ethnic groups, is carrying out a joint project with the IGKÖ is certainly unusual and effective enough. The links between the self-organizations of the migrants in Austria and the cultural scene, even if the latter sees itself as radical, are very rare, if at all extant. In this sense we can say that *Romanistan* has contributed to successfully claiming a small place for these “others” of the Roma community in the cultural scene.

The parallelization of interests of the RKZW and the IGKÖ has taken place along the lines of power asymmetry between, on the one hand, the well organized and the institutionalized bearers of knowledge on the functioning of the cultural scene in Austria and, on the other hand, the self-

organized RKZW that is in part interested in securing the immediate material interests but also in further positioning itself in the cultural field. We can observe that both organizations have had to make concessions in their planning as the project has evolved. The IGKÖ, for instance, had to learn that folklore – in the various forms of music, art and cultural production – also has an important role apart from the exoticizing perspective. The diverse music scene of the Roma and other minorities often has the function of creating spaces in which the group can celebrate itself and thus also recognize itself. To call this in question would thus run counter to the proclaimed intention of promoting the (self)empowerment of minorities and the production of meaning.

At the same time, the 30 interviews with various Romni and Roma in Vienna, Berlin and Barcelona that were conceived as short films and presented on Youtube provide a possibility for self-expression in the cultural field (see also the text by Almir Ibric). These short films continued to be featured outside of the project in the monthly program “PanoRoma” that is broadcast by Community television OKTO-TV in Vienna and produced by RKZW. Further concessions had to be made in the endeavor to pass on the acquired knowhow on the structures and functioning of the cultural scene to the self-organization of the Roma migrants. The dissemination and thus the strengthening of the future orientation proceeded in an oblique way, especially given the need to cope with a common time in a common space with regard to the goals to be achieved. The attempts of IGKÖ to develop further projects together with the RKZW were only partly successful. But to make up for this several members of the RKZW have gained insight into previously unknown areas: first, the

functioning and expertise of a group representing the interests of the cultural initiatives, second in the functioning and needs of an EU project, third, in the networking with other Roma self-organizations, directly in Berlin and Barcelona but indirectly also in a broader sense. This symbolical capital, which the RKZW has acquired, is joined by the immediate material capital as added value, which plays a much greater role in such an organization than in an established group with a long tradition representing interests.

The question remains as to whether the cooperation that took place from June 2011 to May 2013 was an alliance situation. According to the above-cited definition of alliances that have a conflict situation and a common interest in increasing the potential for implementation – a phenomenon that is taking place within a political field –, we can only indirectly speak of an alliance in the cultural field. The cultural field is not a place of politics even if the opposite is often claimed. It is a place where the political, the thinking, and the discourses of the political can be cultivated. However, these discourses must be implemented and fought for in the political field, using the means that are available there. In this sense it can be said that the *Romanistan* cultural project, with all the public and internal discussions, the cultural and artistic production, the workshops, the conferences and the discourse work which has taken place in the period has certainly tilled the ground for political alliances in the direction of politics, while having remained situated within a cultural field itself or, in a more positive sense, must have remained situated there.

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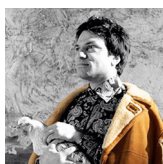


Photo: Patrick Kwasniewski

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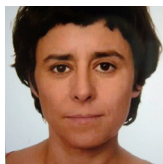
and the co-editor of two anthologies criticizing *Antiziganistische Zustände*.

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Photo: Christian Untertuber

Simone Schönnett

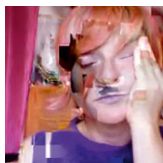
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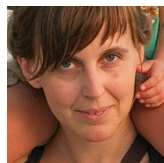
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Since 1996 she has been working as a translator and interpreter in English, Italian and Dutch. She is also committed to the development of theoretical discourse on power, gender, borders and governance, as well as to grassroots action-research and cooperative art practices. She has translated works by G. C. Spivak, Toni Negri, Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Chin-tao Wu, Z. Bauman, S. Žižek, F. Jameson and M. Davis among others.

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Project Participants

Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe was a joint project, organized by IG Kultur Österreich (Wien), Roma Kulturzentrum (Wien), Amaro Drom e.V. (Berlin) and the Federación de Asociaciones Gitanas de Cataluña / FAGiC (Barcelona) in the framework of the EU-programme Culture (2007-2013).

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Amaro Drom is an intercultural youth association of Roma and non-Roma, which was founded in 2006 with the goal of creating a place for youth to become active members of civil society through empowerment, mobilization, self-organization and participation.

Amaro Drom does in-depth studies of Roma cultural work throughout Berlin. The main questions it addresses are: what is the content and form of the relation between cultural identity and cultural production? What possibilities does cultural work provide, particularly in terms of outreach and in cultural education? Which visions of self-representation and of self perception and perception by others already exist or are currently being developed within Roma communities?

In December 2011, Amaro Drom hosted the Zukunftswerkstatt (Workshop of the Future) in Berlin, which – among other things – created a basis for the participation of Roma communities.

The discussions in each of the different workshops contributed to defining the overall direction the project would take. Through the workshops, the participating artists developed their proposals for the works they were to produce and the themes they wanted to address, which they then realized in 2012 and 2013, against the theoretical background of this EU project.

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Gitanes de Catalunya

FAGiC Barcelona is the association of Roma organizations in Catalonia. They support Roma rights and culture in the region and maintain close relationships with public and private institutions. Among other things, they encourage self-organization of Roma associations, specifically through providing information and support and improving infrastructures.

In June 2012 FAGiC organized the Festival Viva la Cultura Gitana at the Ciutadella Park in Barcelona, the city's flagship park, with many activities that had a wide range of Roma art and culture. The event presented young Roma and non-Roma artists and organizations, which resulted in a network bringing together different participants.

The European Conference of Art was a series of personal presentations by national and international renowned artists who focused on discrimination and racism in the Roma artistic production. On the basis of their own personal and profes-

sional experience the speakers explained how discriminatory barriers could be overcome and what tools could be used to this end.

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Associació Cultural Gitana de Viladecans, Unió Romani, Associació Ternikaló XXI, Associació Gitana, Tots els Colors, Fundació Privada Pere Closa, Associació Socio Cultural Lachó Bají Calí, Associació de Dones Gitanes de Sitges, Associació Teatrejoc, Associació Gitana de Dones Drom Kotar Mestipen, Associació Cultural Monàrquica de Girona, Associació Gitana Catalana Sant Josep Obrer, Centre Cultural Gitano La Mina, Moviment per la Pau – MPDL, Associació CAFUNÉ, Servei Civil Internacional de Catalunya, SOS Racisme, Global Humanitaria, FECCOM, Associació D'Art Venus, Fundació Save the Children, FORCAT, Fundació ARED, Metges del Món, Veus Gitanes.

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Roma Kulturzentrum Wien was founded by Nenad and Milorad Marinković in 2005. The goal was to create a place for youth and adult Roma to meet so as to provide them with opportunities for participating in different cultural and educational projects.

Roma Kulturzentrum Wien seeks to offer high-quality recreational activities to youth and adults who were born in Vienna or moved here later in life. The activities of the association comprise education (tutoring for Roma children), culture, health, work and employment, as well as lobbying (e.g., immigration law). An important activity is exchanging experiences with other Roma organizations in Austria and in the EU, in order to work together to improve the situation of Roma as well as the quality of our own work.

The project *Romanistan* attempts to counter the biased representations of Roma and to change them for the better. In addition, Roma Kulturzen-

trum Wien has also offered a series of workshops on antiracist cultural work to other Roma organizations in Vienna.

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IG Kultur Österreich

The IG Kultur Österreich, located in Vienna/Austria, represents the cultural-political interests of independent cultural organizations in Austria, in addition to providing information and services for these groups. IG Kultur Österreich's main goal is to improve the working conditions for emancipatory cultural work.

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Pedro Aguilera Cortés
Katalin Bársony
Aylin Basaran
Ljubomir Bratić
Hamze Bytyci
Markus End
Gilda-Nancy Horvath
Marty Huber
Almir Ibrić
Patricia Köstring
Anna Mirga
Radostina Patulova
André J. Raatzsch
Simone Schönnett
Erika Thurner

Romanistan is everywhere

Tracing Treacherous Terrain

Between 2011 and 2013 the project *Romanistan. Crossing Spaces in Europe* addressed issues of self-organization and contemporary culture and media work by Roma in Europe. This reader compiles texts issued within the project.

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