

Roma Integration and Institutional Practices with Roma/Gypsies in Postsocialist Hungary

by

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DEDICATION

For my mother and father, who made it all possible.

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My parents and brother, first and foremost, laid the foundation for my education, critical thinking, and engagement with community and social issues, and helped me to find my voice and my sense of purpose. Our ancestors and extended family inspired me to interrogate the divergence between the perceptions and the lived realities of people who exist outside the physical spaces and social networks of centralized political power and cultural capital. They helped me to see the vital importance of challenging ethnocentrism in all its forms; they helped me appreciate the values and cultural practices of people with ways of life and homelands that are often disrespected and misunderstood by those who live in ignorance of the realities beyond their narrow scope of experience. The geographic and class mobility of the generations that preceded me, that landed a daughter of rural farmers-turned-middle-class-urban-professionals in elite Bay Area private schools, cultivated a sense of tenuousness of position for me in both worlds as well as a lifelong calling for translation through storytelling, which found its articulation in the peculiar, rich borderland of social work and anthropology.

The teachers, mentors, colleagues, friends, cheerleaders, counselors, healers, family members, and everyone else who blazed the trail ahead of me, helped guide me on the path, and nourished my mind, body, and spirit along the way are far, far too numerous to name. Among them are those who also so generously shared their time, narrated their intimate lives to an outsider, and gave countless other crucial supports over the course of my field research. It is not an exaggeration to point as far back as my extraordinary secondary school teachers at Head-Royce and The College Preparatory School in Oakland, California, such as Ms. Fineman, Bobbie Barnier, and Harry Chotiner, as fundamentally shaping the trajectory of my scholarly work and the language I have available for the stories I tell and convincing me that they were worth telling. The Oakland-Nahodka Sister City Association and its unique and timely exchange, introducing me to my Russian brother Roman Yorick, opened my eyes to the world beyond the Iron Curtain just moments before it was opened.

In many ways I am the product of the unique, countercultural academic environment of the University of California at Santa Cruz in the 1990s, home of many individuals whose personal histories were part and parcel of the lessons they had to teach, like fierce scholar-activists like Angela Davis and eccentric geniuses like Tom Lehrer. There, Bettina Aptheker schooled us by the hundreds in feminisms and reformulated our understanding of the meaning of being a woman; John Dizikes invited us to think of 19th century women painters, Beat poets, opera singers, and horse jockeys in the same field of vision in our inclusive, holistic study of American society. Judy Yung showed us the art and craft of oral history and gave us an unforgettable, historically grounded tour of San Francisco Chinatown, the neighborhood in which she had been raised, which included discussion of the civil associations and local residents together with the restaurants, shops, fortune cookie factory, and the other features more widely

known by tourists and outsiders. Ann Lane introduced us to Marxist theory and Native American activists and intellectuals; and historian Gildas Hamel, a brilliant son of Breton peasants, taught us about the transition from rural to urban society in France, raising my consciousness about class and rural/urban divisions and how they operated in Europe. The American Studies program there, where I studied critical theory and learned the framework of multiculturalism in the 1990s among many young people of color activists, was foundational in shaping my understanding of the societal experiences of ethnic minorities and many others whose social identities had fundamental influences on the trajectories and opportunities that were available to them. My friendship with Anikó Tóth, daughter of '56ers who raised their family as consciously Hungarian-American in Los Angeles, introduced me to Hungarian culture as they practiced it in their transnational diasporic community. Meanwhile, courses on East European and Jewish history and literature with Greta Slobin, Murray Baumgarten, and Peter Kenez further cultivated my knowledge and interest in Central Europe and built my awareness of these issues in that geographic context. No other moment in all the years of my education is more memorable than that in the Holocaust history course when our professors shared their own family stories about the death camps. Murray Baumgarten explained that he had been born on a boat to the United States after his family escaped from Vienna, and thus narrowly escaped Auschwitz. Raising his hand in the air, Peter Kenez, who grew up in a Hungarian Jewish family, pulled back his sleeve to reveal a tattooed number: "I wasn't so lucky."

This particular project of working on Romani/Gypsy issues in Hungary dates back two decades, and the debts I've amassed in the process are truly impossible to repay. Claude Cahn's generous tutelage in the field of Romani rights and international human rights conventions and his orientation to the work of the European Roma Rights Centre through our collaboration on the

Poland and Greece country reports were invaluable and foundational in my entry into, and understanding of, the field of Romani Studies. In 2003, he opened his Rolodex and thus his whole social and professional network in the field of Roma rights. The Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies at the University of Texas at Austin generously supported the beginning of my graduate education, as well as summer language study and travel in the region, through Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships for the study of Romani and Hungarian languages. The faculty teaching in their Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies program between 2002 and 2005, particularly Cynthia Buckley, John Kolsti, and Charters Wynn, helped me to begin to answer my many questions that had begun to form during these first years of my part-time living in Budapest in the late 1990s and early 2000s. They and others at University of Texas also, crucially, helped me to learn how to ask better, more interesting ones, and how to undertake to answer them through the craft of social research, and supported my academic advancement in a myriad of ways. Ian Hancock taught me the grammatical intricacies of both Romani language and *Romanipe* through individual language instruction and his undergraduate course on Gypsy Language and Culture, and his unique tutelage demanded for me to consider my level of commitment to this work. Michael Stewart and the professors and students involved in the course on Romani Studies at the Central European University in Budapest in 2003 (including János Ladányi, Yaron Matras, Victor Friedman, Wim Willems, Leo Lucassen, Annabel Tremlett, and Huub van Baar, among many others who helped advance the conversation), in turn, contextualized and deepened my understanding of Hancock and his project in relation to other scholarship — as well as all other aspects of the contentious field of Romani Studies and the position and experience of Roma/Gypsies in society.

Zsuzsanna Abrams patiently supported and encouraged me in learning the seemingly impossibly complicated choreography of Hungarian language, and along the way, offered friendship and institutional access, shared her library, taught me better manners, and deepened my understanding of Hungarian culture and society in the way that only a truly great teacher of language can do. In this regard I have been blessed: The depth of the lessons I've learned from a handful of my Hungarian teachers, who embody a combination of humor, erudition, generosity, and lack of pretension that entails the very best of Hungarian culture and society, goes far beyond the rules of grammar, lexicon, register, and usage. Dorka, Zsuzsi, and Nora, *nagyon szépen köszönöm*. I am grateful also for all the many other teachers who have helped me along the way in building my fluency over the years as I marveled, laughed, cried (yes, really), and tore my hair out in Debrecen, Budapest, Pécs, Austin, Alameda, and Ann Arbor. The Debreceni Nyári Egyetem program in particular was critical in helping me see the skeleton in the body of the *magyar nyelv*. They supported my study in their summer program in Debrecen through their Némedi Lajos Scholarship in 2017 at the time I was making the transition from a two-year period of clinical social work practice in adolescent mental health and child welfare in Northern California back into this research; the language instruction in the region was critical in bridging the gap.

Alaina Lemon's critical book on Romani intellectuals in Russia, published in 2000, illuminated a different architecture that was possible in the field of Romani Studies and a whole different way Roma people could be depicted in a story. Together with Douglas Foley, Dieter Haller, and Carol Silverman (with their insights on race and class in schools and communities; borderlands and diversity in minority enclaves; and power in the context of marginality in the cultural production of Romani musicians in Eastern Europe), she helped me come to understand

that if there was a disciplinary home where I and my stories belonged, it was in Anthropology. Alaina drew a critical mass of students to the University of Michigan that had the makings of an Ann Arbor School of Romani Studies; the collaborative conversations about Roma I had the unique, extraordinary opportunity to engage in with her, Elana Resnick, Alex Reusing, and Luciana Aenășoaie helped to challenge my assumptions and think in new ways about methods and theoretical approaches to this work as well as its meaning. Martha Lampland and Krisztina Fehérváry, in turn, through their exceptional, meticulous scholarship and generous mentorship, modeled the depth of insights that anthropological study could reveal about Hungary, in particular. The support of both of them at different stages of my academic trajectory helped convince me that what I had to contribute to the understanding of Hungary, and to the field as a whole, was worth the labor.

The University of Michigan, as a whole, has given me an institutional home with an unimaginable wealth of resources in its libraries, technical and financial support, training and mentorship, multitude of opportunities for research and teaching experience, and incredible intellectual minds. The anthropology department overwhelmed me with its riches of insight into all the areas of human diversity, and the scholarship, teaching, and support of Gayle Rubin, Julia Paley, Tom Fricke, Conrad Kottak, as well as the rest of the faculty, have been essential in defining my work as a scholar.

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“Social justice warrior” has become a term of derision in our era, but I believe the dogged advocacy for equality and empowerment of all peoples to be an honorable pursuit, one worthy of making my life's work. Some in academia perceive scientific accuracy and political activism to be mutually exclusive. Thank you, David Scheffel, for pushing me to reflect on this question — such critiques are precious, because they help to crystalize one's own sense of purpose. My firm belief is that telling the truth in the painstaking detail we have available as ethnographers — and applying the holistic approach to analysis that is the hallmark of anthropology — has the potential to cultivate the seeds for liberation, and there is no need to forego one in favor of the

other. Having endured incarceration in connection with your work in our field, you have paid a high price for this labor and demonstrated the personal risks involved.

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PREFACE

János's eyes are filled with mirth as he begins the tale. His French friend Françoise had driven several hours to visit him in Budapest, arriving at his home in Rákóczi Square toward evening. Françoise had been in the flat for well over half an hour when the buzzer rang from the entrance of the building. János wasn't expecting anyone, so he answered with curiosity, then surprise. The familiar young voice addressed him respectfully and affectionately as an elder with the honorific "Uncle" combined with the shortened version of his name. "Jáncsi-bácsi," the child said, "we were wondering how long the lady was going to be staying up there before she comes back down to her car. She left it open, and we've been watching it for her, but we need to go in to have dinner now."

At this point in telling the story, János bursts out laughing.

Most Hungarians would consider the whole scenario unthinkable. The seediness of Rákóczi Square was notorious; it was a dangerous place you were supposed to avoid altogether, but if you had to go there, you were supposed to watch your back, watch your pockets, and cross the street to prevent an encounter with the hookers, thieves, and "Gypsies" you would inevitably find there. Known to be the seediest part of the seediest neighborhood in central Budapest, Rákóczi Square wasn't a place you left belongings in your car; indeed, from the perspective of the Pest locals who didn't live in the neighborhood, it wasn't even a place you left your car if

you were sensible.¹ To leave the doors to the vehicle open was absolutely ridiculous, already. But here were the neighbor children guarding it for Jáncsi-bácsi's unwitting foreigner friend, to add to the impossibility of the situation. And the part that completed the comedic genius of the story: The children were Roma ("Gypsies").

János had kept his beloved flat on an upper floor of the Habsburg-era building for a couple of decades, cherishing the 19th century paintings on the window glass and the view of the square from his balcony, decorated with carefully tended red geraniums. The centrality of the location facilitated his active social networking with ever-permeable boundaries between friends

¹ The name "Pest" is also used informally as a designation for the capital as a whole, but it also refers to the territory on the eastern side of the Danube river in the city of Budapest, an area that has historically been the center of commerce and industrial activity. It is also the site of the Jewish quarter in its VII district, Erzsébetváros ("Erzsébet/Elizabeth town") and the location of the VIII district, Józsefváros ("József/Joseph town"), which has a large concentration of Roma/Gypsy people and is the subject of the present story. Each individual quarter of the capital, of which there are now 23, has its own character, sense of place and history, and social geography, and each has a considerable degree of autonomy in self-governance in the administrative system established in the postsocialist period. The VIII district is also the location of the Roma Parliament, a prominent Roma organization discussed later in the text.

The level of local autonomy of the districts in Budapest mirrors a general emphasis during the "transition" period restructuring on local municipal government control in Hungary. One of my cultural consultants in Hungary stated that there was a political push in Hungary for increased power and autonomy at the local level after the high degree of centralized power during the state socialist period, perceived by many in Hungary as a system in which Moscow controlled the Hungarian state. According to Susan Rose-Ackerman, economist and professor of law and political science at Yale University, the hierarchical structure during the socialist regime gave municipalities little independent power, and therefore county-level government in Hungary was "re-created in 1990 as a weak, residual administrative category. The 1990 reorganization went quite far in devolving authority downward and providing block grants to municipalities" (Rose-Ackerman 2005:114, citing Lorentzen 1998:147 and Szabó 1993:100). Many Roma-related initiatives I encountered during my fieldwork were taking place at the local level in town and village municipal governments and in specific districts in Budapest, such as the IX district and the VIII district.

The city of Budapest emerged during a period of extremely rapid urbanization and industrialization around the turn of the 20th century. In 1873, the three municipalities of Buda, Pest, and Óbuda were consolidated into a single city of 194 square kilometers and 296,000 inhabitants, with a total of 10 districts. Between 1873 and 1910, the population had risen to almost one million inhabitants (Országgyűlési Könyvtár ND; Izsák and Probáld 2001). Óbuda (ancient Buda), to the north, was the site of Roman ruins that, like baths and rose gardens from the period of Ottoman Turkish rule, continue to this day to be visible features of the physical environment of the city. Buda is the hilly territory that includes the castle and surrounding areas, a place that in the early postsocialist period continued to be considered by most Hungarians to be a more peaceful and desirable place to live than in Pest, the flat territory across the Danube river from Buda. At the turn of the 21st century, the late period of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the late stages of Habsburg rule, the territory of Pest was the site of a great deal of rapid construction, including many multi-level residential buildings like the one in which János lived. Housing needed to be constructed to accommodate the huge influx of people moving from rural areas into the capital and taking jobs as workers in the new factories.

and colleagues; they were constantly coming and going along with his family members, neighbors, and acquaintances. In five minutes, you could be out the door (locked with four separate locks), down the two flights of worn tile stairs in the shared central staircase, across the corner of the square, and already seated aboard the bright yellow 4-6 tram *en route* to anywhere in the capital.

Jáncsi loved the grandeur of the space that had been appointed by a local aristocrat who had been the original inhabitant. And as in the early days of these 19th century buildings, there was vast variation in the levels of material wealth and social capital of the residents who lived in adjacent flats.² For János, a Fulbright scholar who had grown up in a rural area of Hungary and taught American Studies at the distinguished Eötvös Loránd University, this often meant looking up from reading *Orientalism* by Edward Said, or some other text from his massive multilingual library, to answer the door and help a hapless foreigner or impoverished Roma/Gypsy neighbor with some logistical or material problem. You could tell that he appreciated the juxtaposition; it appealed to his flair for the dramatic as well as his socialist politics. He liked to say provocative things and tell off-color stories about the place, like the time the apparently drunken tram driver stopped at János's stop and announced to the passengers over the loudspeaker of the 4-6: "Rákóczi Square. Whores, get off."

On a crisp fall evening in 1998, when I was leaving his flat to go home after our very first meeting, he told me, "Don't talk to anyone, darling. The men will think you're for sale and the women will think you're competition." While he said the words in his characteristic teasing tone, I could also tell that he didn't really mean it as a joke. Walking after dark many nights in those

² For more insight on the 19th century Habsburg-era buildings and their social lives, see chapter one.

days, past heavily made-up women in yellow, high-heeled vinyl boots, I understood that the seedy mythos of the place was grounded somewhere in reality, like most stereotypes. British expatriate Marion Merrick's tell-all novel about Budapest in the 1980s, *Now You See It, Now You Don't*, was named for the three cups sleight-of-hand game some neighborhood Roma played in the square in those days, picking up a few forints from the passersby who thought they could best them. For Merrick, like most others, these tricksters and the shrieking, "grubby children" she observed "playing in a fenced-off area" in the square embodied the local Gypsy people in the quarter.

Yet here were the Roma/Gypsy neighbor kids in János's story, guarding the car of his French visitor against theft, in hilarious contradiction to every commonplace understanding of the neighborhood and, especially, about the people of their ethnic group.

Neither János nor Rákóczi Square is the focal point of this dissertation. But the contradiction in his story, the basis for its comedy, is at the heart of the stories I wish to tell. Roma/Gypsy people are always acting in the context of a social environment in which their behaviors are juxtaposed with a firmly engrained set of expectations of how they will act and beliefs about what they are like. If the children are "grubby" and they shriek as they play in the square, if the men sit and play sleight-of-hand games at the outdoor tables, they reinforce those expectations. And if they act protective toward the property of a foreigner and address their older ethnic Magyar neighbors with respect and affection, they so defy the expectations that the effect is total hilarity.³

³ Another Hungarian who read an earlier version of this text was inspired to tell me a story about an encounter of a non-Roma professional she knew who moved into a similar Habsburg-era building in the same neighborhood, with the same distinctive spatial organization and mixed composition of inhabitants from the standpoint of ethnic background and socioeconomic standing. In the 1980s, the doctor moved with his wife into a building in the VIII district of Budapest, with many Roma/Gypsies residents who had now become his close neighbors. He told my

Figures like János are a core part of the story, too, though, because the social environment is interactional, always populated with other persons to whom Roma/Gypsy people live in relation. An ethnic Magyar elder who is a longstanding fixture in the neighborhood who treats their families with civility and respect, who earnestly tries to help them when they run into difficulties, also defies the usual interactional norms of relationships between Roma and non-Roma. An expat friend from Northern Ireland living and teaching English in 1998 in Százhalombatta, an industrial town thirty miles from Budapest, reported that he was sometimes called a “Gypsy lover” for his tendency to greet Roma with the same courtesy as the others in the town. I, too, confounded many ethnic Magyar people in the way I related to Roma over the years I spent living in Hungary on and off between 1998 and 2012, defying their notions of what was sensible or even safe. A young Hungarian girlfriend of a British expatriate was shocked when she found that there was a substantial number of Roma at my house party to which he had brought her. A roommate in the city of Pécs, a Hungarian scientist who worked at the University of Pécs, was absolutely dumbfounded when she learned that not only had I gone over the weekend to Budapest to a Roma-themed cultural event (and *enjoyed* it), but I had also eaten the food prepared by one of the Roma women there. An elderly Hungarian neighbor from our own 19th-century building in the sixth district of Budapest pulled me aside once and warned me with grave seriousness against my practice of inviting the daughter of my upstairs neighbors into my flat, where she and the other neighbor girls liked to play with my ballroom dance shoes, taste unfamiliar foods, talk to me with my idiosyncratic Hungarian speech, and learn English words. “You mustn’t let the Gypsy children into your flat,” he told me; “they will steal from you.” The

friend that he felt absolutely secure there; his Gypsy neighbors told him that he didn’t need to worry, that no one would ever hurt him or steal from him, because they were living under Gypsy protection.

many warnings and directives I've received over the years have been instructive for wholly different reasons than the givers intended them to be.⁴

Finally, there's the way that Roma/Gypsy people are embedded into the social geography of a place, which is also part of the story. As in urban environments in the United States, where a perception of dangerousness is often attached to neighborhoods where African-American people are concentrated, there is a complicated constellation of variables at play in the psychology of place regarding where Roma people live. Discriminatory limits, whether imposed through formal bureaucratic procedures (e.g. redlining in the USA or the Pale of Settlement in Imperial Russia) or informal social practices, have often helped define the territories in which people from apparently undesirable minorities are able to live — whether, or in which the neighborhoods, they can settle or own property; the buildings or domiciles into which they are allowed to move. There is also the question of the stability of their presence as well as the neighborhood characteristics — the questions of whether their property rights will be honored and enforced; whether they will be subject to widespread evictions; whether their ethnic majority neighbors

⁴ The distinctive social intermixing that I had a part in creating in my home environment as a part-time resident in Budapest also applied to Roma/Gypsies from diverse backgrounds. Sometimes this was positive, but on one occasion, it created a very uncomfortable situation. Tibi was the developmentally delayed son of the upstairs neighbors, the brother of one of the girls who spent a lot of time visiting me in my flat. They were the children of an ethnic Magyar mother and a Roma/Gypsy father from the Beash subgroup, but like other mixed-race persons in Hungary, they were generally subject to the “one drop” rule from the standpoint of outsiders: These were the “Gypsy children” our neighbor spoke of so disparagingly. (There is further discussion of Roma/Gypsy subgroups in chapters one, two, and three; on the “one drop rule,” also called hypodescent, as it operates in the context of the contemporary United States, see Ho *et al* 2011 on persisting perceptions vis à vis hypodescent and Ho *et al* 2013 on the influence of *social dominance orientation* on use of hypodescent.)

Tibi stopped by and asked to come in, and I invited him into my living room, where he encountered two Serbian Roma who were visiting me. One was a man who was a tuba player touring with a well-known Balkan Roma orchestra, the other a woman who was a student in the Roma Access Program at the Central European University. Unlike his very bright and charismatic nine-year-old older sister, Tibi had some challenges socializing with others, and in this encounter, he also exhibited his own internalized racism against Roma/Gypsies. He made reference to Liliana, whose skin and hair color were considerably darker than his own, as a “little black dwarf.” Apologizing to Liliana and leading Tibi to the door, I took the opportunity to teach the child about the necessity of respect of all persons and firmly communicate that such behavior would not be allowed in my home. But I wondered if the situation would leave a real impression against the ubiquitous stigmatizing narratives he had been and would be subjected to throughout his lifetime.

will stay or they will leave *en masse* in another instance of so-called white flight.⁵ The limits regarding their mobility also had an impact on their vulnerability to exploitation or corruption by

⁵ Evictions have been a major issue for Roma/Gypsies in Central Europe, a domain that has been a focus of attention of some of the most prominent figures involved in pro-Roma activism in Hungary, such as Roma civil rights leader Aladár Horváth, who was a former Member of Parliament and president of the longstanding Roma organization the Roma Parliament, and Hungarian sociologist Gábor Havas. At times these evictions have appeared expressly racially motivated and at others they seem to be part of forces of urban renewal or gentrification in which people living in poverty (among whom Roma/Gypsies are very disproportionately represented) are being moved out to allow for renovation of buildings and ultimately the influx of residents of higher socioeconomic status. At times the compulsion of Roma to leave a community has not been forcible, but coerced and/or incentivized, as in the case of the town of Kisvárdá, where in 2017, the municipal government offered a sum of money to impoverished people living in social housing to leave the community, and 20-30 people accepted the offer of 1.5 million forints (approximately 4,800 Euros) and left (European Centre for Democracy and Development 2018:33; Szurovecz 2017).

The phenomenon of Roma evictions is one that has been significant in Hungary throughout the postsocialist period, beginning in the early 1990s. Not unique to Hungary, it has also been visible in Slovakia — for example, in a community in the Tatra mountains in the remote eastern part of the country in which I conducted field research in the summer of 2006, in which Roma had been evicted from a building in the center of a small town, and the nongovernmental organization ETP, together with the local government, were creating a housing project in a remote site outside the town center. The location, which had been identified and agreed upon by the local governments of the three adjacent municipalities, happened to be on available land at the farthest identifiable point from all three of the municipalities. The logic operating here was the same as in Kisvárdá: It was considered desirable to create as much distance as possible between Roma/Gypsies and everyone else.

As in the case of this community in Slovakia, evictions in Hungary have contributed to social exclusion of Roma in a number of ways. In Hungary, the dynamics of social exclusion in the evictions entail both pushing urban Roma/Gypsy families from Budapest into smaller rural communities where there is greater social isolation and more limited access to resources, and creating complicated ethnicized/racialized neighborhood dynamics in the communities into which they move. In the Jász region of Hungary in 2003, when I visited the community as part of a group field research project with Michael Stewart and others from his Central European University summer course on Romani Studies, there was a town in which there was strong tension and resentment about the influx of Roma/Gypsy people who had left the capital city due to evictions and had moved into dwellings in the area that had traditionally been used seasonally by ethnic Hungarians as summer cottages. The overall increase in Roma/Gypsy residents there as well as the specific “type” of Roma/Gypsies who were coming were contributors to the tensions. There had been a reasonably peaceful coexistence of ethnic Hungarians with longstanding local Roma/Gypsy residents from the Romungro subgroup, who were integrated into the community in specific subservient stations they had occupied for generations, as was common in many places across Hungary with regard to the largely assimilated Romungro Roma/Gypsy population, who spoke only Hungarian language. (American sociologist Gail Kligman observed a similar dynamic in Romania, described as a patron-client relationship by Gabriel Troc. Kligman 2001:69.) Moreover, in addition to the dimension specifically related to race, there was undoubtedly consternation among local people about the transformation of summer cottages to long-term, permanent housing. Such cottages were “normal” for summer holidays akin to camping, but “not normal” for an everyday domestic living environment. These kinds of normative evaluations reinforced racialized thinking about Roma/Gypsies and *what they were like*.

The newly relocated Roma from Budapest, who were very poor, were from the Vlax subgroup, whose members historically have had a tense relationship with the Romungros. There was immediately conflict both between the newly arrived Roma and the non-Roma but also between the longstanding Roma/Gypsy residents and the new ones. In addition to the preexisting subgroup tensions between the Romungros and the Vlax Roma, the poverty, lack of local roots, and lower degree of cultural assimilation promoted hostilities between the two groups of Roma/Gypsies. The Romungros there, who had been perceived as “our Gypsies,” were in danger of being lumped together with the newly arrived Vlax Roma and facing a deteriorated relationship with their long-term neighbors. Although the relationship was not one of equality and it did not necessarily entail much respect, it had been stable, familiar, and safe. (See chapter three also for discussion of the longstanding historical relationships between assimilated Romungros and peasants.)

greedy or predatory persons, which could also have an effect on the material conditions of their built environment — for example, whether their common cost payments will be used appropriately toward maintenance and renovation of the buildings in which they live.⁶

The social and employment discrimination Roma/Gypsies often experience reinforces the forces of impoverishment that accompany their exclusion from the ownership of desirable property that increases in value and can enrich a family over generations through inheritances and intergenerational wealth transfers. Moreover, the social capital and material wealth required to maintain or make improvements to property may not be available to persons living in poverty and in a state of social marginalization. Therefore, the geographic peripherality and shoddiness of the material/built environment of many residential areas where you find Roma/Gypsies and

⁶ I witnessed and experienced this phenomenon first-hand in the building in the VI district on Izabella utca where I was a longtime homeowner between 2000 and 2017. Corruption seemed to be at the root of the failure of the management company to maintain the building, which, besides the crumbling plaster and concrete in the common areas, also had standing water and rats in the basement. They also failed to complete long-promised renovations and improvements such as the construction of a lift (elevator). The lift had been promised as an imminent renovation sometime in the early 2000s, but it somehow never managed to be completed in the entire time I was part-owner of the building. The project was started but abandoned partway through, leaving a partially completed lift structure in place for several years.

With a high concentration of the residents who were impoverished, elderly, foreign, living with disabilities, or some combination thereof, they were limited in their capacity to organize and advocate for their own interests. The unusually high rate of common costs (*közös költség*, or flat owners' fees, that were collected from residents in most every building to pay for routine cleaning of the common areas, maintenance of the building as a whole, and any renovations) they were compelled to pay yielded minimal results. Therefore, the impoverished residents, including the mixed-race Magyar/Gypsy family upstairs, lived in a rat-infested building and walked up the worn, crumbling staircases, throughout the first twenty-five years of the postsocialist period. Meanwhile, the neighboring buildings in the neighborhood, which they walked past every day, underwent their cosmetic facelifts and infrastructure improvements. Having left in 2017, I don't know whether the lift in our building was ever completed.

The situation I have described is one that was experienced by all the residents of the building, including me. The relevance to the current discussion vis à vis Roma/Gypsies, however, is to illustrate how a situation of corruption and/or intransigence can affect the built environment and how an inability to leverage social capital and political power to intervene can leave residents who are in vulnerable positions in an unpleasant, unhealthy, and potentially dangerous environment. An inability to overcome such corruption also affects the real estate value of the property they own and thus interacts with their socioeconomic condition and structural dynamics of wealth and inequality. Because of the high levels of poverty and low levels of social capital of Roma/Gypsies, they were more vulnerable to experiencing such situations. They undoubtedly affect others in groups vulnerable for other reasons, such as those with disabilities or elders without very robust kin-based social support networks. Because Roma/Gypsies were considered undesirable neighbors, they were more likely than most (probably more than those from other vulnerable groups) to experience challenges finding their way into well maintained, well managed properties, regardless of their wealth or socioeconomic status.

other people of color is not a coincidence — nor, even, is the higher rates of certain types of crime in some of these neighborhoods, given the limited opportunities for socioeconomic advancement or even for getting by that are available to the people who are concentrated in those places. However, correlation is often mistaken for causation. The outward signs of impoverishment and the criminal behavior some people engage in often become attached to whole populations and whole neighborhoods, and they come to be seen as defining characteristics of members of that group. “Gypsy criminality” (*Cigánybűnözés*) is a trope with a long history, as I’ve touched on elsewhere (Tidrick 2010), and it has gained further traction in Hungary in the rise of right-wing nationalist politics and white supremacy in the years since the fall of state socialism.⁷

It is in the context of these social geographies, against this backdrop, interwoven with these beliefs and assumptions, that the actors in these stories are acting, that these institutions are operating. The constellation of these beliefs, assumptions, and associations is what I am referring to when I talk about *racial ideologies*.

My overarching argument is a simple one, but it has important implications for the recent evolution of Hungarian politics. I argue that in the first two decades following the collapse of the state socialist period in Central and Eastern Europe, there were multiple regimes coexisting in the country of Hungary with their own racial ideologies at work with regard to Roma/Gypsies. Influenced by geographic, linguistic, demographic, and institutional factors, as well as those of political economy, they pointed to different priorities and end-goals with regard to Roma integration. The element of Romani/Gypsy difference, or “Gypsiness,” was engaged and

⁷ I discuss the rhetoric of *Cigánybűnözés* further in chapter one.

mobilized differently as it was rhetorically constructed or performed for different audiences and in different contexts.

The centuries-old hierarchy in which Roma/Gypsiness has been coded as stigmatized was present as a factor in all these multiple regimes, but the ways in which this stigma was engaged was a core element in their divergences.

My dissertation presents snapshots of a few of these divergent racial ideological regimes operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the concept of Roma integration and the practices in a range of different institutions with Roma/Gypsies in the first three decades of the postsocialist period in Hungary as a framework for understanding racial ideologies operating in the country at the time. It is based primarily on fieldwork conducted in the summers of 2006 and 2009 and the period from July 2011 to December 2012 in the cities of Budapest and Pécs.

My overarching argument is a simple one, but it has important implications for the recent evolution of Hungarian politics. I argue that in the first two decades following the collapse of the state socialist period in Central and Eastern Europe, there were multiple regimes coexisting in the country of Hungary with their own racial ideologies at work with regard to Roma/Gypsies. Influenced by geographic, linguistic, demographic, and institutional factors, as well as those of political economy, they pointed to different priorities and end-goals with regard to Roma integration. The element of Romani/Gypsy difference, or “Gypsiness,” was engaged and mobilized differently as it was rhetorically constructed or performed for different audiences and in different contexts. The centuries-old hierarchy in which Roma/Gypsiness has been coded as stigmatized was present as a factor in all these multiple regimes, but the ways in which this stigma was engaged was a core element in their divergences. Further, in the context of the widespread project of “Roma integration,” I observed a slippage between inclusion and integration and lack of consensus about what integration entailed. Assimilation was assumed to be part of the process not only among most in the general population in Hungary, but also among many of those working in initiatives with goals of democratization, inclusion, and/or integration.

My dissertation presents snapshots of some of the divergent racial ideological regimes operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period, focusing on the institutional contexts of the University of Pécs Romology Department, a community-based Roma organization in Pécs, the Roma Poverty Housing Program of Habitat for Humanity International, and the European Capital of Culture Pécs2010 program. There are comparisons to many other institutions, to

highlight tensions, alliances, and convergences in different approaches to work with/for Roma/Gypsies and understandings of Roma integration. I utilize varied approaches, including textual analysis and autoethnography, to uncover insights into Hungarian sociocultural dynamics of the time and understandings of difference and how these interrelate with different contemporary institutional practices with Roma/Gypsies. I discuss many factors affecting the divergences in approach, including (1) the distinctive social geographies of Pécs and Budapest, and (2) the foundations of “indigenous” Hungarian institutions versus “international” organizations coexisting in Hungary in the early postsocialist period.

The rise of “illiberalism” in Hungary and the increasingly exclusionary model of the Hungarian nation that has been becoming hegemonic during the third decade of the state socialist period create an increasingly hostile backdrop for engagement with stigmatized minorities, including Roma/Gypsies. I analyze Roma- and Gypsy-related projects and processes in these institutions in relation to the evolving political landscape and explore their interaction.

I conclude with a typology of Roma programs that were operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period, which offers a synthetic analysis of models of institutional practices with Roma/Gypsies in this period from the standpoint of interventions and their implicit theories of change.

INTRODUCTION

A Village in the Mátras

I arrived at my destination, a village in Hungary's Mátra mountains, rather confused about my anticipated role for the coming week. It was summer 2012, and I had responded to the local mayor's recruitment call, circulated several weeks before by a member of an email listserve on Roma ("Gypsy") themes. The village mayor was "looking for researchers in social sciences who would document their initiative in Roma and non-Roma cohabitation." She was offering an opportunity to participate "actively or as an observer" in "a language learning exchange week where volunteers could teach European languages to locals and locals would teach them Lovari."⁸ The colorful brochures attached to the message, produced in Hungarian as well as an awkward English translation, briefly described the model of "opportunity creation"⁹ taking place in the village and the nature of the problems faced by the "uneducated Gypsy people" "living in difficult circumstances" who constituted nearly half the population of the village.¹⁰

The project fell squarely in the domain of my ethnographic research on the topic of Roma integration and institutional practices with Roma/Gypsies in Hungary. I immediately responded with an email inquiry to the mayor, delighted to be presented so seamlessly with another Roma

⁸ From English-language email circulated on Roma-themed listserve by Roma woman in international institution in Hungary, summarizing the mayor's project in what appeared to be her own words. Lovari is a commonly spoken dialect of Romani language in Hungary, frequently used by non-Roma as the term to refer to Romani language without recognition that it represents one variant of a language with diverse dialects. I discuss Romani language in more detail beginning in footnote 12 of this chapter and throughout chapters one and two.

⁹ "Opportunity creation," the term included in the English language brochure, is their own translation of the original Hungarian, "*Esélyteremtés*."

¹⁰ Except where noted, quotes from programs are English translations by the present author from the original Hungarian language.

program to include in my dissertation research. Oftentimes I had to seek out initiatives that communities or organizations were doing in the area of Roma integration or other identified issues pertaining to Roma/Gypsies in the area. This mayor was self-consciously advertising the project in English to foreigners.

Upon receiving the mayor's email response to my message, I eagerly accepted the offer she extended for me to participate in the summer language camp as a volunteer English teacher. However, as I stepped off the public bus from Budapest a few weeks later at the side of the highway that divided the Gypsy and non-Gypsy quarters of the village, I still had a vague understanding of the format of the language instruction from our email correspondence. Although she'd sent more colorful, cheerful flyers giving more information, including identifying the daily themes for the week — Animals Day on Monday, Plants on Tuesday, Creative Day on Wednesday, Movement and Communication on Thursday and Friday, respectively — I wasn't clear on how the language study would be built around these activities. I also didn't know what my role was to be in building the connection between these themes and English language lessons or how the daily schedule would be structured to accomplish that. I did know with certainty that I was welcome, I would have free room and board, my dog could accompany me, and I was being offered an opportunity to become familiar with a rural Roma/Gypsy integration program the local government was eager to promote and publicize. Though I didn't know for sure, I imagined there would be other foreigners participating as instructors in the language camp and that there might be other outsiders there to conduct research or observations on the social initiatives in the village.

As was typical in rural areas in Hungary, although there was a bus that came to this remote spot from the capital, there wasn't much in the way of signage to indicate what was

located where once you got there. I tentatively followed a friendly-looking pair of young people across the highway. Like me, they had travelled with backpacks on the bus from Budapest. They gave the impression of being urban people, outsiders to the community, but they seemed confident in where they were headed. (As I discovered later, we were going to the non-Gypsy side of the village; all but one of the Roma/Gypsy families lived on the other side of the highway). We began talking as we walked into the village. I learned that they were “social architects” who lived in the capital and that this was a familiar route for them, since they’d been involved in work in the village for some time. They had stayed more than once in a house owned by the municipal government that was used for accommodating outsiders during their visits to the village. In fact, as I soon learned, we would be happily cohabiting the little house for the next few days, together with another woman who was a friend of theirs from Budapest. In the evenings, as we talked, drank wine, and played music together around the kitchen table with Barnabas on guitar, I learned about the social dynamics of the village from their perspective and about their own history with the place.

Early in their careers, Barnabas and Lilla were working to establish themselves in a field of community-driven development of the built environment, and their work in this municipality followed this model from their professional field. For some months, they been building relationships with the local government and the village residents to collaborate in the rehabilitation of old buildings in the village to meet community-defined needs. Over my several days there, I observed and benefitted from the cordial relationships these Budapest-based ethnic Magyars had cultivated with those in the village, both Roma and non-Roma, children and adults. Young and unassuming — Barnabas with his floppy, longish hair, Lilla with her Pipi Longstocking—style braids, one on either side of her head — their professional ambitions were

grounded in a genuine desire to help people and contribute to a more equitable world with rights and opportunities available to all, including the impoverished Roma to whom they introduced me in the village.

A couple of days after we arrived, there was a birthday celebration of the primary Roma/Gypsy leader in the village. Lilla and Barnabas were there alongside the Roma, participating in the festivities, for at least an hour, whereas the ethnic Magyar mayor drove across the highway to make an appearance for just a few minutes. The perception of risk attached to this side of the highway was so strong, the locals insisted against my protests that my recently adopted street mutt stay behind in the yard in which we were staying. The dogs on the other side were mean, they told me, and not to be trusted. Much amusement ensued later when Juju broke free and was searching for me through every street on the white side of the village until someone finally brought her on leash to the party. She encountered no problems with the local dogs there and was very happy to join the festive atmosphere. By then, we were singing songs the village Roma all knew, to the accompaniment of one of the local Roma men on guitar, as we stood outside in a large group.

One of the Roma boys snapped photographs of the celebration with Lilla's expensive DSLR camera she'd let him borrow. We posed for a few shots with the children in front of the run-down building that had been designated as the site for their first project. Not long after, someone eagerly posted the photos to Facebook to be viewed by everyone, including by the village kids on the couple of computers in the community center. There was a social life in which Barnabas and Lilla were actively engaged in the village, into which I was also swept up upon arrival, with playful engagement with children, alternately amusing and annoying attempts at

matchmaking for Lilla and me, and sympathetic discussion with local adults about their lives and experiences.

As for the language camp, meeting the mayor that first day and learning more about the camp did little to alleviate my confusion about the language instruction. Despite being an experienced English teacher, I was still puzzled how I was expected to weave the lessons into the various activities such as nature hikes, crafts, and physical education. In the days that followed, the monolingual activities undertaken throughout the day in Hungarian, with groups divided only by age, offered few opportunities to provide language training to youth with little to no English language experience. The Hungarian girls who were apparently tasked with inserting bits of Spanish- and German-language training into the activities, were apparently following the same guidelines of teaching the children a few words occasionally during the course of the day, though I didn't see this happen too much from my observations. They did not seem to achieve much more success boosting the foreign language abilities of the children, whose parents from the village paid 1000 Hungarian forints per day toward a language camp that had advertised division of the participants according to chosen foreign language and level and indicated that activities would be conducted using the languages being studied.¹¹

Though it was a poorly conceived plan, the learning of English, Spanish, and German was clearly intended to be built into the day as an integral aspect of the activities undertaken by the whole group. Romani language (or "Lovari" as they called it), however, was an activity that was allotted its own time slot in this Roma-integration themed language camp. We gathered every afternoon in a makeshift classroom area utilizing the covered outdoor eating area, where

¹¹ While the amount was very small by Western standards, this was in a context of limited economic opportunities and high unemployment. The point is also about the value offered for the cost and the divergence between the originally advertised program and how it was implemented.

we sat at picnic tables facing a whiteboard, following the lessons in grammar and lexicon offered by a young Hungarian Roma man trained as a Romani language instructor. The handful of us who attended his lectures, mainly comprising foreign visitors and the mayor's daughters, were the ones who opted to stay rather than going for a museum tour, a rock-climbing adventure, and other outings offered as "alternatives" to the Romani language class. After completing a grammar-heavy language exam to test our knowledge from several days of instruction and study, we were rewarded for our participation in this special class with official certificates of completion. In this way, Romani language instruction was differentiated — sectioned out and segregated from the day's activities and designated as an area of special expertise that was to be certified. Along with us foreigners who participated, obviously, the mayor's daughters also received this distinction.

In this "language learning week where volunteers could teach European languages to locals and locals would teach them Lovari," Romani language seemed to be given a different status than the world languages that were advertised as choices for camp attendees and integrated into the day's activities. Besides through the segmentation of Roma-themed activities from the rest of the camp content, the differential status and marginality of Romani language was also furthered by its exoticization in the program materials. Although linguists categorize it squarely as an Indo-European language, the brochures semantically designated "Lovari" as non-European. (And, indeed, perhaps not as a language at all.)¹² Another puzzling aspect that emerged later was

¹² Romani language is an Indo-European language with strong Indic roots. It is informally described as being like an onion by the prominent Romani linguist Ian Hancock, with its many layers reflecting cultural contact and linguistic borrowings from the many groups into which Roma and their ancestors came into contact from their origins on the Indian subcontinent. The foundational base of the language is proto-Sanskrit, a substantial component of its grammar is derived from Byzantine Greek, and it has lexical borrowings that provide clues to the migrations of modern-day Roma/Gypsy peoples' ancestors. There is lexicon in every dialect of Romani that comes from many different languages that reflect cultural contact over generations of ancestors of Roma during their migrations across the Indian subcontinent, through the Balkans, and into Central Europe — and beyond, in the case of some dialects of

that the Romani language instructor was a professional hired from outside the community, not a “local” at all. The mayor told me during the week that, in fact, there were no locals who actually spoke Romani language.

However, when I successfully communicated in Romani language with a local Rom outside the village bar, it became clear to me that the mayor either was totally ignorant about the cultural characteristics of the Roma in the village who comprised half of (and were the primary target of) this “project in cohabitation” — or she had opted to bring in a professional to teach classes because the Romani-speaking Roma from the village were not considered to be appropriate persons to exchange language with foreigners. Given that the mayor had explicitly reiterated to me in another email six weeks before the camp that the “unusual Gypsy language instruction” would be provided by the “local inhabitants” (“*rendhagyó cigány nyelv oktatást tartanának a helyi lakosok a nyelvtanároknak*”), I suspected it to be the latter.

No doubt, the university-educated professional language instructor gave a different overall impression from the local fellow I encountered on the stoop outside the local bar. Charming, young, and ambitious, Imre had completed his university education in the Romology department at the University of Pécs. There, his personal ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage

the language. Lovari was by far the most common dialect of the language spoken in Hungary, although there were some speakers of the Karpathian dialect, a couple of whom I met in Pécs (and on one occasion, I saw some Kalderash in Budapest, who speak their own distinct dialect). The existence of Karpathian speakers of Romani from the Romungro group was essentially unknown to many people, even within the field of Romani Studies: I was very surprised to learn that the woman was Romungro and had Romani speakers in her family, because I had heard so many times a general “rule” that Romungros in Hungary were monolingual in Hungarian and only members of the Vlach subgroup in Hungary spoke Romani.

It was quite common to refer to Romani language as “Lovari” in Hungary, though this was a misnomer that reflected widespread ignorance of Romani dialectical variation. Perhaps it was because it was the only well-known dialect of Romani, and most non-Roma were very ignorant about details of Romani cultural characteristics. However, referring to Romani as “Lovari” sometimes may also have indicated a dismissive attitude toward assembled words that did not apparently constitute a “real language” — and a very common belief that Romani language did not employ grammatical rules. These attitudes and beliefs can be seen in several ethnographic cases I present in this text.

as a member of the Roma/Gypsy minority in Hungary was fortified with formal education and multidisciplinary training about Roma/Gypsies in Hungary, advanced Romani language study, and teacher training. For Imre, too, like Lilla and Barnabas, coming to the village to do his professional work entailed a personal opportunity on some level but also reflected a commitment to personal values they saw in some way aligned with the village's initiative. In Imre's case, by teaching Romani classes in a rural language camp, he was promoting Romani language revitalization and the public recognition and circulation of Roma/Gypsy culture throughout the country. However, by employing a non-local in a camp that purported to be about language exchange between locals and foreigners, the local government made a statement about their estimation of the local Roma. The indigenous knowledge of local Roma about their own language and cultural traditions was in a sense devalued, the local Roma not considered to be adequate culture bearers for the project.

Meanwhile, a camp that initially appeared to be related to the "initiative of Roma and non-Roma cohabitation" turned out to fail at one of its primary goals of bringing together Roma and non-Roma children. The organizers had emphasized in discussions with me that it was intended as an integrated camp for Roma and non-Roma children. The graphic that appeared on the camp flyer included a cartwheeling, smiling brown stick-figure girl with the two other smiling white stick-figure children with the slogan "Play, Learn, and Grow ... Together!"



Figure 1. Image from flier for Roma/non-Roma children's camp in the Mátra mountains, summer 2012.

Yet rumor had it that the ethnic Magyar parents threatened to pull their children from the camp when they heard that impoverished Roma children would be in attendance, and the last-minute compromise allowed for just a few children from the more accepted Roma families to participate with their non-Roma peers. Whatever the specifics of the negotiation, the observable outcome was that the majority of the campers were white ethnic Magyars in a village in which the majority of the children are Roma.¹³

Some of the Roma children who were not involved in the camp lingered around the edges of the picnic area on some of the days when we were studying. I suspected that the group of foreigners gathered at the picnic tables outside the municipal buildings of their village, attending a formal language class with lectures in front of a whiteboard, seemed pretty strange for them. To the great apparent discomfort of the young Romani language pedagogue, a few of the Roma boys came to play nearby one afternoon and unleash a string of curse words (in Hungarian) within earshot.¹⁴ The little Roma girls who came around the outdoor classroom one day were very energetic, and their rapid movement to and fro had the potential to interfere with the studious atmosphere of the Romani grammar lesson. They were eager to engage and talk with us, though they did not exhibit much interest in the Romani words Imre was writing on the

¹³ A youth-heavy demographic population structure with a larger proportion of Roma/Gypsy children versus non-Gypsy children was common in villages in Hungary, where there was a somewhat higher birthrate among Roma/Gypsies than among non-Roma/non-Gypsies. This demographic trend was the subject of a great deal of attention, anxiety, and politicization in Hungary, as I discuss at greater length in chapter one.

¹⁴ I thought about this situation later, in another instance in which another young, university-educated Roma/Gypsy man encountered uneducated Roma behaving in conspicuously undesirable ways in public settings, in the presence of foreigners, with behaviors that conformed to negative stereotypes about Roma/Gypsies. The other young man, too, looked visibly uncomfortable when we were walking through the pedestrian area of downtown Pécs at night and we ended up with a drunken, rowdy pair of Vlax Roma behind us loudly speaking in Romani language and behaving in a vulgar fashion. This instance entailed one of only two situations in which I encountered Romani language being used in a public space in the city in Pécs. From my observation in the early postsocialist period (i.e. the first three decades following the end of the state socialist period), Romani language was very rare to encounter in public spaces in central Budapest as well, at least within earshot of someone who could observe it. It may have been different in the farther geographic outreaches of both cities, in which Roma/Gypsies represented a larger percentage of the population, but I did not conduct observation in those areas.

whiteboard and explaining to us in English. However, when I presented the girls with the language learning materials I had generated through my conversations with the village children, with images of some of their favorite identified activities eliciting English lexicon that designated them, the girls eagerly and excitedly were rustling, writing on, and discussing the pages.

Through our nonverbal communication with one another, I thought that Imre seemed to understand intuitively my desire to include the village girls in the space. He may or may not have recognized the importance I saw in bringing them across the threshold into contact with a language that was part of their own heritage, even if the lesson was not targeted toward them. He accepted my whispered side lesson with them with a charmed smile as he continued to teach, in spite of their ongoing active movement and my need to shush them periodically to keep them from disrupting the Romani lesson he was still presenting. I was modeling inclusive, student-driven, diversity-supportive pedagogy and creating a bridge for their presence and medium for their participation in the social atmosphere of our classroom, which, apart from our instructor, an exclusively non-Roma space.¹⁵

Whether or not he discerned my own intention with regard to Roma inclusion specifically, Imre saw that the girls were actively engaged in a constructive and educational project. He seemed relieved and appreciative that their somewhat boisterous energy was being

¹⁵ Given his previous involvement in the Romology department at the University of Pécs, Imre may very well have been part of educational projects with those characteristics, and I don't mean to suggest otherwise here. The contrast to be drawn here is with the class as it was structured in this village, and it was the local powerbrokers who had set the terms of how it would be undertaken. The Romology department has a high degree of community engagement through different initiatives in which many of the faculty are involved, including village language revitalization programs supporting youth empowerment through building a connection with their cultural heritage as Roma/Gypsies. Further, Aranka Varga (one of the professors) is involved in research on inclusive pedagogy, and this is the orientation of the department as a whole in terms of how it recruits and supports students. I discuss these projects and the department as a whole in detail in chapter two.

harnessed and their curiosity engaged, without their being shunned or turned away. The reason they were lingering at the margins of the classroom in the first place, after all, was that they hadn't been allowed to go spelunking or whatever the identified activity was for the children at the camp that day. The sentiments of the anti-Gypsy ethnic Magyar parents had been privileged over the need for constructive activities for social and developmental growth for these children — which, through shared experience with non-Gypsy children, would have helped promote the Roma integration that was touted as a priority, and the rhetoric of which was the basis for external funding they were receiving for their various social programs.

The camp was just one of many indicators of the general attitude toward Roma in a place where “cohabitation” was actively stressed as a value and a project to be pursued. For example, at one point in the week, as we were searching together for a lost kitten through the streets on the white side of the village, one of the Roma/Gypsy girls lamented that when they came here, if they stopped at one of the houses and asked for water, they were turned away by the villagers. Water would undoubtedly have been available in the community center itself, but I was not aware of any other communal resources like water fountains for obtaining drinking water.

As I learned through discussions with locals, one of the village employment initiatives, for Roma women in the village to prepare the popular traditional Hungarian pastry *kalács* for the frequent tourists to the region, had failed miserably because the ethnic Magyars who came to visit did not want to consume food prepared by Gypsies. This represented a widespread pollution taboo that I encountered in other instances in Hungary (e.g., see preface).¹⁶ The program brochures were also revealing in the ways they framed the village's problems.

¹⁶ Obviously, racially based pollution taboos have been observable elsewhere in the world in different cultural contexts at different times. One example is the segregated drinking fountains for whites and blacks that existed in

The majority of the residents lack self-respect, self-confidence, and a very important thing: a sense of togetherness. This must be given back to them. In the place of the feeling of defenselessness, the desire for learning and instinct for self-preservation must be awakened in them. It is necessary to give not only work, but also the love of work!

Although the brochure did not explicitly say that these characteristics applied exclusively to Gypsies, this description immediately followed the reference to the “uneducated Gypsy people” in the previous paragraph, suggesting that it was the majority of *those* residents who lacked a desire for work and learning and a sense of self-respect. The village program thus reproduced the very popular Gypsy stereotype of “work-shy” persons that has been widespread and longstanding in Hungary and internationally.¹⁷

the South in the United States prior to the Civil Rights Movement. These taboos often demonstrate an interesting flexibility. For example, At UC Santa Cruz, Bettina Apteker relayed a powerful story from Angela Davis about experience of growing consciousness and commitment to protest as she became educated, and a time when she returned to her home in the South to visit while she was in college. She knew the local rules, by which as a Black woman, she was required to go to the back of the shoe store in order to purchase her shoes, and it was not allowed for her to try them on prior to purchasing them. On this occasion, however, she and a friend dressed in their most elegant clothes and walked right through the entrance of the store, speaking French and playing the part of wealthy women from France, presumably with family origins in the French colonies. The staff doted on them as they tried on pair after pair of shoes until they finally stood up and said in their perfect, locally accented English that they wouldn't be buying any shoes there, and walked out.

The malleability of racial taboos was something I also witnessed at moments in the field in Hungary. On one occasion in around 2005, I walked into a pizza restaurant in the trendy area of Ráday utca in Budapest's IX district (Ferencváros) and was seated and had a meal with a friend who was visiting from Toronto, who is Romani. I knew very well that the place practiced racial discrimination in their service. They would not seat two other friends of mine on the couple of occasions they had tried to go there, but rather kept them waiting indefinitely in spite of tables being open. They were African-American and Black British. Local Roma/Gypsies were also barred from eating there. There were no nasty written signs or verbal abuse, but for these Black men, the staff simply never allowed them access into the dining area.

In this way, the boundaries were enforced differently in Budapest than they can be in other contexts in the broader Central European region. In the documentary film *The Gypsies of Svinia*, which I discuss later in the manuscript, the local Roma are yelled at when they try to enter a shop in Svinia, Slovakia, near the city of Prešov, in the late 1990s, and anthropologist David Scheffel reports that this is typical of the treatment they receive there. In a village in the same region, Roma told me in 2006 that they were told to leave when they entered the town hall that was the seat of the local government. (For more reflection on race- and ethnicity-based gatekeeping, see chapter three.)

¹⁷ The prevalence of this perception during the period of my fieldwork (2011-2012) was also reflected in the Hungarian government's revamped public works (*közmunka*) program in 2011, reducing unemployment benefits to three months and creating a labor obligation in public works in order to maintain social benefits. It was “extensively criticized” in Hungary “as a measure targeting Roma” (Dunajeva 2018:357, citing Matkovich 2011 and Roma Sajtóközpont 2012). For example, in his article “Public work as discipline” (“*A közmunka mint fegyelmezés*”), Balázs Berkovits described the *közmunka* program as a disciplining tool that reflected the belief that “Gypsies don't want to work” (“*cigányok nem akarnak dolgozni*”) and quoted Prime Minister Viktor Orbán as saying, “*mindenkinek*

From what I saw in the village, however, there was plenty of interest in learning and work. The excitement of the little girls in taking up the English study demonstrated how eager and curious they were to learn new things if presented in a fashion to which they could relate. And many of the Roma/Gypsy adults demonstrated pride and dedication in the work they were doing.

After the Romani lessons one afternoon, I ducked into a small workshop area to speak to two Roma women who were responsible for a ceramics project as part of the initiative. They were tasked with forming, firing, and painting matching clay placards to display the house numbers throughout the village according to two folk-inspired designs. The beauty of their work demonstrated painstaking attention to the detail. They humbly accepted my praise as they showed me around the workshop, but the pride they obviously took in the quality of their craft glimmered in their eyes. The decorative potted plants that lined the streets of the village – on the “right” side of the highway – were another attractive product of their labor. As these women

dolgoznia kell, nem lehet elbújni a munka elől, hogy segélyből éljenek” (Berkovits 2011). The mostly Roma groups of workers in reflective mesh vests of neon yellow could be seen around the streets engaged in manual labor throughout my fieldwork. Orbán’s administration had rolled out the program based on the model that had first been created by the right-wing government in Gyöngyöspata, a community that has been a center of major racial controversy, with Roma/Gypsies experiencing ethnic profiling by the police and harassment for two months in 2011 by right-wing vigilantes.

Michael Stewart’s work from the late 1990s and Berkovits’s commentary on the *közmunka* program both point to distinction between the traditional work of Roma/Gypsies, who often have engaged in economic activities in the grey- or black-market sectors of trade and sales, and controlled labor in factories or public works, and the ways the latter have been delegitimized in mainstream Hungarian ideology both during the state socialist period and more recently. Berkovits notes that the requirements of a person to be involved in the *közmunka* program eliminates their ability to engage in the other economic activities that generate profits for many Roma/Gypsies, such as gathering and recycling items disposed of by others: “It created a new, feudal order of ‘discipline,’ while preventing the Gypsies from securing their subsistence through the often ‘black labor’ of the Gypsies” (*létrehozta a „fegyelmzés” új, feudális rendjét, miközben megakadályozta, hogy a cigányok elemi létfenntartásukat biztosíthassák a legtöbbször feketén végzett „cigánymunkák” révén*) (Berkovits 2011). Stewart observes that “in many ways the Communist doctrine that labor was the sole legitimate source of value and that the profits of ‘trade’ and ‘commerce’ were morally illegitimate reproduced ideas that were already current among the masses of Hungarians” (Stewart 1997:6-7). Stewart also points to the identification of Roma/Gypsies as “social parasites” and “work-shy” as a justification by the Nazis for the Roma/Gypsy genocide (1997; 2007:266; 2010).

undertook each craft with loving care, other Roma men and women maintained a small food garden and farm.

The women from another Roma family in the village cooked to order delicious stews in giant pots over a stove that looked close to a hundred years old, to feed visitors and laborers in the village in an arrangement organized by the local government. The kitchen in which they cooked was so cramped it hardly could fit three bodies standing in place, and so hot from their cooking in the summer weather that I could only last a moment before I had to catch my breath outside. Yet they eagerly took on any order given to them by the municipal government, since it provided much-needed income and reinforced their status in the community. The enjoyment that we all took from their food made them proud of their skill as cooks. This pride was no doubt enhanced by the fact that it demonstrated their privileged position in the village that food from their hands was consumed by non-Roma. Their family had made a rare accomplishment for the village; they lived on the side of the highway where the non-Roma lived, on a road with non-Roma neighbors.

To commemorate the close of our arranged visit to the village (we handful of interested foreigners and ethnic Hungarians from the capital), we visitors were treated to a special celebratory meal prepared in that blazingly hot little kitchen by these industrious Roma/Gypsy women. They posed together with the mayor and us outside visitors in a couple of final photos to mark the occasion, and these images too were swiftly uploaded to Facebook and emailed to me by the mayor.

In my few days in the community in the Mátras, I saw many things crystalized that I had observed in other places in Hungary: roles that individuals played, characteristics of programs and interventions, and community dynamics. The village mayor; Imre; the white villagers; the

Roma/Gypsy villagers in the communal kitchens, workshops, and gardens; the boisterous Roma/Gypsy children; Lilla and Barnabas; and I myself all played parts that I came to realize followed a pattern with a particular political economy. The mayor held the part of the *power broker*, tapping into social networks and institutional infrastructures, strategically engaging discourses to gain access to resources through these institutional and social networks. Having secured such resources, she was positioned to distribute them in a fashion that would maintain, disrupt, or reinforce power hierarchies within the social context in which she was operating.

Imre played a *culture broker*, someone who (usually) emerged from the Roma/Gypsy community and often (as in his case), shored up that personal background with formal education that confirmed and reinforced his expertise, and played the role of mediating and translating between the cultural contexts of Roma/Gypsies and that of the ethnic Magyar majority and other non-Roma. Part teacher, part ambassador, the culture broker navigated the institutional frameworks and social networks in both worlds and negotiated between them. This role provided a certain prestige and position of relatively enhanced political power and social capital. It also offered economic/employment opportunities — for Imre and many others as a teacher, but many others also found jobs as employees in government, social services, or nonprofit organizations, in which they exercised their roles as *culture brokers*. But the role also came at a certain cost of isolation and potential marginalization within both communities in inhabiting the complex and seemingly (according to commonsense principles) paradoxical station of an “educated Gypsy,” of both worlds in some ways, of neither in others, constantly facing the possibility of being shamed or excluded in both of them.

The white villagers, with their houses decorated with hand-painted house numbers, their streets graced with handmade planters, with easy access on their side of the highway to the

village community center with computers and other resources, and with no barriers to their children's participation in school and community activities like the language camp, enjoyed the various privileges that were afforded them as *citizens*.

The Roma/Gypsies of the community, as stigmatized Others, held a role as *subjects* with a more limited framework in which to exercise agency, through assimilation or resistance. They could embrace the opportunities provided through the resources allocated to them by the *power broker(s)*, that allowed them to work in the kitchens, workshops, and gardens, and in faithfully playing their part, enjoy the degree of acceptance that performance of virtue (in mainstream cultural terms) might earn them: entrance into the neighborhood on the white side of the village, inclusion in the camps and schools, a modest income, and praise for their labor and its products.¹⁸ There was alienation from that labor, however — they crossed the highway to get to the workshop and left the painted tiles there when they returned to their own side of the village. Or they could misbehave, like the little boys swearing next to us during the Romani language class, and exercise resistance to the hierarchical system that placed them outside the camp and outside the classroom.

Finally, there were Barnabas and Lilla, the *benevolent outsiders*, who came with good intentions to help the Roma/Gypsies in the community. They had their own potential for gain of professional advancement through their engagement in the projects in which they became involved, but they were also motivated to initiate change to create a more equitable, less discriminatory situation for those experiencing marginalization. I played the *observer* and the

¹⁸ In Kristóf Szombati's outstanding recent text, he discusses similar dynamics of Roma/Gypsy social mobility in the village of Gyöngyöspata. He writes, "By offering 'adaptable' [Gypsy] families the prospect of crossing the invisible ethnic-cum-class boundary, local power-holders had created a powerful tool for disciplining [Gypsy] settlement-dwellers. The latter were given a viable strategy for escaping exclusion: playing the 'worthy' ('deserving,' 'hard-working,' 'tidy,' 'normal') family better than others" (Szombati 2018:65).

documentarian as well as the *benevolent outsider*. The categories or roles were neither mutually exclusive nor static.

There was also potential in the political economy for there to be someone playing the part of a *disruptor*, who challenged the hierarchical structure that leaves Roma/Gypsies perpetually in an inferior political position. The *benevolent outsiders* often seemed to aspire to occupy this role, but it was also often unclear what strategies would be effective to accomplish that kind of change, and there was always a personal risk in attempting to effect it. One could be shunned, one's livelihood could be put in jeopardy, the resources one had access to could be withdrawn. As the political environment has evolved in Hungary in the context of the illiberal democracy, these risks became even more real, and fears about personal safety compounded them.

Key Research Questions

I had entered “the field” for eighteen months of ethnographic research for my dissertation in summer 2011, a year before my visit to this program in the Mátra mountains, asking the following questions: *How do racial ideologies and perceptions of ethnic distinction mediate everyday practices in postsocialist institutions? What are the impacts (if any) of cross-cultural staff training and the ethnic diversity of staff on these practices? And, what do institutional actors' conceptions of culturally competent practice and their evaluation of cultural distinction reveal about how the social integration of minorities is being implemented?*

These questions had emerged out of many years of living intermittently in postsocialist Hungary, traveling, working, studying, and conducting research, since 1998. I had seen a puzzling contradiction at work during that time: on the one hand, a proliferation of institutions and programs dedicated to Roma/Gypsy issues, and seemingly constant talk in media about so-

called Roma integration — and on the other, a remarkable persistence of many of the same features of Roma/Gypsy peoples’ social conditions: high rates of unemployment and poverty, highly disproportionate representation in the category of extreme poverty, very low levels of higher education and generally low levels of educational attainment, disproportionate representation in the child welfare system and in classes for children with mental handicaps, and a staggering ten-year difference in life expectancy. This contradiction led me to dig deeper into the idea of Roma integration beginning in 2003, looking at various ways it was understood by different actors involved in state- and non-state institutions, and exploring what exactly they perceived to be the “Gypsy problem” and its remedy.

Out of this initial research undertaken as a master’s student at University of Texas at Austin, I became increasingly interested in the importance of institutions and programs. Individuals held beliefs and carried perceptions of apparent problems and solutions, but they acted in specific contexts that both mediated and also rendered a different significance to their attitudes. A program, meanwhile, in representing a formalized strategy or solution to address one or more identified problems, offered a lens through which to understand key elements of the worldview of its creators. The problem formulation that underlies the program is always culturally mediated, the program always conceptualized and implemented within social contexts in which ideologies (racial and otherwise) are operating. The program represented a space in which ideological constructs were *operationalized*, where they were articulated in a different, tangible form that when implemented could have real-life consequences for individuals and groups — like other forms of practice do (outside the context of specific programs).

Institutions crucially shape the lives of Romani persons worldwide, wherever they live — in the ways they are educated and disciplined in schools, assessed and treated in the health care

and social welfare systems, and evaluated in the law enforcement and criminal justice systems.¹⁹ Research on Roma frequently references the importance of institutions in determining fundamental life-or-death issues such as whether they may keep their children (Stewart 1997); what work they are allowed to do (Stewart 1997; Sutherland 1975:4); where they live, what resources they may access in their neighborhoods (Okely 1983:23; Gay y Blasco 1999:9-10); which children study in classes for the mentally disabled; and whether and under what conditions Roma receive medical treatment. Yet at the time I began my research, institutional actors had not been the object of study in published ethnographic work about Roma.²⁰

Because institutional actors often exercise state authority, interactions with them can have very high stakes. Qualitative research on state policy and procedure in Hungary demonstrates the profound impact of Roma social marginalization on state bureaucratic processes, for example in their consistently negative assessments in child welfare (Haney 2002) and their total exclusion from Communist land reform (Lampland 1995). What remained inadequately explored in the literature, however, was the racial ideologies at work in encounters with Roma and how workers' subjectivities influenced the ways these ideologies were operationalized in everyday institutional practice. Perceptions of Romani distinction influence the relationship between Romani clients

¹⁹ While the largest populations of Roma/Gypsies are concentrated in the area of Central and Eastern Europe, there are Romani people on every continent, with a presence in many of the countries of continental Western Europe, approximately one million Roma/Gypsies in the United States (Hancock 2010:128), a notable population of Gypsies and Travellers in the United Kingdom, and a presence in many places in South America and Australia.

Discrimination, stigma, stereotyping, and racial profiling are common problems for Roma/Gypsies worldwide, but the specific issues that they face in institutions are somewhat localized and specific to the cultural context and the cultural features of the group(s) present in a specific area. In some places, as in Hungary, like Spain, France, and Russia, there is a Roma/Gypsy minority with a long-standing presence and connection with the local environment as well as a localized mythology or romantic image in popular culture. Migration of Roma/Gypsy persons, like that of any other group moving for economic, social, or other push- and pull-factors, is also a part of the picture, and this has been an important political issue within the European Union ever since the fall of state socialism. Institutional relationships with these Roma/Gypsy persons, whether they are new arrivals or their families have long-standing roots in a given community, are important in shaping their opportunities and everyday experiences wherever they live, and there is academic literature and documentary film on these dynamics in many communities, including (but not limited to) places in Central/Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

²⁰ I discuss the content that *has* been covered in ethnographic work about Roma in this region later in this chapter.

and Magyar health care workers, as Neményi's interview-based study (1998) demonstrated, but their specific manifestations in everyday interactions — and how staff training may transform those relationships — had not been studied.

The extraordinary number of so-called Roma programs added another element to the landscape. Programs are created by institutional actors and realized in the context of specific institutions. They offer a valuable lens through which to understand racial ideologies, both in the elements comprising the programs (reflecting the problem formulation) and their implementation. They offer insights from the standpoint of *discourses* about Roma/Gypsies— and also through *other practices*. *Discourses* are evident in the ways Roma/Gypsies are described, the ways the boundaries of the group are defined explicitly and implicitly through speech, and the differences that are socially constructed discursively, both within the text of the foundational program documents themselves (grant proposals, brochures, pamphlets, etc) and also in the everyday talk by actors implementing the programs. The *other practices*, too, were legible, and could be accessed and analyzed, both through the text of the program documents describing the program elements and intended activities to be undertaken, and also through everyday practices of actors implementing the programs: what they did, where they did it, who they did it with, how they did it, and so on.

These choices were defined and constrained partly by the programs and the institutions -- funding was made available for activities in particular areas, and organizations had their own specific domains of focus, e.g. in education, health, or the arts; geographic reach; and target populations; as well as their own policies, procedures, and institutional “culture” that defined certain guidelines for staff behavior. Beyond these program- and organization-level constraints, there were the more subtle culturally defined parameters of *what one does and does not do* – a

more Foucauldian sense of the normal, the internalized sense every human carries of what is right and wrong, what the world and society are like, and what they ought to be like. The latter domain was what particularly drove my research – trying to understand how the “Gypsy problem” fit into a moral landscape for the actors engaging with it in their work, how that was translated into practices in institutions, and what subjectivities that created or allowed for Roma/Gypsy persons who came into contact with or were subject to the rules and decisions of those institutions and their actors.

My impression, based on my lived experience over many years in Hungary, was that for many people there, Roma/Gypsy people (or at least most of them, the ones who *acted* like Roma/Gypsies from a mainstream perspective) represented a kind of absolute limit to “the normal.” I had heard so many times in subtle variations the same basic idea from Hungarians, that Gypsies were an exception to the rules of what people were like, and what they deserved to have. Otherwise liberal-minded friends in Budapest in the late 1990s said things about Roma/Gypsies that shocked me with the force of their prejudice and extreme dislike. Many times, I heard the same refrain, that “you don’t understand *what they are like*.” And this, this category of designation that was known apparently to all of them, but unknown to me as an outsider, was a fascinating territory of boundary-making: we (non-Roma/non-Gypsy Europeans), you (American), and them (Roma/Gypsies).

And this boundary-making and construction of *what they are like* is at the core of what I wanted to understand, what I came to explore through the study of institutions and institutional practices. The overall opinion of Roma/Gypsies is very poor among the general population in contemporary Hungary, as in other parts of contemporary Europe, as many previous studies have shown. (As a related issue, knowledge about Roma people beyond stereotypy is often very

limited.) During my ethnographic fieldwork, I was struck by how frequently I heard diverse individuals tell stories describing misbehavior on the part of one or two persons of Romani origin that were intended to serve as metonyms for all Roma people and their values and behavior. Whether it was a taxi driver describing Hungary's "Gypsy problem" and issues with "Gypsy crime" in terms of the behavior of one group of passengers he overheard planning thefts, or an assistant videographer describing the "uncultured" and "uncivilized" way a child behaved at a Roma birthday party where she worked, the bad behavior of any single Roma person was subject to generalization across the whole ethnic group by an outsider. Not only that, but the example of bad behavior was held as evidence in a kind of testimony of what Gypsies actually were like — evidence of a reality they were privy to as Hungarian insiders that I obviously could not see as an outsider.

Racial Ideologies and Roma Integration

These logics of testimony about deviance were at the core of the racial ideologies I was seeking to uncover and unpack. I use the term ideology generally, in the sense of structured beliefs and perceptions that are shared (at least in part) by a group of people; I do not limit my definition or analysis of ideologies to the narrow sense of state ideologies, i.e. the "party line" on Gypsy issues.

By "racial ideology" specifically, I mean how phenotypical differences, especially those of skin color, are understood and explained in terms such as blood, DNA, ethnicity, culture, behavioral tendencies, intelligence or intellectual capacity, and more — and also, how these putative differences are perceived and experienced. I also mean the ways these putative

differences get attached to individuals and groups who are believed to be descended from, or related to, persons who are phenotypically distinct.

In the case of Roma/Gypsies, the racial ideologies that define the group most commonly include beliefs about poor hygiene, limited or stunted intellectual capacity, criminality, sexual deviance, laziness, and trickery and deception, along with Romantic ideas of innate Gypsy musical talent, passion and irrationality, and rootlessness and a desire and tendency to wander. Though the specific content of these characteristics has shifted somewhat over time and varies across geographic and cultural space, they demonstrate rather remarkable consistency and particularly durability since white Europeans began describing Gypsy people.

Thus, it is no surprise that the internalization of the strict and meticulous norms of behavior that are hegemonic in Hungary was apparent among many Roma I came to know. Many Roma talked about and demonstrated placing heavy emphasis on being “clean,” using both fork and knife and sitting with appropriate decorum in the dining room, being quiet in public squares and streets and on public transportation, using appropriate and correct language, demonstrating hospitality and offering food and drink, dressing “normally,” and various other qualities of being polite and well behaved according to bourgeois Hungarian standards. According to my observations as well as my research participants’ stories, such norms were enforced through corrective action in classrooms, bathrooms, playgrounds, and dormitories and dining halls at schools and youth camps, as well as through everyday modeling of appropriate behavior in Roma organizations.

Occasionally when I was in the company of one or more Roma, we would encounter a Roma person or group who did not conform to such standards, and my research participant(s) demonstrated a complicated reaction, acknowledging the behavior as abnormal and attempting to

distance him or herself from the offending party. As Alaina Lemon also experienced among Roma in Russia (Lemon 2000), Roma and non-Roma alike frequently tried to guide my attention away from the “wrong” kind or “bad” kind of Roma/Gypsies and toward the ones believed to be more “correct,” “authentic,” or “good.”

The pressure to conform to mainstream standards of behavior was not independent of this proliferation of Roma programs and seeming obsession with the question of “Roma integration.” For generations, through various rhetorical frames (Porter-Szűcs), including 18th century Habsburg assimilation efforts, mid-20th century assimilation efforts by the Communist Party, and now postsocialist Roma integration initiatives, Gypsy distinction had remained a kind of evidence of a failure, on the part of both reformers and the population itself, to transform Gypsies into persons exhibiting the same characteristics as their non-Gypsy peers. In the case of postsocialist initiatives, there was an added element of liberal democracy as the context for such reforms, creating a new type of pressure in establishing at least the semblance of freedom in choosing the life one desires and independence from the demands to conform to the expectations of a dictatorial, invasive state. Meanwhile, the wide scale of Roma integration efforts in the postsocialist period meant that the resource provision appeared to be just that much more significant. As I discuss below, the Decade of Roma Inclusion further broadened the profile of what had already appeared to be an expansive state effort to undertake Roma integration.

The Problem of Differing Perceptions of Roma Integration: Colloquial Understandings vs the Decade of Roma Inclusion

When it came to national and international-level commitments regarding so-called Roma integration, one of the problems was a lack of clarity and agreement, from the beginning, of what it would look like when it was accomplished. Whereas Roma integration in postsocialist

Hungary came to be defined at the national and international level in terms of the improvement of Roma welfare, as reflected in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, for example (see discussion below), in colloquial discourse in Hungary it was, and still is, understood primarily in terms of the degree to which Roma/Gypsies “fit in” in their social environment. Though their priorities and approaches vary, institutions working explicitly on Roma/Gypsy issues in Hungary have tended to reflect in their programming the former conceptualization of Roma integration. In everyday practices and talk, however, workers in such institutions may reflect their personal biases toward the latter. This tension in understandings of Roma integration, between those of institutions and those of the general population, mirrored within institutions in the contrasts between official programming and staff attitudes, represented a major stumbling block for the advancement of Roma rights and welfare in Hungary.

I noted the total absence of initiatives in my fieldwork that challenged discrimination in a targeted fashion through active engagement with members of the majority — i.e. interventions including non-Gypsies as a target group with the intention of promoting changes in attitudes or perceptions toward Roma, along the lines of facilitated Jewish-Muslim group conversations and Youth Dialogues on race and ethnicity as employed at the University of Michigan. The approaches visible in the institutional programs, from the perspective of interventions, generally fell into one (or more) of a handful of categories: (1) direct services for remedying social disadvantage of Gypsies, (2) building shared experiences between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, (3) celebratory multiculturalism, (4) promoting popular awareness and recognition of Roma/Gypsy history, culture, (5) political advocacy and building media exposure around social issues facing Roma/Gypsies, (6) creating cultural brokers or cultural mediators, and/or (7) promoting a new Roma elite.

At the time that then prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsány of Hungary signed onto the Decade of Roma Inclusion along with the leaders of eight other national governments in Sofia in February 2005, they set the stage for a relatively uniform standard for thinking about Roma integration. The project of Roma inclusion was articulated as “a political commitment by Governments to combat Roma poverty, exclusion, and discrimination within a regional framework” within the “priority areas” of “employment, education, health, and housing” along with the other “the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming.” Overall, these concerns were summarized in the following two objectives: (1) To accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma by including Roma in the decision-making process, and (2) To review such progress in a transparent and quantifiable way.

Whereas the partners in the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), including nine national governments, committed to the project of “Roma inclusion,” the language largely shifted to that of “integration,” as measured by nine specific social indicators in such areas as housing, employment and education. Discrimination and anti-Gypsyism were sorely lacking in the formulation of the “Gypsy problem” and the approach to its solution.

The slippage of terminology of “inclusion” to “integration” is worthy of reflection. As Iris Marion Young observes, inclusion is a “norm often invoked by those seeking to widen and deepen democratic practices. The normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making processes and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes” (Young 2000:5-6). The onus of a process of “inclusion” falls squarely on the party engaged in the opposing process of exclusion -- in this case, the societies of which Roma/Gypsies comprise a part. The excluded party, meanwhile, is presumably the judge of the extent of their newfound inclusion. The terminology of

“integration,” in contrast, diffuses the responsibility for the process as well as the evaluation of its success or failure. Although the final results of a successful process, with Roma who are “included” or “integrated” would undoubtedly look quite similar, if not identical, using the language of “inclusion” and “integration” implies different problems and different processes to achieve the final result.

Not surprisingly, in the case of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which early in its formulation engaged as partners the governments of the participating countries, proved a top-heavy administrative entity that spoke in the language of statistics and indicators and processes that has bureaucratized the evaluation of the successes and failures of “Roma integration.” Erased were the phenomenological aspects of inclusion and its counterpoint of exclusion, including the question of microaggressions and other everyday forms of discrimination and segregation that Roma people experience. In my fieldwork I observed such issues in countless settings, as when a Roma scholar and community worker was left with inadequate time to speak at a conference after her white colleagues talked first and over their allotted times, and when a Roma manicurist was forbidden to see her Roma clientele during regular business hours to avoid making other guests uncomfortable.

Understandings of so-called Roma integration were (and continue to be), not surprisingly, deeply intertwined with other attitudes and politics. Anti-Gypsyism, in particular, strongly informed understandings of integration from the beginning of its being taken up as a project, whether in the 18th century assimilationist campaigns under Habsburg leaders Maria Theresa and Josef II, in which one of the component strategies was taking Roma/Gypsy children from their parents and placing them into the homes of Hungarian villagers; in the state socialist era (see Stewart 1997); or in the postsocialist period when the language shifted to that of integration and

inclusion, but the mainstream expectations were the same. Social programs and activities have sometimes incorporated Roma/Gypsy cultural heritage as a component, but many front-line workers involved with Roma in schools and other institutions have persistently believed that support of Roma cultural distinction will only hold Roma back in the process of integration (Dunajeva and Tidrick 2015; Dunajeva 2014).

I suggest that Roma integration is a lens through which the anxieties about Hungarian identity vis-à-vis Europeanness are reflected, and these issues are deep, indeed. One scholar I spoke to during my fieldwork described the contemporary situation in Hungary as nothing short of a *kulturkampf*.

Deconstructing “the State” in Reference to Roma/Gypsies – a Methodological Note

Another aspect of the emphasis on a broad range of institutions bears highlighting for its theoretical and methodological significance. Literature on Roma in Central/Eastern Europe at the time that I began my project tended to treat “the state” as an entity that had its own consistent logic and actions, that had interests and values of its own and operated in relation to Roma in a unilateral fashion according to those characteristics. In particular, Zoltán Barany’s emphasis on regimes and regime change as deterministic of Romani marginality demonstrated an overly simplistic view of what constituted *the state*, but his work was not unusual in that regard. A Hungarian colleague commenting on a work on which we were collaborating in 2013 stated that the Hungarian state “has no interest in a Gypsy-speaking Gypsy society.”

As I was crafting the project ten years ago, the emphasis on institutions more broadly was intended in part to write against this trend in the Romani Studies literature at the time, to incorporate theoretical insights from anthropology in particular, into the conceptualization of

“the state” in Hungary.²¹ The intention was to take into account the inconsistencies and unevenness of how the state operates and to unpack and disassemble the construct. Thus, through empirical observation, deeper theoretical insights might be gleaned about governance in general and in particular in relation to Roma/Gypsy people. Since that time, empirical research about Roma and their flow through and interactions in institutions, as reflective of broader Roma policy, has become more present in the literature on the topic (e.g. Dunajeva; Bereményi 2014). However, there is still more to be done in this area, to continue to unpack the interplay of these different aspects and how they constitute “the state” as an entity.

Another aspect in examining a broad range of institutions was to build on the concept of neoliberalism, to provide empirical data toward an understanding of the significance of neoliberalism in the context of activities related to Roma by different agents in state- and non-state institutions. These institutions and their agents have the potential to have a significant impact on the lives of individual Roma/Gypsy persons, whether through direct services like provision of housing or other material resources, legal services, education or training, etc, or through indirect means like advocacy and construction of narratives and circulation of media that shape public policy and/or transform public perceptions of Roma/Gypsy people and/or Roma/Gypsy issues. In addition to the ethnographic record in this area and providing analysis of such examples, this manuscript expands on the work of Sigona and Trehan and their colleagues (2009) and speaks to the critical queries about what neoliberalism is, how it operates, and what its significance is vis á vis Roma in contemporary Europe.

²¹ In particular, I was influenced in this area by the thinking and teaching of American anthropologist Julia Paley and the anthropology of democracy as she framed it, drawing on (and teaching from) James Ferguson, Akhil Gupta, Barbara Cruikshank, Lauren Leve, Arjun Appadurai, Iris Marion Young, Nancy Fraser, Rosemary Coombe, Arturo Escobar, Paul Farmer, Aihwah Ong, and Steven Sampson, among many others (see Paley 2002 as well as Paley 2001).

In examining distinctions between the conceptualizations of and practices in relation to Roma integration and the “Roma problem” in Pécs and Budapest, I uncover center-periphery dynamics and the importance of the history of place and cultural geographies in defining relations between institutional actors and a given population. In examining the inconsistencies in “top-down” and “bottom-up” discourses and practices, or macro- and micro-level practice, from The Decade of Roma Inclusion and federal and national state-level policy, to programmatic policies, to staff beliefs and everyday practices within specific institutions, I demonstrate the complexities and contradictions inherent in the actions of “the state.” Finally, in incorporating international nongovernmental organizations, and various initiatives with mixed sources of funding, I provide insight into neoliberalism and how it operates within this context. I speak to the importance of who are the stakeholders in a given initiative in how it is constructed and implemented — and how the fuzzy boundaries of governance and organizations affect the everyday experiences and opportunities of people interacting with an initiative and the players involved in it.

Thus, this manuscript makes a contribution to study of the state as a non-unitary entity with inconsistencies and contradictions, as well as to studies of neoliberalism, by looking at a range of different initiatives and their stakeholders.²³

Methodological Considerations

Two points bear further explication. One is that the above discussion of institutional actors implies a situation in which an ethnic majority–identified worker interacts with a Roma/Gypsy–identified client and is in a position of power to make life-altering decisions about

²³ I thank Krisztina Fehérváry for her contribution to the development of this section.

the Roma/Gypsy person. Although this is very often the case, the reality is more complex, with ethnic diversity a feature of many institutions in contemporary Hungary. There are Romani social workers, politicians, teachers, police officers, writers; Roma are represented in many professional roles in Hungary. Sometimes, they, too, are in positions of authority to make decisions not only about other Roma, but also about members of the majority and other ethnic groups in the country.

Furthermore, the above discussion focuses primarily on state institutions, but there are a variety of different organizations in which Roma programs are implemented and/or in which Roma/Gypsy persons are clients, students, or other members of a target group. In the case of Roma organizations, there is an additional significance to the institution and its very presence. Their emergence came through a process of institutionalization that has a fairly recent history, generally in the postsocialist period, but with factors grounded in trajectories starting during state socialism. The founders of such organizations are often outstanding Roma/Gypsy individuals who achieved an unusual level of prestige and education to be in such a position of leadership. The material aspects of the institution, such as its physical space and the budget for its staff salaries, programs, and activities, rely on resource allocation from a range of state- or non-state sources subject to political will and community support. Some institutions, such as the municipal Gypsy self-governments, operate within a state institutional framework, but others, like Roma community-based organizations, are non-state institutions. On the other hand, because of the reliance on funding and resource allocation, not to mention the tolerance of the surrounding community and government for them to maintain their operations, they are not independent of the state, either. As when the Roma Parliament space in Budapest's VIII district was reportedly shut down under government direction in 2013, and then finally and ultimately evicted in 2016

— purportedly due to structural issues with the building — the will of the government and surrounding community constrains and can even end the operations of such organizations. A similar incident occurred when Auróra House, the incubator-like space housing several liberal organizations including the Roma Press Center and refugee assistance organizations was temporarily shut down under dubious circumstances that reportedly had to do with cannabis found somewhere on the premises.

The local community sentiment can also create pressures and challenges for the leaders and staff of these organizations. When an individual dropped a letter at a Pécs community-based Roma organization saying “GYPSIES GET A JOB!” the staff were shaken. What was a racist letter could have been an explicit threat or even a Molotov cocktail. Certain factors were in place to protect the organization and its staff, such as being required to be buzzed into the building in order to visit their offices. But there was always an awareness of members of such organizations that they depended on a basic level of community acceptance and safety in order to maintain their operations. This basic foundation seems perpetually more unstable as the political climate continues to shift in Hungary (at time of writing, as we enter the third decade of the 21st century) toward the model of “illiberal democracy” forged by the Fidesz prime minister Viktor Orbán.

Changes Since 2012

Both the on-the-ground situation in Hungary and the theoretical and empirical academic literature on Roma/Gypsies in Europe (including in Hungary) have evolved significantly since I began this research, and certain aspects have been articulated in the scholarship that dovetail with this work — e.g. Dunajeva, Bereményi, Rövid, etc. (See, e.g., ERRC 2015). Through limited collaborations (discussions while in the field, participation in shared panels at

international conferences, and in a coauthored publication with Dunajeva), I have participated quite peripherally in these conversations that have been shifting academic discourses about Roma, some of which have been concentrated in Budapest itself. However, my participation was always limited, and they have progressed significantly in recent years without my involvement. I touch on the features of these shifts in the academic world of Romani Studies in Chapter Two, which deals with the Romology Department at the University of Pécs.

As for the on-the-ground transformations since the end of 2012, particularly with respect to the advancement of so-called illiberal democracy under the administration of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, these are mostly outside the scope of this dissertation. Although I make reference to them at times, I do not describe in any depth the policy changes or day-to-day, constantly evolving dynamics with respect to Roma, other Others, and the varied institutions that work with and/or serve them. All of these have been profoundly affected by the political changes in these recent years, and the situation has transformed and deteriorated in many respects since the conclusion of my fieldwork in December of 2012.

However, the content of this dissertation is far from irrelevant to the current geopolitical situation and the rise of right-wing and “populist” politics and the ways these politics impinge on the institutional frameworks this ethnography depicts and analyzes. It offers a snapshot of a moment in time as the wave was cresting, focusing in depth on one of the single most volatile and central political concerns of those espousing white supremacist politics. The ratification of the new Constitution of Hungary (*Alaptörvény*, also translated as “Fundamental Law”) took place at the mid-point in my year and a half of fieldwork; I encountered members of the paramilitary group called the Magyar Garda (“Hungarian Guard”) at a gathering in a park while walking my dog in Budapest, came home to swastikas on the door to my apartment building in

Pécs, and had just left the city at the time of the Kata Bándy murder that precipitated white supremacist anti-Gypsy vigilantist protests in the streets of Pécs.

Liberals and members of the Left were describing the situation in Hungary as a battle over the fundamental cultural values in their own society. Some said it explicitly, others implied it, and others chose not to acknowledge it to me at all, but it was a time in which many of them were very fearful for their institutional positions, their livelihoods. Although no one ever said it to me explicitly, the context of anti-Gypsy attacks that had risen dramatically in the latter part of the first decade of the 21st century raised the question of whether, in fact, their very lives were in danger.

Many of them, no doubt especially those with Roma/Gypsy or Jewish heritage, were watching the political developments in Hungary with fear and dread as they reflected on the not-too-distant past of fascism in the country — not only during the Holocaust, but also during the interwar period — and the more recent repression of the state socialist period. After all, then and now, Hungary is a place where history is a palpable force, where the bullets from the 1956 revolution can be seen embedded into buildings in Budapest, where political battles over the names of streets and public monuments have represented highly charged arguments over what it means to be Hungarian, and over which aspects of being Hungarian and being part of a Hungarian nation were worthy of being displayed and which were shameful and belonged hidden away or destroyed entirely.²⁴ These fights have been happening alongside the rewriting of the Constitution, the changes in rhetoric regarding the *cigányügy* (“the Gypsy issue”) and resurrection of the *cigánybűnözés* (“Gypsy criminality”) trope, and national government policies

²⁴ American anthropologists Susan Gal and Katherine Verdery have, for instance, discussed the significance of the reburial of bodies as public events, for example in the cases of the composer Béla Bartók and the political leader Imre Nagy (Gal 1991; Verdery 1999).

that disproportionately affect Roma/Gypsies like the revised unemployment legislation and public works (*közmunka*) program aimed at creating a “workfare” society (Majtényi and Majtényi 2016:157).

At the same time, despite the rising anxiety and tension, there was also a lot of quiet, there was joy, there were and celebrations and parties, and there were many, many people of different ethnic and national backgrounds who demonstrated their commitment to supporting Roma/Gypsy rights and successful integration as they understood it. My dissertation sheds light ethnographically on this political domain in a moment of major transition, and it offers glimpses of how different kinds of difference were understood and practiced in this moment and stories of people who imagined and engaged alternatives to mainstream discourses and practices.

Key Scholarly Contributions to the Field

My project defies and complicates the mainstream picture on this subject on a number of different levels. **First, it depicts the association, collaboration, and mutuality of Roma/Gypsies across porous subgroup boundaries that are often portrayed as rigid, and even contentious or tense, in academic literature — divisions that are, simultaneously, virtually totally unknown by those outside the field of Romani Studies.** The extraordinary diversity of Roma/Gypsy people worldwide has been well documented in Romani Studies literature: They have no universal language or religion, no ethnonym universally accepted by all members of the population outsiders refer to as Gypsies, and virtually no cultural features that are universally present across the whole population of people who are generally accepted to be of shared ethnic origin — be they called Roma, Gypsies, Sinti, Gitanos, Egyptians, or any other name chosen by local groups.

In Hungary, where Roma/Gypsies comprise approximately 10 percent of the population, constituting the largest ethnic minority in the country, the three groups of Roma/Gypsies who have historically been part of the society are Romungros, Vlax (also spelled Vlach or Olah), and Beash (also called Boyash or Băjás).²⁵ Romungros are the largest of the groups, who are the most assimilated. With rare exceptions, their mother tongue is Hungarian and they speak no distinctively Roma/Gypsy language. For Beash, if they speak a distinctive language, it is Beash, a language likened by most to an archaic form of Romanian; that is, in the Romance language group. Likewise, not all Vlax Roma have a mother tongue besides Hungarian, but for those who do, it is Romani, an Indo-European language derived from proto-Sanskrit. Beash and Romani are about as similar as Romanian and Hindi or Punjabi — and these are the modern languages they most closely resemble.

Language is only one vector by which the divisions among the Roma/Gypsy subgroups in Hungary can be observed, but it is perhaps the most evocative, and it is one that can be quite politicized, as I discuss later in the manuscript. Given the groups' divergent cultural features and their geographic concentrations with co-ethnics within their own subgroups, ethnographic work that endeavors to uncover culturally distinctive characteristics tends to focus exclusively on one subgroup at a time. This tendency is reinforced by social conflict and tensions that have been a feature of the relationships among the subgroups. However, as I demonstrate in this manuscript,

²⁵ The extensive complications of population counting have also been discussed by many scholars, with “Who is Gypsy?” (Ladányi and Szeléyi 2000 [1997]) being one of the first major problematics, and another being the reluctance with which Roma/Gypsies self-identify as such, due to stigma. The reluctance historically and perhaps more recently may also be linked to legitimate fears about personal safety and security, given the history of genocide, as one of the groups marked for destruction on the basis of race during the Holocaust (Bársony and Daróczy 2004; Bernáth 2000; Stewart 2010 and 2011). As Zoltán Barany writes, “Hungarian sociologists like István Kemény, János Ladányi, Ivan Szelényi, and others have debated the virtues of standard methodologies used to define the Roma by pointing to ongoing changes in the Gypsies’ environment and lifestyle. The only clear lessons that emerge from this dispute are that there is no single way to determine the size of Romani communities and that the Gypsies do not constitute a population that can be unambiguously demarcated” (2002:159).

there is coexistence, cooperation, and intermixing of members of different subgroups (in addition to that between Roma/Gypsies and non-Gypsies) that is also present in the contemporary sociocultural context of Hungary in the early postsocialist period.

Second, it shows the active leadership of Roma/Gypsies in building and sustaining institutions, contrary to the enduring widespread perception of members of their group as free-spirited wanderers outside society and dismissive of structure and routine. Contrary to the stereotypes, Roma/Gypsies in Hungary, as across the former Eastern Bloc, are not nomadic, but are settled, due to a sedentarization campaign pursued as part of the assimilation project undertaken by the Communist Party during the state socialist period. There is a robust history of community organizing among them that dates back at least until the 1970s, and they have been active agents in creating institutional frameworks for advocacy and social services provision to members of their own communities.

Third, it complicates notions of the local operating in a given geographic and temporal space through its depiction of the ways Roma operated in and engaged with institutions in the unique environment of Budapest in this period — and the fluid movement between Pécs and Budapest, elsewhere in Hungary, and beyond. The capital of Hungary in the early postsocialist period was a place that was a seat of extensive transnational and international cooperation for and on behalf of Roma/Gypsies, facilitated by extensive use of social media for organizing, in which international nongovernmental organizations and educational institutions were playing a major role in shaping the discourses and providing educational, administrative, and financial support in building up the leaders. It was a place with an extraordinary institutional infrastructure for (or related to) Roma/Gypsies, one which has had a special role in the development of international Roma/Gypsy civil society. The extent of the

Roma civil society organization in Hungary in the early postsocialist period was virtually unrivaled in any other country. Skopje, Macedonia, was perhaps the only city with the same degree of institutional development for/by Roma people as could be seen in Budapest. The Hungarian system of Gypsy self-governments at the local level in municipalities, too, although they could be problematic in the way they were realized, reflected an attempt to incorporate Roma/Gypsy people into their own representation.

None of these points is novel in its own right; other authors have written at least to a certain extent about all of them and theorized some of them much more extensively. However, as an ethnography, it provides substance and perspective on all of them and illustrates how they were operating at a crucial moment — critical in at least three ways: (1) in the evolution of local Hungarian politics as a model of growing illiberal sentiment; (2) in that of international Roma mobilization that was happening in counterpoint to that increasingly hostile soil in a place that had been an incubator for that mobilization for the first two decades of the state socialist period; and (3) in the broader global shift toward right-wing or “populist” politics, of which Orbán’s regime was at the front end of the wave, repeatedly provoking and earning the censure of the European Union for his defiance of their norms and regulations. In the process, however, Orbán was modeling and earning the respect of others espousing a particular brand of Christian conservative nationalism in the broader region who also perceived the European Union to be interfering with the local autonomy of small countries and their traditional values. In the early postsocialist period, Roma integration was a domain in Hungary, as immigration became in 2015, in which the clash of those political ideologies, of protection of local values and “the nation” versus nondiscrimination and the protection of human rights regardless of ethnic or national origin, was rendered most apparent.

Dichotomies and Vectors of Divergence in Roma Programs

What I saw through the research, in examining the field of programs and institutions that related to Roma/Gypsies that were operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period, particularly through my field research between 2011 and 2012 in Pécs and Budapest, was a series of dichotomies in approach or understanding. None of these is fully satisfactory in defining the differences in the ideologies at work, but each of them is revealing in certain ways. In the specific institutions I write about in the chapters that follow, some of the key dichotomies included the following:

“International” vs. “indigenous Hungarian”

Budapest vs. Pécs (and center vs. periphery)

Sociology vs. *néprajz* (national ethnography) (and culture vs. class)

Community-wide initiative vs. Roma organization (mainstream- vs. minority-centered)

In indigenous Hungarian institutions, in both Pécs and Budapest, one key area of activity I observed was efforts to inscribe Roma into contemporary Hungarian society as well as its history. International institutions did not tend to share that priority, but rather focused on human rights and advancement for Roma with regard to specific social indicators. The approaches in Pécs and Budapest diverged in certain ways, with more overtly political engagement in the capital and more efforts to effect change in broader public opinion of Roma. Pécs showed a relative prioritization of coexistence and shared multicultural experience. There were those engaged with *néprajz* (see chapter two) whose focus tended to be culture, and those who worked from a sociological approach, who tended to focus on class and poverty. In community-wide initiatives in Hungary, Roma/Gypsies or their integration might be invoked as priorities, but at times, the rhetoric of integration or inclusion was a cynical ploy to gain access to resources for

the community that might ultimately be withheld completely from the Roma/Gypsies there. Roma organizations had a vested interest in their own community (though were not above corruption), but they tended to have a perpetual scarcity and instability of access to resources and a general precariousness because of their dependence on the mainstream acceptance of their existence in order for them to maintain operations.

I make reference to *many* organizations in the manuscript for a comparative point of reference, but the key institutions whose practices are highlighted and analyzed in this work include the **European Capital of Culture program in the city of Pécs** (chapter one), the **Department of Romology at the University of Pécs** (chapter two), a community-based Roma organization I call **Amalipe** (chapter three), and the **Roma Poverty Housing Program of Habitat for Humanity International — Europe and Central Asia** (chapter four). The latter program is the only one that I analyze in detail that constitutes an “international” program; the rest are “indigenous Hungarian” institutions. The European Capital of Culture program is the one community-wide initiative I discuss, besides the brief portrait I paint of the program in the Mátras earlier in the introduction. Amalipe is the one true “Roma organization” I analyze in detail.

The bulk of the organizations I analyze are Pécs-based; Habitat for Humanity International program operates out of Budapest. The Pécs-based organizations I discuss all draw more strongly on the traditions of *néprajz* and generally place an emphasis on multiculturalism as a value and practice. Habitat for Humanity’s program is more aligned with sociological traditions in its emphasis on poverty and social exclusion, though their orientation as an international organization has certain overlaps and certain divergences from that of Hungarian

sociologists, whose approaches to intervention have evolved over time through the interactions with and responses of Roma/Gypsy intellectuals and activists in Hungary.

In terms of conceptualizations and practices of Roma integration, Amalipe and the Romology Department are organizations in which inclusion is practiced within the day-to-day institutional operations. They are primarily driven by, and undertake to cultivate a cadre of, *culture brokers*. The European Capital of Culture program is based on a depoliticized celebratory multiculturalism that is class-blind and does not account for structural inequalities in the relations of the different ethnic groups whose cultural contributions are viewed primarily in terms of their aesthetic value. This program was planned and administered by *power brokers*. Habitat for Humanity's program, created by *benevolent outsiders*, operationalizes Roma integration primarily in terms of socioeconomic indicators and the alleviation of poverty — but with a requisite assimilationist component in the internal emphasis on so-called mental hygiene.

These divergences are captured in the snapshots presented, depicting a handful of the different racial ideological regimes operating within Hungary in the first three decades of the postsocialist period, including the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015. What can be seen in Hungary during this period is in some ways illustrative of the broader schema of Roma integration problematics in Europe at the time, but also has its particularities that relate to the unique sociocultural context of Hungary.

Chapter Organization

The remainder of the text is constructed in the following way: Chapter One introduces the reader to the totality and vision of the city of Pécs in the eyes of its powerbrokers — city planners, urban developers, local politicians — and, in principle, the rest of its population,

through the lens of a bid document submitted to the European Union in 2006 in the hopes of securing the title of European Capital of Culture in the year 2010. Through textual analysis, the chapter examines and analyzes in detail the ways Roma/Gypsies and their institutions appear in this utopian vision of the city.

Chapter Two introduces the Romology Department at the University of Pécs and situates this institution in relation to other Roma/Gypsy-related institutions in Hungary at the time. It explores features including social practices of labelling and disclosure related to personal ethnic identity of Roma/Gypsy students and faculty, sociolinguistics of Gypsy language study, and scholarship and community engagement of members of the department. The chapter concludes with discussion of the project of Roma/Gypsy cultural revitalization and the production and performance of Roma public culture in Hungary, situating the practices originating in the sociocultural contexts of the Romology Department and wider Baranya County in relation to those originating in other institutional and sociocultural contexts.

As a counterpoint to the version of the city depicted by those courting the European Capital of Culture title, Chapter Three offers, quite literally, a street-level view of the city of Pécs one year after the end of its tenure as the European Capital of Culture, bringing the reader on a tour of the city and its material and social geography up to, and into, one of several Roma organizations in the city. Along the way, through ethnographic and autoethnographic vignettes, it explores the ways different kinds of difference were being understood and engaged at the time as well as how different kinds of difference were reflected in the material and social environment in the city. These vignettes depicting multicultural coexistence include examples of Roma/Gypsies sharing physical space and interacting with one another and with non-Gypsies within this multicultural social context. Leading the reader ultimately to a community-based Roma

organization, the end of the chapter offers a glimpse into how things were working within one of the many Roma/Gypsy institutions in the community, institutions which had been a recurring emphasis in the bid for the ECoC title in the name of inclusion and multiculturalism in the city — and highlights the disparity between the resource allocation for physical renovation of the built environment versus for social institutions serving the minorities populating the so-called “Borderless City.” It also depicts a model of inclusion distinct from the assimilation-driven integration that reigned as the expectation of the mainstream society.

Finally, Chapter Four departs from the city of Pécs altogether, to lend insight into the ways Roma people, Roma culture, and Roma integration are thought about and engaged in a different institutional context operating in Hungary, that of the international nongovernmental organization. This chapter deals with the Roma Poverty Housing Program in the process of being planned and developed at the Europe and Central Asia office of Habitat for Humanity International in Budapest in 2006, with an emphasis on visual representations of beneficiaries of the organization and its essentialized, stereotype-based depictions of Roma. The chapter situates the approach to narrative construction and representation of Roma/Gypsies in the organization in relation to those practices in the international NGO sector more broadly in the early postsocialist period. Further, it shows the interplay between these the practices of NGOs producing these etic representations and the growing movement in the mid-2010s of Roma intellectuals and activists challenging Orientalizing and stigmatizing images and pushing for Romani autonomy in the representation of their own people.

The dissertation conclusion provides a synthesis in the form of a typology of interventions observed in Roma programs in Hungary in 2011-2012, highlighting notable goals, approaches to Roma integration, and practices around Roma cultural distinction, as a framework

for understanding the multiplicity of often contradictory approaches to integration simultaneously operating in the same geographic context.

Finally, the epilogue draws a bridge between the practices with Roma/Gypsies in institutions in the early postsocialist period and the corresponding contemporaneous racial ideological regimes, and the social and political evolutions up to the present day at time of writing of this manuscript, at the conclusion of the first three decades of the postsocialist period. My own research has been grounded in the first decade of the 21st century. The period of my intensive ethnographic fieldwork, from summer 2011 to 2012, in certain key ways marked the starting point for a new era in Hungarian politics specifically and represented a manifestation of a broader geopolitical turn toward the right in which Hungary and its prime minister, Viktor Orbán, served as models of a new political stance vis á vis the federalist structure of the European Union and supernational formations more generally (e.g. international NGOs and multinational corporations).

The racial ideological regimes highlighted in this dissertation represent alternatives to that which was hegemonic in Hungary at the time. In recent years, as the reigning political party Fidesz has increasingly cemented its political power under Orbán, the government has become aggressively dismissive of approaches perceived to challenge its own ideological regime, including racial formations. They have exhibited this hostility in a variety of dramatic actions that — thanks to their ever-broadening control of a wide range of different social, economic, political, and cultural institutions — profoundly limit (or utterly eliminate) the ability of many of these organizations to continue their operations. In this way, because of the significance of Roma/Gypsy people and their integration in the rhetoric of Orbán and his governmental administration, the topic and practice area of Roma integration in the context of institutions

working with Roma/Gypsies in Hungary represent a valuable ethnographic lens through which to understand these political evolutions.

CHAPTER ONE

Pécs, the “Borderless City:”

Roma/Gypsies in the European Capital of Culture

If you happened to find yourself in the southwestern Hungarian city of Pécs, approximately 30 kilometers north of the Croatian border, between 2009 and 2011, you couldn't help but notice that the city was under renovation. All through the city center, squares were being repaved with fresh stone, charming and carefully groomed landscaping was being put into place, fountains were being added to further beautify. There was much buzz in the air about this transformation. It had come with the honor of being named as the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) in 2010.²⁶

The ECoC title was a prestigious one with which the European Union designated two cities in Europe each year, and it came with financial support for urban development projects and cultural programming as well as the external recognition of the value of a city's cultural heritage. For Pécs, a provincial former mining city in a borderland area of a small and highly centralized country, a city considered culturally and geographically peripheral from the standpoint of many in Hungary's capital of Budapest, receiving this recognition had a great deal of local significance. Pécs was Hungary's sixth largest city, which had a population of 156,383 people at

²⁶ Relatively little scholarly work has been written about the ECoC Pécs2010 program, but there has been some. Finnish researcher Tuuli Lähdesmäki's study of three ECoC programs (Lähdesmäki 2012; 2013; 2014) includes that in the city of Pécs. Ágnes Németh also included the Pécs program in her study of two ECoC programs (Németh 2017).

the time it presented its bid for the title in 2006.²⁷ In contrast, Budapest — which had also competed for the title and lost to Pécs — was the ninth largest city in the European Union, home to almost 1.7 million within the city limits and an estimated 2.9-3.3 million within the commuter area.²⁸

In order to obtain the ECoC title, the city of Pécs had to provide a convincing argument for why it deserved world recognition as a cultural capital and how the city embodied the core values of Europeanness. This task required initiating a process of rebranding, of constructing a narrative in which the attributes of this place were presented in such a way as to make the city recognized as worthy — worthy of money from the European Union, worthy of tourism from foreign visitors, and most of all, worthy of the distinction of the title of European Capital of Culture. This was no small feat, and there was much at stake in the performance. Pécs was seeking not only recognition as a settlement of civilized Europeans in the face of multiple layers of marginality, but indeed its own survival in the face of economic stagnation and demographic decline.³¹ In this sense, the interests of Pécs in the pursuit of the ECoC title for 2010 mirror those of Hungary as a whole, as I discuss in greater depth below, though intensified in Pécs as a particularly ethnically diverse city with even less political power than the capital.

For the purposes of uncovering features of the European Capital of Culture program in Pécs, this chapter focuses largely on the bid document that was submitted to the European Union

²⁷ The population was in decline at the time, as it has been consistently (though at varying rates) for approximately three decades; this figure was from the Pécs Lexicon (Romváry 2010). The Hungarian census indicated a population of 156,049 in the 2011 census.

²⁸ Figure depends on the source and approach in estimation. The European Union statistics office, Eurostat, counted the functional urban area (including commuters) as 2,915,426 as of 2013 (Eurostat 2016:64).

³¹ In addition to a decrease in population in Pécs between 2004 and 2014, the European Union Eurostat office data indicated a decrease in economic activity in the city between 2010 and 2012 (Eurostat 2016:68, 70). They also observed in Pécs the lowest birthrate among any of the functional urban areas in Hungary, approximately 8 live births per 1000 inhabitants in 2013 (2016:167, figure 8.9).

in 2006 with the hopes of obtaining the title. Entitled “Borderless City: European Capital of Culture — Pécs, 2010,” the 123-page English-language document presented a narrative that strongly emphasized “multiculturalism” and Pécs’s geographic and sociocultural character as a borderland space.³² I use the ECoC Pécs2010 program for two purposes. First, it serves as an entry point for understanding Pécs as a sociocultural and geographic context for institutional practices with Roma/Gypsies and Hungarian conceptualizations of Roma/Gypsy integration in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s to the early 2010s. Second, as an interrelated issue, it

³² Due to its emphasis on narrative construction on the part of the power brokers of the city of Pécs for a wider European audience, this chapter reads largely as a textual analysis of “Borderless City,” the original bid document prepared on behalf of the Local Self-Government of the City of Pécs and submitted to the EU for consideration for the title. However, in building the picture of the ECoC program in Pécs, I also draw on a number of other sources, including local English- and Hungarian-language entertainment magazines published from 2010 through 2012, other printed documents and materials such as advertisements and books of the time, and interviews with an urban planner involved in ECoC Pécs2010 as well as many other people living and/or studying in the city in the period 2011-2012. Additionally, I draw heavily on my own personal observations and embodied experience in the place itself during several visits to the city, with intensive periods of ethnographic fieldwork in summer of 2009 and fall 2011 to spring 2012, with some ongoing on-site research tapering off but continuing through December of 2012 (while I was based primarily in the capital city of Budapest).

A website for the program itself existed for several years after the Capital of Culture year, and I referenced it when I was beginning to draft this chapter, but as of 2020, it is no longer operational. I have reached out recently for additional consultation with those who were involved in the program development using an email address that had been used for the program in the past, but I have not received a response from them, so it appears it may not be actively attended anymore. However, the website of the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter and Zsolnay Heritage Management Ltd are actively maintained, and along with them, a number of their partners are identified on their website that appear to be descendants (and beneficiaries) of the ECoC program. Their websites, available in Hungarian, English, and German, were all designed by the Zsolnay Heritage Management Ltd with high production value and shared graphic and website design, featuring pleasing visual elements and seamless, intuitive navigation systems. The affiliated organizations are World Heritage Pécs (Világörökség Pécs), the Middle Ages University (A Középkori Egyetem), the Kodály Center (Kodály Központ), the House of Art and Literature (Művészet és Irodalom Háza), the M21 Gallery (M21 Galéria), as well as an organization or business devoted to wedding venue organizing (Esküvő Helyszín Pécs [Wedding Location Pécs], also called Boldogság Háza [The House of Happiness]). The Pécs Gallery (Pécsi Galéria) and an organization called E78 also are named as partners and have websites with matched design, but its English and German language versions are no longer functioning. The Bóbita Theater and Pécs Ballet, also identified as partners, also have websites with high production value.

In contrast, there are a number of museums and galleries that are collected under the umbrella of the Janus Pannonius Múzeum, including the museum featuring the paintings of Tivadar Csontváry, the mining museum, the city history museum, and several others, that are not apparently partners of these other institutions, and have not received the technical support in creating their website. There is an English language link for this website, but it is a dead link. The Csontváry museum was closed for construction throughout the ECoC year and was still closed at the time I arrived for fieldwork in Pécs in the fall of 2011. The city history museum was unheated during the winter months in 2011 and was so cold when I toured it, I wore my winter coat throughout the exhibits. It appears that the resources that were invested in cultural institutions in the city as a result of the ECoC were very selectively dispersed. As I speak to in chapter two, minority institutions also did not enjoy lasting benefits from the program.

offers insight into the self-conception of Pécs in relation to Europe as a whole and, as a component of membership, the performance of Roma/Gypsy integration in which the city's power brokers believed they were compelled to engage in order to claim status and authenticity as European.

To elaborate on the first point: The two chapters that follow this one offer snapshots of what was happening with Roma/Gypsies in key institutions in Pécs around the time the city held the ECoC title; this one helps to ground those distinctive institutional environments and their practices in the context of a more mainstream cultural reference point in the city in which they operated. Toward that end, the chapter explores one primary question: *How are Roma/Gypsies understood within the collective of Pécs as it is envisioned and articulated within the ECoC Pécs2010 program?*

To speak to the second point: Crucially, however, although the document made claims of being representative of the whole population of Pécs, the narrative was one carefully crafted by powerbrokers in the city for the purposes of presenting an appealing image to a wider European audience, and this points to the second purpose of exploring the ECoC in relation to the thematic area of this dissertation, illuminating the racial ideological regimes operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period. The ECoC program, as it unfolded over the years during which it was implemented in the city, constituted a collective, shared, embodied and materially situated experience that encompassed the whole community. The bid document, in contrast, is a self-contained text. It had a social life in its conceptualization and creation as well as its circulation to the European Union, and it purports to reflect a lengthy community-wide process of deliberation, but ultimately it is an object that was created by power brokers in the city. The narrative reflects the vision of the city that its authors wished to be performed and represented to a wider outside

audience. These characteristics both add to its value and also limit the scope of the argument that can be made based on the narrative. It represents a self-consciously constructed picture of Pécs as a *European city*, and one worthy of being recognized as a *European capital of culture*. As such, there is value in the narrative itself as a reflection of the reigning ideologies of the time with respect to ethnic minorities in general and Roma/Gypsies in particular.

Hungary, along with most of the other countries in the former Eastern bloc, was under fire throughout the early postsocialist period for the situation of the Roma/Gypsies who lived there. Those in government were well aware of the critiques, which related to a wide range of different forms of social exclusion and social marginality: high rates of poverty, poor health indicators, high unemployment, employment discrimination, low levels of educational attainment, and various forms of racism and discrimination Roma/Gypsy people faced in everyday life, among many others. The critiques came largely through the NGO sector, but were also reiterated through the European Union and its institutions.³³ Along with the critique of Hungary as failing to live up to European standards of social inclusion was the fear on the part of western European countries that unsuccessful Roma integration in the east would mean more Roma/Gypsy migrants traversing the borders into their countries.

Whether cynically or earnestly, the ECoC bid document strategically invoked Roma/Gypsy inclusion —and the robust infrastructure of Roma/Gypsy institutions in Pécs — as an aspect of the multicultural identity of the city of Pécs, asserting Europeanness through a unique borderland, multiethnic, Mediterranean character that embodied the ideals of European culture and society, not in the inherent greatness of a distinct Hungarian nation, but in its

³³ The contours of the NGO rhetoric, narratives generated in that sphere, and concomitant resentments and reactions on the part of both Roma/Gypsies as well as Hungarians are discussed in chapter four.

inclusiveness and diversity. The contours of this narrative were distinctly *Pécsi* (of/from/relating to the city of Pécs), departed from the ways it might be constructed in Budapest (or elsewhere in the Central/Eastern European region), and were indeed reflective of a different cultural geography and relationship to the Roma/Gypsy population — i.e. a different racial ideological regime. The ways that this different regime operated in practice in institutional environments are made apparent in chapters two and three. As is elaborated further in chapter two, these values and characteristics and this vision of multiculturalism were carrying over and cross-pollinating with other institutions in Hungary in the early 2010s.

The Limits of Celebratory Multiculturalism

I argue further that there is an apparent contradiction embedded in the ECoC program, by which Roma/Gypsies are the subject of two simultaneous processes — on the one hand, recognized and celebrated rhetorically for their cultural contributions through artistic performances and robust, active social institutions in the ethnically diverse city of Pécs; on the other, marginalized through the process of urban renewal that marks spaces they occupy as “peripheral.” The class-blind, depoliticized approach that the ECoC embraces is common to the framework of liberal multiculturalism as seen in many other contemporary neoliberal environments, reflective of what Hale describes as “celebratory multiculturalism” (Hale 2002, Griffin 2012). An emphasis on “culture” and the material characteristics of urban space in the context of racialized inequalities and high levels of Roma/Gypsy poverty diverts attention away from cultural and racial oppression and structural marginalization. An ontological conceit of borderlessness in the ECoC Pécs2010 narrative disguises the very real borders that were constructed socially within the city along certain fault lines, most notably between those

Roma/Gypsies who were impoverished, culturally distinctive, brown-skinned, and geographically isolated — and everyone else; between those who were “not normal” and those who looked and behaved in a manner that allowed them access to the collective “we.”

As I illustrate in greater depth in the coming chapters, people of Roma/Gypsy origin were not always excluded, but departures from acceptability on the part of Roma/Gypsy persons were quickly and easily coded as being features of their ethnic character. Further, negative occurrences (thefts, illegal dumping, and so on) were often assumed to be the responsibility of Roma/Gypsy people. Radical departures from acceptability on the part of non-Gypsies, too, were also often likened to Gypsies, who practically entailed a categorical repository for negative values being ascribed to a person or group.³⁴

The European Capital of Culture Pécs2010 Program as a Heuristic

The ECoC program — and particularly the bid document submitted to the European Union to apply for the title — is useful from two different standpoints for thinking about institutional practices with Roma/Gypsies in Pécs and the racial ideological regimes that operate

³⁴ As one example of this phenomenon, British anthropologist Michael Stewart observed that during the state socialist period, members of the communist party were sometimes indicated to have a “Gypsy mentality” (1997:7). As another example: once, during my fieldwork in Hungary in 2009, after stepping in a thick pile of mud, I decided to rinse away the densest part to prevent it from caking on, until I would be home to clean the shoe properly, and I did so in a nearby puddle of rainwater. My friend was disgusted, stating, “Heather, that’s just like *the Gypsies!*!” Susan Gal observed that many of the popular stereotyping narratives about Gypsies in Hungary, for example that they tear up the floorboards of their flats to use as firewood and keep pigs in the bathtub, were characteristics that she had previously observed to be attributed by Hungarians to Romanians (that is, their neighbors to the east with whom they share a longstanding political rivalry due to the contested territory of Transylvania, which often has translated also into Hungarians’ personal dislike of Romanian people) (Gal 2016, personal communication). The transferability of these negative characteristics is noteworthy. In a similar vein, Brian Porter-Szűcs has observed that the new right-wing rhetoric in Poland about LGBTQ people and those espousing “gender ideology” has taken up much of the old anti-Semitic rhetoric — the “international Jewish conspiracy” and the putative gay conspiracy to undermine the Polish nation (Porter-Szűcs 2020, personal communication). He observes that anti-Masonic rhetoric taking a similar form predated even the anti-Semitic version. Gregory Czarnecki also analyzes the similarities between the rhetorics regarding the “Jewish conspiracy” and the “gay lobby” in Poland (Czarnecki 2007:333). As Porter-Szűcs aptly observes, such rhetorics say more about the people who are generating them than they do about those they are supposedly depicting (2020, personal communication).

within these institutions and are reflected in their practices. (1) It offers an opportunity to introduce Roma/Gypsy-related institutions in the city of Pécs from the perspective of those external to those institutions, through a narrative crafted by powerbrokers in the city and presented to a wider European audience.³⁵ This outsiders' narrative about Roma/Gypsy-related institutions that I deconstruct in this chapter paves the way for the in-depth discussion of internal dynamics within those institutions that is a focus of chapters two and three. (2) The bid document, in particular, represents a valuable synthesis of the reigning ideas at the time about the city of Pécs and the concept of the local collective, a “we,” within a Hungarian city of remarkable ethnic diversity. This synthesis offers insight into how Roma/Gypsies are envisioned as members of the community, and implications into how Roma/Gypsy integration is conceptualized in the mainstream.

The ECoC Pécs2010 program is also important to an ethnographic presentation of the city at the time because it represented a major city-wide event comprising several years, one which people there constantly talked about to me when they discovered I was a foreigner visiting the city. Knowing I was a researcher, they were particularly emphatic that I needed to see the brand-new, state-of-the-art “Knowledge Center” library that had been built as a key feature of the program. The ECoC Pécs2010 was a point of pride for many people in the city, one that was being anticipated with great eagerness in the time leading up to 2010, with expectations of the flood of visitors it would bring to the city and the wealth of events and programming it would entail. When I visited in the summer of 2009, the leader of a Roma organization wrote in my

³⁵ The phraseology of Roma/Gypsy-related institutions may seem awkward, but it purposely avoids the terminology of “Roma organization” that excludes institutions of interest that I include within my rubric. The Department of Romology, for instance, as a department of a state university, would not fit under the auspices of “Roma organization” – independent of the question of terminology of Roma versus Gypsy – because it is based in a state institution. Another issue is the question of what ethnic composition of a given organization determines whether or not it is a “Roma organization.”

letter of invitation to do research in her institution that she anticipated they would be very actively involved in many events and activities related to the ECoC in 2010. Construction dust was thick in the air in the summer of 2009, with the whole central square torn apart, with large sections fenced off, with large informational signs displayed that explained the ECoC. A flurry of construction continued through 2010, 2011, and well into 2012, when the much-anticipated Zsolnay Cultural Quarter was completed and ceremonially opened with a weekend-long inaugural grand opening festival.



Figure 2. Reconstruction of Széchenyi tér, the central square of Pécs, in August 2009, as part of the Pécs2010 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) program. Visible behind the dumpster of broken concrete are two informational posters regarding the ECoC. In the far left in the background, the famous mosque can be seen. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.



Figure 3. Reconstruction of Széchenyi tér in Pécs as part of the Pécs2010 European Capital of Culture program, August 2009. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.



Figure 4. Tourist trolley in Theater Square (Színház tér) in Pécs, August 2009, prominently displaying a placard advertising the European Capital of Culture program (Pécs2010 Európa Kulturális Fővárosa). Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

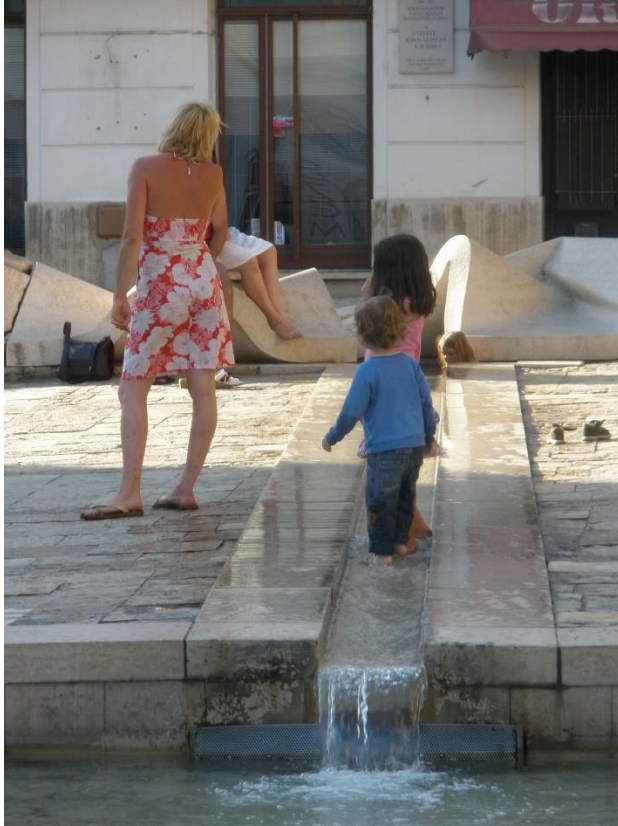


Figure 5. Children wading in newly installed fountain in Jókai tér (Jókai Square), Pécs, July 2009. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

As it came to be realized, the ECoC program had two central focuses: (1) the urban renewal and renovation of the physical landscape of the city and (2) the presentation of arts events. In the process, the program reinforced an order of things grounded in longstanding roles and perceptions were reinforced — Gypsies as natural performers, but undesirable neighbors; Gypsies on the stage but pushed out of urban spaces reclaimed for a public that rhetorically includes them but practically creates barriers that eliminate their access to them.

Using a discourse of multiculturalism, the ECoC Pécs2010 program rhetorically presented Roma/Gypsies in an inclusive fashion, and this rhetoric of inclusivity was supported with the presence of Roma/Gypsy performers in the events included in the public events in Pécs

from 2009 to 2012 (including over the course of the year of 2010, the designated year in which Pécs held the title of the European Capital of Culture). However, the largely class-blind orientation of the ECOC Pécs2010 program and its emphasis in its urban development model on “reclaiming” of “peripheral” areas of the city as “public space” stood in tension with this purported inclusion, because of its impact on historically Roma/Gypsy neighborhoods, promoting gentrification and eroding the opportunities for access to and informal usage of previously liminal spaces within their neighborhoods. Moreover, the apparent celebration of the Roma/Gypsy institutions in the city and references to features of Roma/Gypsy cultural distinction are paired with misinformation that suggest a superficial engagement with the subject matter and the organizations that are highlighted as a reflection of liberalism in the community.

The European Capital of Culture Pécs2010 Bid: *Borderless City*

The aspirations and concept of the ECoC Pécs2010 program are encapsulated succinctly in the document that was submitted as a bid to the European Union in 2006 in pursuit of the European Capital of Culture title for the year 2010. This 123-page document, entitled “Borderless City: European Capital of Culture — Pécs, 2010,” was prepared “on behalf of the Local Government of the City of Pécs, Published by the Pécs 2010 Application Center” with text by József Takáts and English translation by András Bocz. Although originally drafted in Hungarian, the English translation was the official version that was prepared for the competition and submitted for consideration by the European Union. For this reason, my analysis focuses on the English text.

The bid document *Borderless City* is dense, outlining and articulating many important ideas simultaneously about Pécs’s past, present, and future. It also offers a broader schema of the

meaning and function of cities more generally, and situates the city of Pécs within this framework of urbanity, urban planning, urban development, and cosmopolitanism. Simultaneously, it engages the other core elements/aspects of the European Capital of Culture program, namely “Europe” and “European” as cultural and geographic constructs, and “culture” in its various forms. The document articulated a vision of what the city was, what its history was, who was a part of the city and how, what the city’s most desirable future was, and finally what the ECoC program would contribute toward realizing that future — all from the standpoint from the power brokers of the city who were the architects and authors of the text.

ECoC Pécs2010 as a Democratic Reflection of the Collective of Pécs and its Community Aspirations

With weathered commemorative plaques displayed on buildings and monuments that offered insight in Hungarian language into the distinctly Islamic features of the “mosque church” in the central square and other architectural relics of the Ottoman Turkish era, the pride Pécsi people took in their city clearly dated back farther than the bid to become part of this prestigious European Union program. The archaeological features of several other key periods also were demarcated to illuminate the city’s multilayered past. City and regional archives were indexed and curated with care, many even collated in book form, to evidence the colorful “patchwork history” of this ancient settlement.

However, the grand, richly appointed, newly constructed “Knowledge Center” library and regional archives — and the state-of-the-art concert performance space, named the Kodály Center for the celebrated Hungarian musicologist and music pedagogue — represented part of a newer effort, partly re-creation of the city itself, partly rebranding, which had apparently involved the investment of much time, effort, and money over several years to “achieve [the]

main goal” of “the cultural development process” that had been underway for “the past four decades.” That is, to “reorganise the structure of [Pécs’s] economy on the basis of culture, leaving behind the former phase of development characterised by mining and various branches of industry.” So explained then-mayor László Toller in his introductory statement at the beginning of *Borderless City*. From being a state industrial city socialist era in the 1960s, focused heavily on mining the uranium reserves of the surrounding hills, which provided core raw and manufactured goods to the highly centralized, state-administered Eastern Bloc economic network, Pécs was to achieve its rightful claim as a center of European culture —the end point of a natural process of cultural evolution bolstered by the support of the European Union program. In addition to its financial support in realizing specific goals related to urban development, the European Capital of Culture program provided external validation of Pécs’s identity as one of the great cities of Europe.

The aim of reorganizing the economy on the basis of culture, according to Mr. Toller, represented a shared, universal priority for the people of Pécs, where extensive debates over a three-year period “evolved into co-operative actions” that had culminated in the bid document as “the outcome of these joint efforts, based on wide public and political consensus” (7). The mayor’s confidence in the extent of the consensus was apparent in his far-reaching statement, asserting that “Here in Pécs *we all feel . . .*” (7) [emphasis added]. Toller asserted unity of opinion and purpose of the whole population of some 156,383 people (as of 2006) in obtaining the title of European Capital of Culture for their city and restructuring its economy and landscape, updating them for a new era.

The Multicultural Collective of Pécs as Articulated through *Borderless City*

Reflecting an apparent consensus and speaking sometimes from a first-person plural frame of reference, the “we” of *Borderless City* is part of what I interrogate here. At least nominally, the document is rich with references to diversity, “multiculturality,” and various minority groups present in and constituting a part of the social body of the city. In this sense, Pécs’s bid for the ECoC2010 title stands apart from the bid made by Budapest for the same title; references to ethnic minorities of Hungary were minimal, almost nonexistent, in the latter. Roma/Gypsies specifically are mentioned explicitly several times in the Pécs bid document, along with Croatians and Germans, with scattered references to other ethnic groups who make up the population of Pécs along with its Hungarian majority.

In terms of its representation of Roma/Gypsies specifically, there are explicit references to Roma/Gypsy people in four different sections of the document, and their inclusion in the ECoC program appears to be a central goal with the statement that “The familiarization and recognition of Romany culture and the issue of equal opportunities are given a prominent role in our bid document” (18). Indeed, apart from the Hungarian majority, Roma receive more attention in the bid document than any other group except perhaps the German/Swabian minority who also comprise a large part of the population of Pécs and its surrounding region.³⁷ This attention

³⁷ It is perhaps notable that some Swabians in Pécs reported their anger to me in 2011-2012 about their general invisibility and that their own history of persecution in Hungary during and after World War II was not generally recognized or talked about. The attention Roma/Gypsies received domestically and internationally was therefore a source of resentment for the Swabians also for reasons specific to their own history as an ethnic minority in Hungary. Some of their experiences in Baranya County and experiences of ethnic Germans generally across Eastern Europe, including their expulsion from many places, as well as some of the complexities of their identity issues, are discussed in Ulrich Merten’s monograph *Forgotten Voices: The Expulsion of the Germans from Eastern Europe after World War II* (Merten 2012), with a chapter devoted to their experiences in Hungary. One account he includes is from a farmer from the district of Mohács in Baranya County, who describes a group of about fifteen of them being held by police for three days in Fünfkirchen (the German name for Pécs) and then brought “under German military escort” to Darda, where they were forcibly enrolled in the German forces (Merten 2012:179-180). Merten states that many Swabians in Hungary espoused ethnic Magyar identity at the time of the war and were resistant to being recruited to fight for the Nazis.

appears to be paid due to the perceived importance of Pécs in the cultivation and support of Romani/Gypsy cultural traditions. “Today [Pécs] is the most important centre of German, Croatian, and Romany culture in Hungary,” (17) the document states, noting that these groups as well as six other groups (Serbian, Bulgarian, Polish, Greek, Ukrainian, and Ruthenian) have minority self-governments in Pécs and discussing the educational institutions specific to German and Romani cultural traditions.

From the standpoint of inclusion, the document reflects a liberal mindset with explicit values of “tolerance” and “equal opportunities for the minorities,” and a celebration of “multiculturality.” The idea of openness is referenced several times in different contexts. In terms of consciousness of class divisions and socioeconomic inequalities, there was some sensitivity to poverty that was also reflected at least nominally in the text, in a couple of references to “disadvantaged social groups,” specifically the target of creating “access to a wide range of new opportunities for disadvantaged social groups” (80) and the goal of moving toward “e-government,” which “make[s] it possible to extend the dimensions of democracy and improve the prospects of people with disabilities and disadvantaged social groups” (50). However, the level of engagement with the question of class is minimal in *Borderless City*. Moreover, the assumption that e-government can assist in accessing government services for impoverished persons demonstrates a disconnection with the reality of the most impoverished persons in Pécs and in the surrounding region around Baranya. Access to computers (and internet) was only possible for many people through pooling resources or relying on community-based organizations as community access sites.

Pécs is “a Little Bit Mediterranean:” Multiculturalism in the ECoC and the Social Geography of Pécs

In its bid for the ECoC title, the local government of Pécs highlighted the city’s multiethnic demographic composition and its distinctive history and geography — features that were often claimed as points of pride by many people in Pécs. Pécsi people (the people of Pécs) often liked to say that the city was “a little bit Mediterranean.” Besides its proximity to the border to Croatia, gateway to the beautiful beaches and islands of the Adriatic Sea, Pécs also boasted a relatively temperate climate and a hilly landscape, both of which distinguished it from most of the rest of Hungary. But the city’s human features were also distinctive, with its unique location and history of place reflected in the diversity of its built environment, sociocultural characteristics, and demography. Whereas many municipalities in Hungary had populations comprising almost exclusively an ethnic Magyar (Hungarian) majority and an ethnic Roma/Gypsy minority, in Pécs in 2010, there were minority self-governments not only for Roma/Gypsies, but also for Croats, Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Poles, Germans, Ruthenians, and Ukrainians.³⁸ Not surprisingly, “multiculturalism” was a recurring theme in the narrative presented to the European Union. It was also a community characteristic that local leaders often discussed when explaining the situation of local Roma/Gypsies and their own work in Roma/Gypsy-related institutions, programs, and issues.

Multiculturalism/Multiculturalism in Pécs in the Context of Mainstream Hungarian Fears

The emphasis on Roma/Gypsies in *Borderless City* is consistent with the general ethos of “celebratory multiculturalism” (Hale 2002) that governs the program document. Many, many

³⁸ Rozs, András, *kisebbségi önkormányzatok* (“minority self-governments,”) Pécs Lexicon v. 1, p.397.

times in the bid document, a point is made about the “rich multiculturalism” of the city of Pécs, comprising (as noted above) not only ethnic Hungarians, but also many other groups, a similar composition to that of the territory south of the border in Croatia, in the former Yugoslavia. Multiplicity is a common theme in the document — multilingualism as a notable feature of an 18th century bishop’s library (89), the “multireligious nature of Pécs and the peaceful coexistence of these different religions in the city” (90), and most of all, “multiculturalism” — multiculturalism as a feature of Pécs, its surrounding region, and the Balkans.

Through the ECoC, Pécs faithfully performs European liberalism with a particular Central European and Balkan flair, a performance in which multiculturalism is the core common language between a provincial Hungarian city and the uncontested central powers of Europe and the cultural heritage of colonial empires. This is not to suggest that the performance is inauthentic, nor that it is undertaken lightly. Pécs’s history as a sanctuary city during the Balkan wars, and the very multiplicity of minority institutions, reflect that there is substance to the narrative of inclusion in spite of its contradictions.

Part of what is noteworthy about Pécs’s ECoC bid, too, is that demographic factors that in mainstream Hungarian discourse are the subject of anxiety and preoccupation are strategically presented by the putative collective of Pécs as a manifestation of European cultural value and significance. Within this framework, a robust network of institutions of minorities — whose very presence (and increasing demographic strength, in the case of Roma/Gypsies in particular), from the standpoint of white nationalists, represented a threat to the “Hungarian nation” and Hungarian culture through demographic and cultural dilution— in fact become indexical of relevance and Europeanness itself.

A combination of outmigration and a low birthrate for the overall population meant negative population growth in the context of a small country with relatively little political power and global cultural recognition. With a differential birthrate between Roma/Gypsies and non-Roma, there was a notable fear among white nationalists about the “browning” of Hungary that dovetailed with lingering resentment about the territorial losses through the Treaty of Trianon at the end of World War I, which were escalating between the time *Borderless City* was submitted to the European Union in 2006 and the time Pécs held the title in 2010. (In the intervening years to the present, the fears have continued to escalate, although the anxieties have come to incorporate immigrants into the schema.)³⁹ The linkage in Hungarian nationalist ideology between the narrowing conceptualization of the Hungarian nation in ethnic, religious, and cultural terms with the preoccupation with territorial losses through Trianon could be seen in the images of “greater Hungary” you could often see displayed in the early 2000s, often on bumper stickers placed on private vehicles, such as the one in figure 6 below.⁴⁰

³⁹ Anti-Semitism has also become more prominent in the rhetoric through the depiction of George Soros as instigating an assault on Hungarian values and autonomy through his financial support of liberal institutions in the country.

⁴⁰ In this instance, the symbol at the center of the territory of Hungary with its pre-Trianon borders (overlaid with the red, white, and green stripes of the Hungarian national flag) is a coat of arms of Hungary flanked by two angels. This was the official coat of arms was used officially between the Austro-Hungarian compromise of 1867 to the end of World War I.



Figure 6. Decal attached to a car window in Pécs in August 2009, depicting the territory of Hungary with its pre-Trianon borders overlaid with the colors of the Hungarian national flag and an historical version of the Hungarian coat of arms. The image of “greater Hungary” (in with different variations), a symbol of Hungarian irredentism, could be seen frequently around Hungary during this period. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

The sentiments regarding demographics and cultural “dilution” in Hungary found expression through varied forms from the benign to the murderous. The mainstream anxieties and beliefs were vividly articulated in anti-Gypsy videos posted to the popular online video site YouTube during the period 2009-10. These white supremacist, anti-Gypsy videos that were increasingly numerous on YouTube in 2009-2010 propagated the popular discourse on (“Gypsy crime”) and stirred the fears of Magyar extinction through narratives about demographic change and Hungarian territory being taken over. In three such videos, the threat was made absolutely explicit when they culminated in images of a map of the territory of Hungary: If things continue as they are, Hungary will become overrun with Gypsies, so much so that it will literally become a Gypsy country. Whether with black-colored walnuts, hazard-indexing red color, or a moustached, gold-eared, violin wielding cricket, the videos depicted a Hungary overtaken by difference, where what is familiar and normative is disappearing from the landscape, and the territory is overrun with Others. Two screenshots from different videos are included below:



Figure 7. Screenshot from YouTube video “Népesedés Dinamika, Statisztika ,előrejelzés” (Demographic Dynamics, Statistics, Forecast), posted February 2009.



Figure 8. Screenshot from YouTube video “A Tücsök és a Hangya” (The Cricket and the Ant), posted August 13, 2008.

The video “A Tücsök és a Hangya,” uploaded by a user named Hannibal Gárdista on August 13, 2008, offers more insight into what this imagined dystopian “Gypsified” future apparently looks like in Hungary, depicting at length many of the popular stereotypes about Gypsies. We see images of violent criminal activity, parasitic destruction of the country’s infrastructure and natural resources, frenetic copulation, and more, in this video based on the Moricka comic book “Tücsök és Hangyák” (Cricket and Ants), drawing on the folktale “the Cricket and the Ant.”

During the same period, a series of attacks on Roma/Gypsy persons by right-wing extremists took place between 2008 and 2009, in which six Roma/Gypsy persons were killed and 55 injured. Before finally being apprehended by authorities, Zsolt Pető and the brothers Árpád

and István Kiss, together with the assistance of István Csontos, executed a series of nine attacks across the country between November 2008 and August 2009 using shotguns, grenades, and petrol bombs, before finally being apprehended by authorities. The murder victims were Éva Illés (age 40) and József Nagy in Nagycséc on November 3, 2008; Róbert Csorba (age 27) and son Róbert Csorba (age 5) in Tatárszentgyörgy on February 22, 2009; Jenő Kóka (age 54) in Tiszalök on April 22, 2009; and Mária Balogh in Kisléta on August 9, 2009. In fact, the attacks by this particular group of extremists were only nine out of at least 48 violent attacks on Roma in the period 2008-2010 (Stewart 2012:xiv)

Although many in Hungary were outraged and shocked by the targeting of innocent Roma/Gypsy people on the basis of race in premeditated attacks of violence, there were also those who said that they needed to be viewed in the context of the (putative) deviant and criminal behavior of Roma/Gypsies as a whole, in particular, the phenomenon of *cigánybűnözés* (“Gypsy criminality”). As scholar Lídia Balogh has noted, “According to a survey in 2006, almost two thirds (62 percent) of the adult population of Hungary agreed fully or to some degree with the following statement: ‘The tendency to commit crime is in the blood of the Roma’” (Balogh 2012: 242, citing Tárki).

Some have observed a resurgence in the discourse of *cigánybűnözés* specifically in the wake of the incident in Olaszliszka in 2006 in which Romani perpetrators brutally killed an ethnic Magyar man named Lajos Szögi. Jenő Kaltenbach, Parliamentary Commissioner for National and Ethnic Minority Rights from 1995 to 2007, was alarmed by the portrayal of the murder in the Hungarian media, where the crime was being attributed to the ethnic background of the perpetrators. Kaltenbach attempted to intervene, calling on the National Association of Hungarian Journalists and the management of one of the Hungarian television channels to

challenge the “inciteful *cigányozás* (derogatory talk about Romani people) in the press, and the general tendency to discuss the Olaszliszka murder as an element of *cigányügy* (the Gypsy issue)” (Boromisza-Habashi 2012:107-108). Unfortunately, there was ultimately no action taken.

Lídia Balogh points to the socialist era, when ethnic data was kept by police and prosecution offices between 1971 and 1988, as the origin of the term *cigánybűnözés* (Balogh 2012:242). There were specialized “Gypsy crime” units in the police departments at the time (Dunajeva 2014:61). However, the attribution of criminal deviance on the part of Roma/Gypsies to their biology goes back much farther, at least to the 19th century, when Italian criminological anthropologist Cesare Lombroso was creating profiles of criminal types, including the “Gypsy criminal.”⁴¹ Discourses of Gypsy criminality were part of the justification of the Nazi genocide of their people during World War II. Again, although many in Hungary recognize the Roma/Gypsy genocide as a tragic and dark episode in the history of the region, there are those who dismiss its significance — and some, even, its existence. As of 2014, civil leaders, including Romani activist and Holocaust historian Ágnes Daróczi, were still petitioning the Hungarian government to have anti-Romani persecution and the Roma Holocaust included in Hungarian

⁴¹ In his text on portrayals of Jewish crime and criminals in Viennese newspapers between 1895 and 1914, historian Daniel Vyleta’s discussion of the distinctions between perceptions (and representations) of Jewish versus Gypsy criminals in the criminological literature by the authors Cesare Lombroso, Gross, and Herz is quite instructive in relation to contemporary Hungarian discourses regarding *cigánybűnözés*, because the assumptions are still strikingly similar (Vyleta 2007:52-55). He writes, “Lombroso systematically removed Gypsies from common humanity and described them as atavisms incarnate, a race from before civilized time” (Vyleta 2007:52). In contrast, Vyleta observes, “The Jew, in the contemporary criminological literature, was not then conceptualized as a physiological other, but as a hyper-rational actor, whose criminal activities exemplified civilisatory progress rather than opposed it” (*ibid*). The criminologists emphasized the “metaphor of animal behaviour and animal skill” in relation to Gypsies, comparing them “to ‘wild beasts’ because like certain animals they ‘wander in the winter months.’ They were said to have the ‘agility and suppleness of weasels,’ the ‘eyes of owls and the ears of foxes’ and were animated with an ‘animal sensuality. A Gypsy would slink around potential crime scenes ‘like a fox,’ and would only be given away by his or her pungent animal smell that was like ‘fat and mouse smells combined’ and that clung to the walls long after he or she was gone. On this metaphorical level, too, we are thus consistently reminded that ‘the gypsy differs completely from every civilized human being, even the coarsest and most degraded kind,’ i.e. that he represented a racially cohesive other, that moved and lived in a herd, and hence was hardly human at all.” (Vyleta 2007:53).

schoolbooks about World War II history, and lamenting an absence of government funding for the annual Holocaust commemoration in Budapest in August or for the clean-up of the memorial on the banks of the Danube, which has been desecrated with dog feces and having parts of it gouged out (Tóth 2014).

As Balogh wrote in 2012,

“In April 2009, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Civil Rights, Máté Szabó, said in an interview that Hungarian society needs to be warned about ‘Gypsy crimes,’ which are a special type of ‘livelihood delinquency,’ carried out by Roma, who still live in a ‘collectivist, nearly tribal society, which stands in sharp contrast with the Hungarian society’s individualist approach’” (Balogh 2012:242).

Although the murders between 2008 and 2009 were their most extreme expression, these beliefs about “Gypsy criminality” are decidedly mainstream, and anti-Gypsy sentiment in Hungary has been so commonplace in the postsocialist period, it can be identified as hegemonic.⁴² Meanwhile, white supremacy has become increasingly pervasive. In the context of the episodic racially motivated violence against Roma/Gypsies and mainstream beliefs and discourses that identify criminality as an inherent characteristic of Roma/Gypsy people, expressions of faith in multiculturalism and value of Roma/Gypsy culture and institutions in Pécs appear all the more significant. Gypsiness, almost universally coded in the mainstream as a negative, except with reference to musical expression also being “in the blood” of Roma/Gypsies, appears to have room for acceptance and inclusion in the ECoC; there is, at least, a narrative in which they have a part.

⁴² Although this manuscript alludes to this mainstream racial ideological regime many times as the backdrop to what is operating within the context of institutions supportive of Roma/Gypsies and their inclusion and empowerment, it does not receive in-depth analysis. I have previously written and also presented at academic conferences on this topic (e.g. Tidrick 2009, 2010, 2011, 2015, 2016) and I will likely incorporate it more explicitly into the picture I present of Hungary in the postsocialist period as this work develops. In this project, however, I have chosen to focus more intensively on the counternarratives and alternative practices of the time, with a particular emphasis on building the ethnographic record of alternative formulations in the city of Pécs.

Indeed, that the ECoC bid document references Roma/Gypsy cultural distinction in a positive light is notably countercultural in the context of mainstream discourses that frame any Gypsy-associated distinction as stigmatized and undesirable. On the other, although it is affirmed as a valid cultural system through inclusion among the notable minority “cultures” in the city, the neutrality with which it is referenced does nothing to combat the extreme dislike and discrimination that still constituted the dominant attitudes toward Roma/Gypsies in Pécs at the time. The more generous inference is that this was a way to strike a balance among people of differing attitudes in Pécs. The less generous interpretation is that the appearance of interest in Roma/Gypsy cultural features and institutions is affected and purely strategic. The reality probably falls somewhere between these two. Indeed, as I illustrate in the ethnographic portraits of two Roma/Gypsy-related institutions in Pécs in chapters two and three, political neutrality and a multiculturalist ideological framework also characterized most of the everyday institutional practices within these organizations.

Gypsy Language Education in Pécs

Roma/Gypsy education in Pécs is one area of their institutional infrastructure that is particularly emphasized in the text of *Borderless City*. The assertions regarding Romani/Gypsy education are noteworthy, because they appear to be one of the arguments the city is making for its own significance to Roma and therefore overall as a culturally vital and relevant cosmopolitan urban environment. The document states, “Pécs is the only Hungarian city where education for the Gypsy population is provided in their own language at all levels, from kindergarten up to the university level. Through the work of the Romany educational institutions in the city — the Gandhi Secondary Grammar School, the Collegium Martineum and the Department of

Romology at the University — Pécs and its region serve as a model for the entire country” (18). In a later section of the document, it is reiterated that Pécs is “a city which provides the opportunity for studies in the Gypsy language from kindergarten up to the university level” (96).

This twice repeated assertion bears some analysis, both because of the emphasis placed on it, and because it is somewhat misleading on a few levels. First of all, it should be noted that the primary language of instruction is Hungarian in all of the educational institutions mentioned above. The courses offered that employ a Roma/Gypsy language are also taught in Hungarian — the language component in a distinctly Romani/Gypsy language that appears in such courses is grammar and lexicon taught to Hungarian speakers to advance their basic knowledge in that second language. Sometimes the classes also contain students who are “heritage speakers” of the Romani/Gypsy language being taught, but they are fully able to communicate in Hungarian language and access the lessons being taught in Hungarian. What is available in Pécs is *not* a comprehensive educational program offered in a minority language — such as one would see in a Francophone bilingual institution such as a French-American school. This explanation should not be read as a criticism, but merely an explication of the type of minority language educational opportunity that is offered in the city.

In fact, a more comprehensive educational program in Romani/Gypsy language — for example, offering science or arts classes in Romani — would be impractical in Pécs for several reasons. One reason of its impracticality leads me to my second point about the ECoC assertions about Gypsy language education in Pécs — namely, that it is not a straightforward project identifying the language of delivery for classes. Because Roma/Gypsies live all over the world, their people speak many different languages, usually including the majority language of the place in which they grew up and/or live, and sometimes additional languages as well. Some

Roma/Gypsies also speak a distinctly Romani/Gypsy language, the most widely recognized of which is Romani. Romani is an Indo-European language based on Proto-Sanskrit with resemblances to modern-day Hindi and Punjabi. This language is considered to be very important to Roma people from the perspective of cultural heritage; Romani scholars of historical linguistics demonstrate that it is the language of the ancestors of Roma, which appears to have come into existence in Byzantine Greece. Some, such as Ian Hancock, argue that its emergence as a codified language co-occurred with the emergence of “the Romani people,” a group with a codified ethnic identity (Hancock 2002, personal communication; Hancock ND: 4, 34). Many people value the Romani language both because of its special role in the ethnic heritage and history of Romani/Gypsy people as well as because of the element of supporting communication across geographic borders, for Roma from different countries who meet and are able to communicate in their mother tongue — or, potentially (and occasionally), a language learned later in the interest of ethnic solidarity with other Roma worldwide.⁴³

In Hungary and some other surrounding countries, there is a Gypsy sub-group called Beash, some of whom speak another distinctly Gypsy language, also called Beash. In Pécs and Baranya County as a whole, Beash constituted a large component of the overall population of Roma/Gypsies in the area. In institutions in Pécs where Gypsy minority language is provided, Beash and Romani are often taught side by side (with classes offered in each), as “Gypsy languages,” in principle with no privileging of one language over the other. In the Gandhi school, for example, the curriculum required choosing one of the languages as one’s primary language of study and pursuing it for three years, then studying the other one for an additional year (Mercator 2005: 10). This approach of equivalency of the languages was controversial for a

⁴³ This was a situation I observed among some Roma activists in Budapest in the early 2000s.

number of reasons. For one, there is an element of practicality: Romani speakers are much more numerous and widely distributed geographically; they represent a few million worldwide (estimates range; Bakker *et al* estimate the total number to be 4.5 million), whereas Beash speakers amount to approximately a few hundred thousand, concentrated almost exclusively in southern Hungary, Romania, and northern Croatia.⁴⁴ From the standpoint of facilitating communication for Roma/Gypsies across geographic boundaries in the interest of ethnic solidarity, Beash has limited currency.

The more common argument against this equivalency of languages in Roma/Gypsy education (sometimes implicit rather than explicit) is around the idea of authenticity and the connection that Romani language provides with the ethnic heritage of ancestors who represented the original group of Roma. Although Beash scholars sometimes take issue with its characterization as such, their language is often described as resembling an archaic form of Romanian. In this sense, representing linguistic assimilation of Gypsy people to the majority population at a time when many of them were living in slavery, the Beash language could arguably be considered a language adopted from the oppressors of their ancestors, sometimes assimilation by slaves to their masters. This characterization would no doubt deeply offend many speakers of Beash, for whom the language is usually the language of home and family, with positive associations of intimacy and shared and distinctive identity. In their communities, where Beash generally represent the primary or only Gypsy group, Beash language represents one marker of Gypsy distinction, a cultural feature that distinguished “us” from “them,” as it was very rare for someone of non-Beash heritage to speak their language. (Outside the context of the

⁴⁴ Researchers estimate that between 5% and 8% of Roma/Gypsies in Hungary speak Beash (Mercator 2005, citing Hegedus 1999:27, and Trehan 1997:104). In 2000, Kemény estimated that approximately 56,000 people in Hungary used the Beash language and that it was the mother tongue of 28,000 people there (Kemény 2000:319).

Roma/Gypsy institutions of Pécs and/or those who had emerged from or passed through them, it was especially rare, but not unheard of.) If one spoke Beash language, it was a demarcation line between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, but also could be a powerful one between Beash and Roma/Gypsies of other subgroups.

For the reason of this complicated sociolinguistic dimension, there is a practical consideration in providing minority language education to Roma/Gypsies “in their own language,” about which language is chosen. Beash scholar Anna Orsós asserts that there are two languages spoken by “the Gypsies,” Romani and Beash. (“How many languages do the Gypsies speak?” Anna Orsós asked a class of students in the Romology department in 2012. The answer she awaited, then affirmed, was two.) In Pécs, this principle, that Romani and Beash are *the* two “Gypsy languages,” is generally the guiding principle behind the provision of minority language education for Roma/Gypsies in local institutions — a fact no doubt influenced by the fact that Beash are so much more heavily represented among Roma/Gypsies in Pécs and the surrounding region of Baranya County than in the rest of Hungary. But where provision of comprehensive education in any Gypsy language would make a difference is in early childhood education and lower primary school grades in Beash- (or Vlax Romani-) majority villages where the children may not have had adequate exposure to Hungarian for them to succeed in classes provided in Hungarian language. Such cases are described by some Roma/Gypsy scholars in relation to their parents and the challenges in academic achievement in earlier generations. In an urban setting such as Pécs, this level of linguistic isolation is generally not present, and thus such an educational program would be impractical. Some level of Hungarian language learning support might be warranted in some cases for younger children beginning their transition into the mainstream Pécs school system from a Beash- or Romani-speaking household. In certain cases

of limited literacy, there could be an argument for older students. However, this kind of program is not what is being described in the ECoC bid document.

What is actually offered in terms of minority language education in Pécs in the Gandhi secondary school and the Romology department at the University of Pécs is isolated classes of basic grammar and lexicon in Beash and Romani languages, taught in Hungarian by teachers of Gypsy or non-Gypsy origin who may or may not be native speakers of the language they are teaching. These classes are geared most strongly toward successful completion of the *Érettségi* foreign language examination, required for all graduates of Hungarian universities. One question, which has often been posed as a critique vis à vis Roma/Gypsy civil society organizations as a whole in Central and Eastern Europe, was what the significance of such programs was to Roma/Gypsies not affiliated with these institutions — the average Roma/Gypsy people living in Pécs. When I spoke to Roma/Gypsies unaffiliated with the Romology Department and/or the Gandhi school during my fieldwork in 2011-2012, few of them were aware of or interested in these activities. Thus, another question arises about the import of such programs vis à vis the ECoC, since the majority of those whose heritage was ethnic Magyar or that of any of the other national groups comprising the population of Pécs had minimal to no interest in Roma/Gypsy institutions of minority language education. From the standpoint of European standards of minority inclusion, however, it was a very important point. Demonstrating attention to this area shored up the assertions of Europeanness and Pécs's achievements vis à vis Roma integration and community and state support of Roma/Gypsy cultural heritage.

Roma/Gypsy Institutions in Pécs

In addition to the multiple references to Gypsy language education in Pécs, there was some discussion in *Borderless City* about both existing and proposed institutions related to the Roma/Gypsy minority. As noted above, the Gandhi secondary school was a high school in Pécs that provided education primarily (but not exclusively) to Romani/Gypsy children with an emphasis on Roma/Gypsy cultural heritage, including languages of Roma/Gypsies in Hungary.⁴⁵ The bid document referenced the Gandhi school as a potential site of cultural activities during the ECoC year: “Gandhi Secondary Grammar School located in the outskirts may be a venue for conferences or exhibitions dealing with Romany culture, but could host many other programmes” (101). Besides the educational institutions referenced (the Gandhi school, the Collegium Martineum, and the Department of Romology at the University of Pécs), the bid document also acknowledges other institutions existing in Pécs that are involved with Roma/Gypsies: “In addition to social organisations there are several other institutions, dealing for instance with the artistic education of Gypsy children” (18).⁴⁶

Apart from the reference to the existing Roma institutions in Pécs, the ECoC bid document also proposed the foundation of a new institution, called the “European Tolerance Centre,” “a scientific research and training centre” (96). The goal of the centre would be to “engage in issues of the assertion and protection of minority rights as an official institution of the European Union” (96). The primary argument for the establishment of such an institution in Pécs

⁴⁵ Mercator indicated in 2005 that 95% of the pupils at the Gandhi school were of Roma/Gypsy ancestry (Mercator 2005:10).

⁴⁶ Elsewhere I have translated “collegium” as “college,” but in the case of the Collegium Martineum, it is better explained in the manner used by Mercator, namely, “talent nurturing [hall] of residence.” They explain: “The hostels and residences are institutions aiming at socialization and correction of deficiencies of upbringing in the family. In this case, students can study in any secondary school in the region” (Mercator 2005:24). It is telling that the purpose was identified as “correction of deficiencies of upbringing in the family” — a highly pejorative way of describing the family and its cultural practices of upbringing.

is its role as a city of sanctuary and “humane assistance during the South Slav war” in the late 1990s — for which UNESCO named Pécs “The City of Peace” (96). The bid document also proposed that “one central programme of the Centre could be the study of equal opportunities for Romany people in Europe” (96). Thus, the proposed European Tolerance Centre would be an institution actively engaged in European Romani/Gypsy issues.⁴⁷

Roma/Gypsy Subgroups in Pécs

Besides references to Gypsy language and institutions engaged with Roma issues, there was one more point the ECoC bid document made with regard to the local Roma/Gypsy minority. It states, “The majority of the Romany population in the region belongs to the Boyash (or Beyash) branch, while the rest are Romanian Gypsies” (18). This is essentially misinformation, a bit troubling given the emphasis placed on the Roma/Gypsy minority as a feature of the multiculturalism of Pécs. It *is* correct that Boyash make up the majority of Roma/Gypsies in Baranya County and Pécs specifically. However, Romanian Roma are not to be found there. Of course, this misinformation could very well have made its way into the document through miscommunication or misunderstanding, given that the document was submitted in English after being translated from the original Hungarian text. Even if the matters related to Roma/Gypsies in the area were discussed with local Roma experts (any of whom could have explained why this statement is not correct), as it passed through many hands, a mistranslation or erroneous

⁴⁷ It appears that this idea did not come to fruition in the city; as of 2020, this researcher could find no reference to such a center existing in the city of Pécs. There is a nonprofit organization in Paris that is called the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation, which was established in October 2008 and as of 2020 has former British prime minister Tony Blair as the chairman of the board. There is also a European Tolerance Center Fresach, located in southern Austria in the state of Carinthia. In Riga, Latvia, there is a European International Tolerance Center, also called the European Centre of Tolerance, which focuses on research on the Holocaust and contemporary forms of radicalism. Although the proposal suggested in *Borderless City* in 2006 could possibly have had a part in the creation of one or more of these institutions, it seems more likely that they arose independently, and there is no mention of Pécs in any of their websites as of January 2020.

“correction” could have been made. The “Roma,” “Romani,” “Romungro,” “Roman,” “Romanies,” and “Romanian” terms are frequently a source of confusion for many, and to add to the confusion, “Roma” is used somewhat differently in Hungarian than it is in English. For one, the proofreader of the English text, Simon Corrigan, was a British expatriate in Budapest with no specific knowledge on the topic of Roma. Anyone else in the chain could have introduced an error.

Still, it is unfortunate that misinformation made its way into a document placing such an emphasis on the importance of Roma organizations and cultural resources in Pécs. Given the other emphasis on consensus and broad-based cooperation and involvement, it is a pity the final version did not get fact-checked with those knowledgeable on the topic. The problem with the representation that the majority of the Roma/Gypsies in the area are Romanian (i.e. recent immigrants from Romania, not raised in Hungary) is that it suggests heavy migration and/or itinerancy that are both perceived as characteristic features of Roma/Gypsy people, a component of a widespread stereotype (the “wandering Gypsy”). I frequently joked with my Roma/Gypsy friends in Pécs about how much more frequently I traveled than they did. Like most of the Roma/Gypsy population across Eastern Europe in the postsocialist period (with their community having been subject to the socialist era assimilation campaigns), they were sedentary, worked in fixed locations, and traveled for the more or less the same reasons anyone else travels: for holidays, for social visits, and for work responsibilities like academic conference presentations. They had a strong sense of local connection to Pécs as their home and had roots in the community. As Alaina Lemon writes in her monograph on Roma in Russia,

There never lived an abstract Gypsy, ‘nowhere and everywhere.’ The image of wandering leads to faulty abstractions about diaspora: all humans travel and shift. The challenge may be less to construct a ‘nomadology’ for Gypsies (cf Deleuze and Guattari 1987:23)

than to see that Roma, too, belong to places. Particular histories, and the numerous quotidian discursive performances that recent and distant memory narrate, make it apparent that Roma do not see themselves as mere guests; they *earnestly* see themselves as simultaneously Romani and a number of other things, be it Russian, Soviet, Orthodox, or ‘black’” (Lemon 2000: 4).⁴⁸

What Lemon observes in Russia was true in Hungary as well: Whereas cosmopolitanism was a prominent characteristic among some of the Roma/Gypsies living in Budapest in the postsocialist period, given their involvement in international organizations and the movement they often made within that circuit across international boundaries, Roma/Gypsies in Pécs were strongly domestically grounded in Hungary.

The reality is that few outside the circles of those power brokers in Pécs (and their supports in Budapest) who wrote and produced the text and those in the European Union institutions who evaluated the bid for the ECoC title would actually read this document. Therefore, the consequences of the error in terms of misrepresentation of the community to a broader audience are likely limited. Nonetheless, the error suggests a superficial knowledge of the topic when the performance of Roma/Gypsy inclusion seems a core part of the claims to Europeanness that are at the heart of the ECoC narrative.

As for the truth of the matter, it is ultimately unclear what the authors of the bid document intended to communicate when identifying the other Roma/Gypsies of the area as “Romanian.” One assumes they mean one of three things: (1) that the other non-Beash Roma are immigrants from Romania, or (2) that they are from a sub-group called Romanian Gypsies or

⁴⁸ The stereotype of the “wandering Gypsy” bears a resemblance to those of the “international Jew” and “wandering Jew.” In both cases, the perception of rootlessness and lack of local allegiance or connection is emphasized. See footnote 34 earlier in this chapter and footnote 16 in the introduction for further discussion of the fluidity of the application of stereotypes and stereotyping rhetorics.

Romanian Roma — or (3) this is a simple error in translation or copyediting, and perhaps they meant Romungros.

Of the three main groups of Roma/Gypsies in Hungary, Romungro are the most numerous, followed by Vlax (Olah), then by Boyash. In Budapest, as I noted above, one also encounters Roma born and raised in other countries, who have migrated to Hungary for work or educational opportunities, usually drawn by the international programs and initiatives based there, such as the Central European University, Open Society Institute, European Roma Rights Centre, etc. (This will undoubtedly change with the moves from Budapest of Soros's Open Society Foundation to Berlin and Central European University to Vienna due to the political environment cultivated in recent years by Viktor Orbán.) This movement has been made possible and facilitated by the language of operations of these organizations being English. In the coming chapters, there is more discussion about those Roma/Gypsies who constituted this group.

In Pécs, where organizations operated almost exclusively in Hungarian, Roma/Gypsies from other countries were far less likely to migrate and settle internationally into Pécs. Unless they came from a Hungarian village in one of the neighboring countries, for example in Slovakia, the Transylvanian region of Romania, or the Vojvodina territory of Serbia, such a transition would present significant language barriers. With limited jobs and economic opportunities available to *anyone* in Pécs, the movement of Roma/Gypsies was far more likely in this period to be outward to places like Germany or the United Kingdom, rather than into this provincial part of Hungary. There was one woman I met at an event at a Roma/Gypsy organization who spoke Hungarian and Romani and had come from a region in Slovakia that had historically been a part of Austria-Hungary and therefore had overlap in ethnic groups — including many ethnic Hungarians as well as the subgroups of Roma/Gypsies that were present

in the country of Hungary within its post-World War I geographic boundaries. There was not a single Romani/Gypsy person I met in Pécs during my fieldwork there who was born in Romania.

If we assume for a moment that the authors of the bid document were not referring to immigrant Roma/Gypsies from Romania, the question then is what they meant by “Romanian Gypsies.” The territory of contemporary Romania is a very important place in the history of Roma, because of the long period of Romani slavery in the areas of Moldavia and Wallachia. Because of their forced settlement and labor for ethnic Romanian and Hungarian landowners in the area, many of the Roma/Gypsies all over the world had ancestors who lived there. After the abolishment of slavery in a series of actions in the mid-1850s to 1864 (Hancock 1987: 35), there was much out-migration of Roma/Gypsies from the territories in which they had been enslaved. Both Vlax and Boyash Roma/Gypsies have such an ancestral connection with Romania in this sense. Thus, making a distinction between Boyash and Vlax on the basis of their connection to Romania is rather nonsensical. Romungros have a somewhat different history in Hungary, but one with a longer period of settlement in the territory of Hungary (or so-called Greater Hungary — encompassing the territory lost to surrounding countries at the end of World War I) than that of the other two groups. Therefore, it is very unclear what was meant by “Romanian Gypsies” in this general characterization of the Roma/Gypsy population of the area. If it was a simple translation error that wasn’t caught by the editors, it’s still somewhat uncertain what they intended to communicate. And, if they did mean Romungros, it is puzzling that they didn’t even mention the presence of Vlax Roma. While their numbers were quite small, the presence of Vlax Romani language was a crucial feature of Roma/Gypsy language education in the region.

This extended reflection on the question of one phrase in the ECoC bid document may seem excessive, but the point is that in a document explicitly emphasizing community consensus

and inclusion of minorities, particularly Roma/Gypsies, there is basic misinformation being presented about their population. The problem could have been avoided with another simple consultation of most anyone involved in the Roma/Gypsy organizations the ECoC bid document makes a specific point of referencing — and referencing more than once as one of the arguments for why Pécs is a suitable place to be selected as a European Capital of Culture. Although members of the Roma/Gypsy organizations expressed their anticipation in 2009 that they would have an active part in the ECoC when it materialized in their city, their expertise as to the composition of their own population was not reflected in the narrative about their own community in *Borderless City*. This is problematic in a document that purports to be fully representative of the whole city. It does point to the question, what *was* the involvement of Roma/Gypsies and Roma/Gypsy institutions in the process of writing this bid document — and, far more importantly, the lively public debate process that culminated in “wide public and political consensus” and “co-operative actions” the then-mayor of Pécs, Dr. László Toller, referred to in his discussion of how the ECoC bid came about. To put it another way, are Roma/Gypsies part of the “we” who “all feel” that the ECoC title would benefit the community? If so, which Roma/Gypsies? Who was consulted, who was involved? With e-government proposed as a solution to promote access to resources, it appears plain that the Roma/Gypsies living in one-room houses without bathrooms were not part of the participatory process. Who else was missing?

The content analyzed in the previous section comprises all specific references made to Romani/Gypsy people and Romani/Gypsy culture and language(s) in the ECoC bid document. The interest that Roma have in the ECoC program obviously goes beyond the specific ways their population is discussed in the bid document, however. As members of the population of the city

of Pécs, Roma/Gypsy people in Pécs, like those of any other ethnic group, would be affected and have an interest in any changes to the landscape and economic structure of their community.

How “Community” is Conceived in ECoC

The ECoC bid document represents an effort at a totalizing vision of the city of Pécs, within its wider region, and in relation to the rest of Hungary and the rest of Europe. The goal of the ECoC Pécs2010 program was to refashion the entire city in ways that transform the lives of its inhabitants and visitors through the deliberate transformation of its physical spaces. Thus, every reference to “the community” and the “citizens” of Pécs was, at least in principle, inclusive of Roma as it is of all ethnic Hungarians and members of other minority groups – and members of all social classes. There is a curious slippage, however, in the discussion of territory, neighborhoods, and spaces, when advocating “reclaim[ing]” “public spaces” “for the community” (68), as if they have been claimed by those outside the community. From whom, indeed, must they be reclaimed?

Many times during my fieldwork in Hungary, I observed that spaces that were liminal and not clearly designated with a purpose were often being used by people in ways that were creative and innovative. (Oftentimes the public space was being used to meet needs of the individuals, families, and communities that could not be fulfilled with their individual domiciles, for example.) Areas of green space between so-called panel houses (socialist-era housing blocks) in both Pécs and Budapest in three different neighborhoods in which I lived were being used as informal (illegal) dog parks.⁴⁹ In Újlipótváros (Budapest’s XIII district), one such area had a

⁴⁹ As Krisztina Fehérvári has observed, the construction technology utilizing prefabricated concrete panels for the creation of such mass housing did not originate in Eastern Europe and the use of this technology in creating mass housing to address “urban housing shortages” was widespread internationally in the 1960s, but nonetheless, the

segment sectioned off as a flower garden maintained by two older male residents of the housing estate (see figures 9 and 10). A nearby area of street also had colorful trumpet-shaped flowers growing in soil in small planting areas beside the sidewalk. One Romani Pécs resident reported that the green space in the open area beside the old Zsolnay porcelain factory was a place where Romani boys often played soccer.



Figure 9. Informal garden in housing estate, XIII district, Budapest, c. August 2012. The garden is in an open area between “panel houses” in Budapest’s XIII district on the border between the neighborhoods Angyalföld (a working class district, one in which one area had historically contained a large Roma/Gypsy settlement, or *cigánytelep*) and Újlipotváros (a neighborhood with a large bourgeois population, also generally known to be a place with left-leaning politics as well as a significant Jewish population). In the foreground, flowers can be seen that were planted by residents in the housing estate. In the background, there is graffiti depicting the word “getto” (i.e. “ghetto”) on the panel housing building, background. Visible toward the left, items held in storage in what appears to be a common area of the building. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

“Socialist Modern aesthetic regime became inseparable from the economic and political system that brought it into being” (Fehérvári 2013:83). In Budapest as well as Pécs, as in many other urban municipalities around Hungary, such “panel houses” were present in the varied built environment of the urban landscape alongside older buildings such as “brick-and-mortar Socialist Realist style apartment complexes” (*ibid*) and the many Habsburg-era multi-level apartment buildings from the urban boom during the rapid industrialization of Budapest at the turn of the 20th century. Although the graffiti in figure 9 might suggest otherwise, people from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds live in panel houses in Hungary and they exist both more and less desirable neighborhoods. One of my homes in Pécs was in a panel house near the university campus in a flat I shared with a scientist from the university. From the standpoint of comfort and desirability of living in this type of building, the main concerns I heard expressed about flats in panel houses were about the existence of asbestos in the construction and the limited insulation that meant high utility bills.



Figure 10. Another image of the informal garden in the same housing estate, c. August 2012. The crumbling plaster walls of the building and brick layer beneath the plaster are visible beyond the illegally planted flowers. Within a few years of this photo, the informal garden had been removed. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

Such informal use of these liminal spaces was not without conflict. When I was collecting seeds from the plants by the sidewalk on the public street in Gogol utca in Budapest's XIII district, an older woman approached me and told me in no uncertain terms that I was not to collect the seeds, because the plants were *hers*. I had intended to give the seeds to the men tending the garden in the informally designated space a block away in the adjacent housing estate (see figures 9 and 10). Residents were often complaining about the dogs playing in the green spaces near their homes, distressed about child safety, mess, noise, and various other issues. Although some older ethnic Hungarian residents in a building where I resided in the VI district of Budapest used an area under the outdoor stairway on a long-term basis as a spillover storage space for furniture from their tiny one-room flat, my British flat mate received the wrath of the other residents when he locked his bicycle in the common courtyard of the same building; I experienced a similar conflict when I tried to lock my own bicycle under an outdoor staircase in

the common courtyard in a building in the XIII district. An older Hungarian man utilizing an outdoor walkway on an upper floor overlooking the courtyard of a building in Budapest's VIII district for a couple of days to catch the sunlight for his jars of homemade *kovászos uborka* pickled cucumbers elicited no particular reaction from the neighbors. But the Roma (a couple of men and a little boy) who allowed their puppy to play in the ground-floor courtyard in the same building were subject to neighbors' annoyed commentary.

These conflicts and negotiations over public and private in urban spaces in Hungary had a long history. Historian Gábor Gyáni depicts 19th century dynamics of social boundary maintenance in the context of the residential buildings with a diversity of social classes through the lens of a memoir by the son of doctor parents who grew up in an apartment block in the center Pest. The memoirist notes that "My parents only mixed with 'people like us': *unsereiner*, they called them; people of similar earning power and outlook" (Gyáni 2002:54). Gyáni notes that firm social boundaries were in place "even if the families were all from the middle classes and the differences between them were, to an outsider (or to someone from a later generation), barely distinguishable" (Gyáni 2002:55). The Pest memoirist observes further:

These social divisions were excellently reflected in the large, four-floor building where we lived . . . Another doctor lived below us, a graying man called Dr. Köves. He wasn't a professor or a hospital doctor, but held a surgery all day in his home. We knew that the Köveses were Jews, but we knew nothing else about them. My father thought Dr. Köves was a fine man, and respectfully called him 'colleague,' and used the formal form when addressing him. Dr. Köves called my father 'professor.' Sometimes they would speak in the lift or on the stairs — but that was the only contact we had for twenty years" (Gyáni 2002:55).

András Török's "critical guide" to Budapest, in turn, observes the separate staircases in such buildings and also notes that there had once been specifically designated, set times for each

household to bring their carpets to the courtyard to beat them for cleaning (Török 2001:150).

“This gave rise to many arguments,” he writes. “When the ladies made peace, they used to gather in the yard to chat.” He summarizes, “Sadly, the vacuum-cleaner, already in general use by the mid 1960’s, brought this busy social life to an end” (*ibid*).

So perhaps the process of “reclaiming” the public space in Pécs was intended as a way of formalizing the purpose of such areas through a structured process of urban planning and transformation. A Hungarian friend of mine in Budapest lamented in 2017 that the green space has been disappearing at an alarming rate in Budapest, with trees and grass replaced with monuments and museums. In Pécs, the transformation of the Zsolnay factory grounds into a cultural quarter created a boundary between the space and the local residents who had been using the space, such as Romani boys using it as a playground. The walls of the complex excluded those who might repurpose the space newly envisioned and cultivated for a different, specific purpose. Cultural events there had gatekeepers who collected money for tickets.

In reference to the territory of the Zsolnay factory, new cultural quarter – and what was referred to in the bid document as “the reconstruction of the eastern end of Király street” (70) and the “enlargement programme of the city centre in the eastern quarter” (70), referred to as a “peripheral area.”

Romani/Gypsy Performers and Audience within the ECoC Framework

In the opening weekend of the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter in spring of 2012, the very pregnant, multiethnic musical artist Bea Palya led her audience on a deeply personal, beautiful musical journey through various spaces of the newly renovated grounds of the Zsolnay Porcelain Factory. She sang as we walked sometimes, and she chose specific spaces for specific pieces that

made use of the acoustics of the different spaces for the *a capella* vocal music. Palya's concert was one of many of the activities that were part of the opening festival weekend, which was one of the most anticipated events in Pécs during the period I was there from fall 2011 to spring 2012. There was an admission fee to get into the grounds to be part of the opening.

Palya is part Beash and claims this as a core part of her identity, and she takes an active interest in community initiatives related to Roma/Gypsies. She was one of many performers of Roma/Gypsy background who performed around the time of Pécs's recognition as the European Capital of Culture, and in association with the ECoC programs. In the fall of 2010, the Serbian Romani band Boban Markovic Orkestar performed at the grand stage of the brand-new Kodály Center. With concerts also by the "Gypsy jazz" group Szakcsi Generation, Romani- and Gypsy-identified folkloric ensembles, and many other Romani/Gypsy performers in the period 2010-2012, there were many featured performers in the performing arts lineup, with the more famous, higher profile Romani musicians performing in the more exclusive performance spaces of the Kodály Center and the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter. The visual arts programming organized through ECoC Pécs2010 appeared to similarly include Roma- and Gypsy-identified artists.

The Pécs 2010 Association, which apparently continued to work in the legacy of the ECoC Pécs2010 program as of the spring of 2018, named among its "aims and goals" to "promote opportunity for culture of minorities, to initiate multi-ethnic projects." Further, they also aimed to "create and support new international artistic, urbanistic, social and interdisciplinary projects."⁵⁰ In the programming they offered, Gypsy cultural performance appeared side-by-side and ostensibly equal to that of the local Swabian/German minority.

⁵⁰ Pécs 2010 website, accessed April 7, 2018, at <http://www.pecs2010.hu/en>. At time of submission of this manuscript in January 2020, the website is no longer active.

In the implementation of the ECoC program, in keeping with the celebratory multicultural orientation presented in *Borderless City*, Romani musicians and performers were given respect as artists and offered opportunities to perform in venues and events as part of the European Capital of Culture program, without any apparent prejudice or discrimination. However, with the admission prices to the fancy new venues, a class exclusion was created. Impoverished people of Pécs, and therefore Roma by extension (being heavily and disproportionately represented among the poor, and disenfranchised, especially the extremely impoverished) were tacitly excluded from the broader process as stakeholders and often as audience members. Although minority cultural organizations were present in the network of those involved in the organization of ECoC events, they were peripheral in the overall picture, as reflected in Ágnes Németh's network analysis of the program (Németh 2017:159, figure 8.3). Lähdesmäki also observes the way that the ECoC Pécs2010 program aestheticizes cultural diversity "as visual diversity" and "[blots] out" wars, conflict, and genocide.

Stressing the historical layers of (positive) multicultural interaction in the past centuries obscures power mechanisms which control present day cultural diversity. The multicultural past is represented in books and promotion material as a creative, stimulating and unproblematic condition. Past as well as current conflicts and confrontation related to cultural diversity are turned into a peaceful dialogue, which fades away the hierarchies of dominance and suppression related to confrontations, conflicts or 'dialogue' (Lähdesmäki 2014:34)

Free open-air concerts certainly offered the opportunity for poorer people, including Roma, to attend, and there was a noticeably mixed audience of middle-class and lower middle-class people from different racial/ethnic backgrounds for such performances I observed in 2009 as well as in 2011-2012. However, active efforts to diversify audiences (encouraged in the ECoC

program at the European Union level) and bring more people into these performances were somewhat lacking. With the profound geographic and social isolation and extreme unfulfilled basic needs of Roma living in the so-called slums of Pécs, attending concert performances and other performing or visual arts or walking through museums were not activities of particular interest or relevance in most cases. It was particularly poignant to see gatekeepers requiring tickets at the grand reopening of the Zsolnay factory and its grounds in an historically Roma/Gypsy neighborhood on the poorer side of town. At the “opening” of the site of one of the most iconic cultural institutions in Hungary, a treasure of the community, and a core and central element of the entire European Capital of Culture program in Pécs, a class division was enforced that prevented access from many of the neighbors, and a gate established dividing a space newly designated as “ours” from people without the means to be able to participate.

Conclusion

The ECoC Pécs2010 can be seen on one level as a wider-scale manifestation of the phenomenon Krisztina Fehérváry has depicted in her work on middle-class Hungarians’ renovations of their domestic spaces in the early postsocialist period in Hungary. Rooted in a deep longing to claim or reclaim their rightful position as civilized Europeans, these material transformations from concrete to stone, from dilapidated buildings to grand, state-of-the-art facilities, represented a conscious effort on the part of key politicians, urban planners, and other leaders in Pécs to transform the image of their provincial city to one of worldwide standing, one that could transcend its postsocialist pedigree through recognition of its older temporal layers and the geographic and cultural spheres besides those of the former Eastern bloc. But the rebranding of Pécs through the ECoC Pécs2010 program also reflected a unique sense of place

grounded in an identity as a Mediterranean and borderland space, one that also transcends Hungarian national identity and embraces a multicultural, transnational ethos that links the city to the Balkans. And yet, the discourse of multiculturalism employed in the ECoC Pécs2010 narrative also reflected a strategic deployment of European liberalism in a different kind of performance of Europeanness.

A broader set of questions that I will return to later are as follows: How did these conceptions of Roma integration and the role of Roma in Pécs relate to the other reigning ideas about Roma integration operating elsewhere in Hungary at the time? In what way were they distinctly Pécsi? What cultural legacies, intellectual traditions, and geographic specificities were at work in the city of Pécs that contributed to a different notion of minority participation and/or inclusion than could be seen in the capital of Hungary? In particular, as I unpack these questions, I return to the viability of multiculturalism and the self-conception and heritage of Pécs as a part of a Mediterranean geographic space.

CHAPTER TWO

Situating the Department of Romology as a Cultural Institution in Hungary

Presenting Doctor Lakatos

On the day that Szilvi received her Ph.D., we were all gathered in one of the grand old halls of the six hundred forty-five-year-old University of Pécs, sitting in the chairs arranged in multiple rows lining each side of the spacious room, to attend her dissertation defense. We were ushered out during the deliberation following her presentation on Romani language pedagogy in Hungary, and we stood and talked in hushed voices in the corridor until we were invited back into the room. We stood in place before our chairs in reverent silence, hands clasped behind our backs, as the decision was announced. As an American and a newcomer to the ceremony of a Hungarian doctoral defense, I couldn't help but think about how much it reminded me of being in a church; it was so much more formal than the doctoral defenses I had attended in the United States.

Many of us in the audience of students, faculty, friends, family, and others, had observed her completion process at close range; with the books spread wide across the expansive table tucked in the back room at the office of her Roma organization across the city; with her palpable sense of pressure as she navigated her multiple roles as doctoral candidate, mother, university instructor, and leader of the community-based organization Amalipe; her trips in her aging car from the Romology department to the Roma organization to conferences around the country to

offer her perspective on different aspects of the situation of Roma/Gypsies in Hungary. From her standpoint as someone who had led an organization providing different programs for Roma people in the city of Pécs for many years, as a Vlax Romani woman herself, she had a unique position from which to reflect on her community. Her dissertation undoubtedly was shaped by own experience as a Romani language pedagogue herself, but she had also developed advanced expertise that built on the extensive secondary literature on Roma/Gypsies that had already been published in Hungary, some of it generated in this very department by her and her Romology colleagues. The community of Roma from Szilvi's subgroup, that of the Vlax Roma, was quite small in Pécs, and the part she played on the ethnically mixed faculty of a Gypsy Studies department was an important one — not only in being the only native speaker of Romani language, but also in representing one of the key subgroups of Roma/Gypsies in Hungary.

There was awareness in the Romology Department of a dependence on Szilvi to provide the Romani language courses given the scarcity of other Vlax Romani academics in Pécs. This reliance on her for this essential feature of the Romology curriculum intensified the stakes for everyone in her successful completion of the PhD. There was strong pressure to finish and obtain her doctoral degree because of the university/state requirements regarding what qualifications were held by instructors teaching foreign language in a Hungarian university.

When they announced she had passed the dissertation defense, Szilvi's joy, relief, and pride were apparent. Her small reception held in a room at the Romology Department, located up the hill in the building of the Liberal Arts Division, featured food Szilvi's sister had prepared and displayed on tables. Szilvi presented key people with bouquets of flowers also selected and purchased by her sister. Besides the large one she presented to her dissertation chair, Katalin Forray, there were smaller ones for other members of the faculty. Szilvi reflected later that she

felt a little embarrassed ("ciki") about the small bouquets that didn't seem quite adequate as gifts to acknowledge the support she had received through the process. As an existing and ongoing member of the faculty of the Romology Department, Szilvi was a professional colleague of the teachers at the University of Pécs in two senses, both as an employee and as a graduating student. This dual role created additional social pressure in these relationships, as the academic mentors supervising her dissertation research were closely involved in and aware of her teaching, its effectiveness, and her level of engagement with it — and her teaching colleagues were likewise witnessing her progress with the doctorate with intimate proximity. Any potential misstep or setback in either was readily visible to everyone. This tension lay beneath the generally collegial atmosphere in the department, which more than one person called "family like" (*családias*) when I asked them to describe it.

Chapter Introduction

This chapter presents an introduction to the Romology Department at the University of Pécs as I encountered it in the 2011-2012 academic year and provides ethnographic depiction of practices within this institution. In particular, I explore the social conventions around naming and labeling of Gypsiness and the conjuring of Roma/Gypsy identity in social settings within the department, as well as the engagement of faculty and students with other initiatives related to Roma/Gypsies. This examination lends insight into the conceptualization of Roma/Gypsy culture, its definition and construction in the context of a space of knowledge formation and dissemination, and its perceived pertinence to the projects of Roma/Gypsy empowerment and integration.

When examined in relation to Habitat for Humanity International as well as other international and indigenous Hungarian institutions, the Romology Department in particular but also other Baranya County–based Roma/Gypsy institutions reveal different naming and labeling practices around Roma/Gypsy cultural identity and differently articulated boundaries around Gypsiness. I draw on the insights of Kata Horváth from her ethnographic study in a Hungarian village to help understand features of the social conventions and grammar of invoking Gypsiness (Horváth 2012).

A handful of factors are at play in shaping a different orientation in institutions in Pécs and in the Romology Department specifically. In the latter case, the influence of Hungarian scholarly tradition of *néprajz* has promoted a priority of delineating and documenting culturally distinctive features of Gypsy groups in Hungary as bounded groups with essential cultural characteristics. Drawing on Hofer, Bunzl, Barth, Gellner, and Boas, I will briefly provide some context and examples from the historical development of Hungarian scholarship on Gypsies and from published scholarly literature from the Romology Department, to explicate the ways this orientation manifests itself. Bringing in selected examples from Roma public cultural events in Budapest, I demonstrate alternative formulations/articulations/conceptualizations of Gypsiness. I discuss contrasting visions of Roma empowerment in Hungary and relate the approach within the Romology Department to the approaches taken by others within Hungary — including how this has evolved over time.

In addition to the influence of *néprajz* that manifested itself particularly in the practices in the Romology Department, there were other factors that shaped institutional practices in Roma/Gypsy-themed organizations within Pécs — including at the university. These included (1) the demographic factor that the Beash Gypsy subgroup comprised the majority of

Roma/Gypsies in the area, and most of the Roma/Gypsy institutions there were led by Beash Gypsies, (2) the unique multicultural context of this space, conceptualized variously as Mediterranean, Balkan, or borderland — with different relative emphases to each name, (3) the relative geographic isolation of Pécs, on the periphery in a country where power and influence were highly concentrated in the capital city of Budapest, and (4) the factor of language, as most of those involved in these institutions in Pécs spoke relatively little English, so the cultural reference point was strongly Hungarian.

Beyond any theoretical contributions I hope to make to anthropology, social work, or Romani Studies, a key contribution I offer in this dissertation is an ethnographic depiction of practices related to Roma/Gypsy ethnicity and Roma/Gypsy people in the recent past. People in Hungary of Gypsy and non-Gypsy origin, of different subgroup identities among Roma/Gypsies, are often discussed and depicted as segregated populations or at least as groups with clearly delineated boundaries. However, in my own observations in Hungary since 1998, I have seen a more complex picture vis á vis Gypsy/Roma heritage and identity in communities, families, and individual persons.

Individuals in Hungary often have mixed or contingent ethnic identities and relate to the individuals from other ethnic groups and the cultural features of other groups in fluid and creative ways. In Budapest I was friends with a Romungro woman and a Vlax Romani painter who lived in a common-law marriage; their romantic partnership challenged common understandings of subgroup animosity that prevented intermixing between these two groups (see, for example, Stewart 1997).

Pécs, specifically, offered many other examples of people who embodied complex versions of or engagement with Gypsiness, both across subgroup boundaries of Roma/Gypsies as well as traversing the Roma/non-Roma social divide. On one occasion in Pécs, I encountered Beash Gypsies spontaneously and joyfully singing in Romani on the main street in the pedestrian zone of the city — in spite of the fact that Beash Gypsies were said to resent Vlax Roma and the cultural primacy of Romani language as “the” authentic language of Roma/Gypsies. (This was one of only two instances I recall in which I was aware of hearing Romani or Beash language in the public space of Pécs, outside the context of language classes.) There were also reportedly Lovari families in Pécs learning Beash Gypsy language from their children attending the Gandhi high school, challenging the general assumption that Vlax Roma had a supercilious disinterest in the distinctive cultural features and language of other Gypsy subgroups. I met a half-Beash Gypsy half Swabian (Hungarian German minority) man in Pécs who spoke the Karpathian dialect of Romani; his very person embodied the product of another coupling that common perceptions suggested would never occur. Swabian people in Hungary, although they retained a distinct ethnic identity and memories tied to their German cultural heritage, were accepted as white and not held apart from Hungarians in the same fashion as Roma/Gypsies were.

These examples of ethnically exogamous marriages, relationships, and families crossing subgroup and ethnic boundaries demonstrated the fluidity of these boundaries that were often depicted as firm. Szilvi herself, a Vlax Romani woman, had also been in an interethnic marriage; she had mothered two children with her ethnic Hungarian ex-husband. Szilvi sometimes talked about her daughter and how she had raised her without assuming she would identify as Romani, given that her father was ethnic Magyar. Having never pressed a Romani ethnic identity on her,

Szilvi explains, she was very surprised when she discovered her daughter had posted a video to YouTube about her experience as a Gypsy girl.

The social boundaries were also somewhat porous at the community level in the places where I conducted research throughout Hungary. There were many so-called ghettos and slums in the country, many examples of segregated communities of Roma/Gypsies in Hungary, where Roma/Gypsy people lived in sharply delineated, racially homogeneous neighborhoods separate from those in the ethnic majority. However, many of the old 19th century Habsburg buildings in Budapest, which had once housed commoners as well as wealthy aristocrats who maintained their physical and social distance from the former, were now home to both Roma/Gypsies and non-Gypsies, living together as neighbors with varying degrees of harmony and discord (as I touch on in the preface). Even in some heavily segregated rural communities, there were exceptions of families who had come to be accepted as neighbors on the white side of town and whose food the Hungarians would eat in spite of the general taboo around consuming anything prepared by Gypsies (as in the village in the Mátras that I describe in the introduction). Similarly, although the level of educational attainment among Roma/Gypsies in Hungary was very low, there were also examples of members of the minority in higher education. And, indeed, like Szilvi, there were some who had completed their doctoral degrees.

Meanwhile, there were many Roma/Gypsy institutions in Hungary that had emerged in the postsocialist period. Such institutions were present in many places around Central and Eastern Europe, but there was a particularly dense concentration of them in Hungary. In and around Pécs, a relatively small city, there was a proliferation of them, as I discuss also in the chapter on the European Capital of Culture. As I discuss in that chapter as well, these institutions engaged with diverse cultural features of local Gypsiness (i.e. the articulation of Roma/Gypsy

distinction) in Pécs and the broader Transdanubian region, including both of the Gypsy languages spoken locally.

Some of the institutions doing work with, about, or on behalf of Roma/Gypsies in Pécs and the surrounding areas in Baranya County took a form visible in many places in Hungary, similar almost to a family business in which one key figure led the organization with the cooperation primarily of his (or occasionally, her) extended kin network. Others represented a broader extent of collaboration of more diverse individuals from a more expansive social network. As was the case throughout Hungary, any social services organizations working with marginalized or impoverished persons in the community inevitably worked with a large number of Roma/Gypsy clients (due to their social marginalization and high rates of poverty), and some created programs specifically targeting Roma/Gypsies or addressing specific social issues facing members of this population. However, in Pécs there was a proliferation of institutions that were specifically focused on Roma/Gypsy people and/or issues. Among the Roma/Gypsy-related institutions were several schools, a cultural center, community-based organizations, and the Romology and Sociology of Education department (Romológia és Nevelésszociológia Tanszék) at the University of Pécs.

Within this vein of ethnographic insights into the everyday integration of diverse individuals in urban settings in Hungary, the Romology department represented a key example of a multiethnic institution operating in the field of Roma/Gypsy issues — one in which there was collaboration, friendship, collegiality, and coexistence of members of different groups, and where difference was explored, reproduced, and engaged constantly in various ways. It was a place where members of the non-Gypsy population worked alongside and in collaboration with Roma/Gypsy colleagues, showing respect and appreciation for them and their contributions —

an attitude that could be seen elsewhere in Hungary, but which was definitely a departure from the norm. The department was also an institution of higher education in which there were many Roma/Gypsy people who demonstrated their academic aptitude and enthusiasm for learning. This latter point may seem relatively banal, but it represents a critical challenge to the mainstream perception of “the Gypsies.”

Introduction to the University of Pécs Romology Department

The department of Romology had a small faculty and an unobtrusive footprint of offices and classrooms considering its apparent symbolic importance in the constellation of institutions related to Roma/Gypsies in Hungary. After all, this was the first and primary university department in Hungary that was devoted to the study of Roma/Gypsy culture, language, and society. One small office crowded with desks and computers provided the space for the faculty members to prepare their lessons. Another small room held a library of Roma/Gypsy-themed books on a few bookshelves around the perimeter of a room with tables, that doubled sometimes as a classroom. Under a Romantic painting of a Gypsy woman hanging on the wall outside the door to the main office, a colorful and homey space, you would sometimes find a student sitting, waiting for a meeting with a faculty member or a class, on a small, aging loveseat in the hallway. Once in a while there might be a couple of students sitting there together, closely side by side, having a conversation.

Before or after classes or meetings, you might find familiar people from the small department gathered and talking collegially in pairs or small groups of students and sometimes the odd faculty member, cigarette in hand, outside the Faculty of Liberal Arts building. From there, after a smoke or a chat, the group might disperse into pairs or singles to go up the stairs to

the department, or head down the hill to access other university buildings or head into town. The building in which the department was housed was situated in a peaceful setting beside the botanical gardens, near the main building of the university, close to the medical school and clinics, a kilometer and a half above the entrance to the pedestrian zone in the inner city.

To get there from town, you would ascend the hill past the Pécsi beer factory, a hundred-year-old brewery emitting its strong, characteristic, slightly sweet, slightly sour smell of fermenting mash throughout the neighborhood. You would pass the popular student hangout Café Paulus, a coffeeshop and restaurant a few steps away from the main building of the university, where one often saw young people studying, gathering in small groups, or eating a meal between classes, and you might catch a familiar face from the department. Then you would go past the old chapel and the gated entrance to the campus leading to the main building of the university, housing the Faculty of Sciences and Humanities on Ifjúság utca (“Youth Street”), its brick and stucco facade on three sides surrounding the courtyard punctuated with green trees and shrubbery, with its peaked roof featuring the characteristic red terra-cotta tiles you saw throughout the city and great, tall, arched windows flanking its impressive stone entryway with unusual metalwork overhead, featuring a crest. The seal of the university, with the crest decorated with four fleur-de-lis, indicated the founding year of 1367. To find the Romology Department from there, you ducked through the attended gate in the small side street around the corner, up a small hill, into their building, which belonged to the branch of the university that also housed such fields as Germanistics, Romance Languages, Slavic Languages, and Anglistics, History, Society and Media Studies, and the social sciences, among others.

The Romology department faculty — some PhD candidates, others those who had already completed their doctoral education, was an eclectic group including both ethnic

Hungarians and those identifying as either Roma or Gypsy. One of the popular instructors was known more widely as a rock musician, leader of the band 30Y, with a following throughout the country. Szilvi was not the only teacher involved in other social initiatives in the region. Aranka, an ethnic Hungarian, had founded a small nonprofit organization to create support for youths aging out of the foster care system, who often struggled with severe social and financial precariousness. The race disparities that characterized the child welfare system in the United States were also a feature of the Hungarian system, in which foster youths were disproportionately Roma/Gypsy (ERRC 2007; ERRC 2011). And as was the case in most other places, former foster youths in Hungary were likely to struggle in many areas of their lives — with education, health, employment, and housing stability. Fa Ág was an organization committed to creating a community space of fellowship and friendship as well as a place to crash for homeless former foster youths. When I first visited the organization around 2007, one of the former foster youths, a young Gypsy man, was staying there at the time because he was homeless and had nowhere else to go.

Dr. Anna Orsós, too, who had just taken over the directorship of the department from Katalin Forray in fall of 2011, placed high importance in her own work on community engagement. Her main recent contribution in this area was involvement and leadership in youth initiatives in villages in Baranya County that promoted language revitalization among Beash Gypsy children, to bolster a sense of pride and self-esteem for youths whose ethnic identity was highly stigmatized. For Dr. Anna Orsós, this project had a strong connection to her family heritage; her mother had experienced significant language challenges in the Hungarian education system as a child, during her early schooling, because she had grown up speaking Beash Gypsy

language with her family and had limited Hungarian language contact before entering the schools.

The faculty engaged in community work were part of a close social network of a number of individuals and organizations working to improve the situation of people living on the margins — a category that in Hungary included individuals from different backgrounds, but which always included Roma/Gypsies. Thus, those engaged in most any kind of social work or social initiative in Hungary usually had fairly extensive contact with Roma/Gypsies, and almost always had something to say about the minority and its members. Those who were actively working toward support and integration of Roma/Gypsies in this context knew one another and sometimes collaborated with one another. In Baranya County, another one of the active organizations was a school for Beash Gypsy youths in the small village of Alsószentmárton, led by Tibór Derdák and administered by a Buddhist organization of which he was a part. The school, Kis Tigris (“Little Tiger”), was one of the destinations on the tour of local Roma/Gypsy-related initiatives in Baranya County to which Aranka (the Romology professor and founder of Fa Ág) had brought me around 2007 after I first met her at a conference in Budapest on Romani child welfare in Hungary. Anna Orsós and Aranka Varga had collaborated in the 1990s with Tibór Derdák in creating another organization called Amrita, which operated for several years from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s and was created to help address Roma/Gypsy students’ difficulties in secondary school through both academic and social supports. Anna’s brother was also engaged in similar work with kids in a mobile secondary school in a small village, to help them prepare for secondary school by addressing issues they had with reading and writing.

The active faculty involvement in community social initiatives took place alongside their scholarly pursuits as teachers and researchers. All the faculty members taught and published

regularly, presented at conferences both throughout Hungary and, whenever possible, abroad. The expense of travel and the challenge of language were obstacles in the latter, but there was a higher degree of prestige in presenting and publishing outside Hungary, so these opportunities were highly desirable. The department also had its own series of publications, small monographs and co-edited volumes, on various topics related to Roma/Gypsy culture, society, and language, including linguistics, folklore, ethnomusicology, and sociology. The unique and central position of Roma/Gypsy musicians in the history of musical performance in Hungary meant a natural gravitation of scholars of Romology toward the topics of Romani/Gypsy music and musicians. Meanwhile, the social isolation, marginalization, and poverty that were common features of Romani/Gypsy communities, which explained the high degree of community involvement among those who taught and researched in Romani studies, had also attracted the attention of sociologists and “sociographers” for several decades in Hungary. Hungarian sociologist István Kemény’s work was foundational to the field of Romani Studies in Hungary — as evidenced by those in the Romology Department at the University of Pécs referring to him as the “father” of their discipline — although there were examples of Hungarian scholarly study of Roma/Gypsies that predated his groundbreaking work in the 1970s. As Ian Hancock taught his students in his Gypsy Language and Culture course at University of Texas at Austin in 2002-2005, a Hungarian nobleman named István Vályi was one of the early examples of non-Roma outsiders studying and documenting Romani language (specifically, lexicon), and he is often cited as the source of the “discovery of the Indian affiliation of the Romani language” (Hancock 2010:47-53).

According to Marcel Courthiade, in 1763,

“the Transylvanian pastor, Vályi István, from Szathmar/Satu Mare, ‘rediscovered’ the Rroms’ Indian origin through the comparison of the Romani dialect from Ráb (Győr) with the language spoken by three Indian students he met in the Netherlands (their language was either Sanskrit, since they were educated, probably brāhmins, or Sinhala,

the language spoken in Ceylon, from where they seem to have originated” (Courthiade 2004:105).

As in the early days of the foundation of the contemporary field of Hungarian Romology by sociologists in the 1970s, practicing as a Romology scholar in Hungary in 2011-2012 was also still somewhat of a political project, both through casting attention on topics excluded from mainstream discourse and through uncovering the value and complexities of Roma/Gypsy language and culture, which were summarily dismissed or maligned by the majority of people in Hungary. In the 1970s, when Kemény began his work, there were the dual elements of poverty and ethnic distinctiveness that made his study and discussion of Romani poverty taboo. Poverty was, after all, supposed to be nonexistent in a socialist society, purportedly a worker’s state. Meanwhile, ethnic identity was a social distinction that was theoretically supposed to fall away in the context of class solidarity in the absence of capitalist exploitation.

In the early 2010s too, given the extent of anti-Romani sentiment in Hungary as elsewhere in Europe, there was a kind of natural overlap among the projects of academic publishing, social initiatives, and building a public profile of Roma and Romani cultural features through museum exhibits, archives, and publications for a nonacademic audience. Publishing Romani translations of excerpts of classic texts from the Bible, internationally known authors such as Hemingway and Shakespeare, and famous Hungarian authors like Imre Kertész and Imre Madách (Labodáné Lakatos 2004) — like producing the Romani language performance of Federico García Lorca’s play “Blood Wedding” in Budapest at the Roma Parliament in the early 2000s (Dunajeva and Tidrick 2015)— challenged commonplace assumptions about the limitations of Romani as a literary language. Assembling grammars and books of lexicon of Romani and Beash languages (Orsós 2002, Orsós 2004, Orsós 2008, Choli Daróczi 1984,

Hancock 1995) demonstrated and provided testimony to the fact that they in fact had rules and coherence as languages, contrary to the widespread perceptions that they were essentially argot (Dunajeva 2013, Dunajeva and Tidrick 2015).

Apart from the inherent value of these publications in combatting preconceived negative ideas about Roma/Gypsies, there was active engagement also on the part of many academics who worked in the field of Romani Studies in other public institutions outside the academy. The prominent Hungarian ethnographer Péter Szuhay was engaged with the Aurora House project as well as museum exhibits and his many publications. As Aranka explained it, there was a distinctive energy brought by members of her generation to civic initiatives in the postsocialist period, given the newfound freedom to act in this domain. They were taking advantage of the newly emerging opportunity (in the wake of the collapse of the state socialist system) to create organizations and initiatives to challenge injustice they had long observed but had been forbidden to acknowledge — much less act upon. This energy was reflected in the proliferation of nonprofit and civil institutions created in the early years after the collapse of state socialism. The liberatory drive was also a part of the presentation of Romani/Gypsy cultural traditions to a broader audience. In reflecting on his work at the Ethnographic Museum in Budapest in 1993 in creating the exhibitions dedicated to the history of the Gypsies, Péter Szuhay verbalized this concern very clearly. In 1994, he wrote:

“According to our experience, already in the last years of the 80s, Gypsy people were often marked as the cause of the tension accumulated in the Hungarian society, and that obviously intensified the prejudices against the Gypsies. We were convinced that contemporary social sciences (ethnography, sociology, anthropology) - with the help of their special scientific method - are obliged to deal with a problem that causes conflicts within the whole society, and that such sciences must be able to show a clear view on reality in order to fight beliefs, and to show the actual position of a social stratum being a subject to discrimination. It was clear that an exhibition about the Gypsies that houses the history of the Gypsy people within the walls of a museum, shall contribute to

emancipation, and it is itself an act that - in the very minute it is arranged - evaluates certain cultural performances as worthy” (Szuhay 1994).

As I discuss later in the chapter, Szuhay’s notion of “evaluat[ing] certain cultural performances as worthy” and rendering them visible to a broader audience was one that was being reiterated through a number of other initiatives in Hungary in the early 2010s.

***Néprajz* and the Romological Field in Hungary**

The *néprajz* tradition in Hungary (from which Péter Szuhay comes) appeared to be a strong influence in the orientation of the Romology department. Though best translated as “ethnography,” this scholarly field in Hungary had its own features and traditions, grounded heavily in a Herderian approach to studying a population and its cultural features. Although its approach overlaps with that of American and British cultural anthropology, closest cousin in the academy in the United States context was Folklore. The scholarly tradition of *néprajz* privileged the study of a rural village setting and authentic, “traditional” cultural context, in an attempt to identify and detail the distinctive, essential cultural characteristics of a given group. As reflected in the type of scholarship (and pseudo-scholarship) produced by members of the Gypsy Lore Society and published in their journal, this emphasis has also been the norm within the Romological/Gypsy Studies field outside Hungary since its inception until relatively recently.

As Tamás Hofer described the Hungarian *néprajz* tradition, “National ethnography, at its inception, was intended to “produce an overall and coherent picture of the [local] folk culture” and was a branch of research in which “the disciplines linguistics, literary history, and national history cooperated” (Hofer 2005: 349). He stated further, “National ethnography may be compared to a granary in which generations of ethnographers, one after the other, hoard and

preserve their knowledge. Ethnography is a cumulative discipline, like history (Cohn 1962)” (Hofer 2005: 354). In the painstaking compilation of ethnographic details, the implicit goal is to provide a comprehensive portrait of a folk group. National ethnography is intended to capture – as comprehensively as possible – the elements of a given “culture.” The conceptualization thereof is one a collected and collective assembly of customs, traditions, material elements, history, and other elements that comprise a shared system that is tied to a given (and identifiable) people and, generally, a specific and designated geographic space. Temporality has not been a prominent feature in most of the work, because the snapshots of cultural elements are integral elements in a silo of cultural artifacts from that given culture, with the implicit assumption that the boundaries of that culture will be discernible and somewhat constant (if not in fact stagnant) over time.

Another dimension that Hofer discusses is that, although not exclusively, national ethnographers in Europe have focused their attention on their own indigenous cultures. In both these senses, although Romology showed its roots in and similarities to national ethnography (*néprajz*) in Hungary, there was also a contradiction within it; namely, that it was an academic field dominated by non-Roma ethnic Magyars who were outsiders to the cultural system they were depicting. However, as the Department of Romology drew Roma/Gypsy students, the field became more heavily populated with Roma/Gypsies, and it took on a character more similar to that of *néprajz*, in which Roma/Gypsies were studying and depicting the cultural heritage of Roma/Gypsy communities. Given the diversity of Roma/Gypsy cultural traditions, this situation might or might not reflect an individual student or researcher doing research on his or her “own” community or culture.

Composition of the Student Body in the Romology Department

Whereas the field of Gypsy Studies as it had been practiced since the 19th century (and earlier) had been dominated by white (non-Gypsy) Europeans, the Romology department at the University of Pécs had historically had a high concentration of first-generation college students of Romani/Gypsy origin. Many of these students experienced challenges and tensions in the political and identity issues in becoming an “educated Gypsy” (Hancock 2010), as was the case for most any person of Roma/Gypsy origin in higher education, who face prejudice in the academy and the potential for alienation in their home communities where the overall level of educational was very low. The department also had the reputation of having had a flow of academically marginal ethnic Hungarian students drawn to a department low in enrollment, in which they believed they could scrape by and complete university in spite of their marginal past grades and academic performance. One Hungarian Jewish friend in Budapest had told me in 2009 that “If you’re a bad student” in high school or college, it was common — or at least had been in the past, to study Romani (“Lovari”) as one’s foreign language. It seemed from what he and others said that the logic that was applied to the language also drove (or at least contributed to) the mainstream perception of the overall field of study.

Many of the non-Gypsy Romology students I came to know in the 2011-2012 academic year, however, demonstrated genuine interest in and commitment to Roma/Gypsy issues. Two female students had done colorful illustrations to accompany the texts in children’s books that Szilvi and Orsós Anna had written (in Romani and Beash languages, respectively), which had been published by the department. One of the same students periodically assisted with projects at Amalipe. Nori, similarly, was a Romology student who regularly worked at Amalipe; she was often a fixture at the computer in the office there, researching and writing grants for the

organization. A young male student with an incredible aptitude for languages — with excellent mastery of English as well as several other languages— was engaged in advanced study of Romani linguistics and seemed clearly to be destined for graduate study in the field. One female graduate of the Romology program was a current PhD student in the anthropology department at the University of Pécs, and she maintained close ties with the Romology department.

One male ethnic Hungarian student who was actively involved in the Szakkollégium described his own relationship with and perception of Romology in the following way: “I am without prejudices. My parents were very anti-Gypsy, but when I was growing up, I had many Gypsy friends, and that is how I came to Romology.” He continued, “I think that this Romology is a good thing, because we need to be planning for 10-12 years, maybe longer; we need to think about the future.” Although he didn’t state it explicitly, his commentary seemed to reference the demographic change in Hungary that so many ethnic Hungarians found immensely threatening and concerning: the Roma/Gypsy population was rising, their percentage of the overall population in Hungary increasing.⁵¹ The need for cultural understanding between Gypsies and

⁵¹ Concerns about demographic change and the fear on the part of members of the ethnic majority of being “outnumbered” are obviously not unique to Hungary nor new to this time. In the United States at the time of writing as the 2010s come to a close, viral videos are frequently circulating related to white people exhibiting different manifestations of these anxieties: expressing vitriol toward Latinos speaking Spanish language in public places or calling the police when encountering African-Americans engaging in everyday activities in shared public spaces, like using a barbecue grill in a public park or accessing a library.

In the 19th century and early 20th century in Russia, concern was being voiced about the “yellow peril” presented by the Chinese in the territory of their country. The famous French eugenicist thinker Arthur de Gobineau was “consumed” with worry in this regard, and expressed urgent concern in his writings that about “yellow” masses that would overcome Europe and bring about, “the demise of the last vestiges of Aryan civilization in Europe,” in the summary of Gobineau’s views by historian Gregory Blue (1999:114). Gobineau’s racialized views and worries about demographic obsolescence have been reflected over time in Russia and in Europe. On March 31, 1908, Russian “prime minister P. A. Stolypin addressed the Duma, . . . warning that ‘if we sleep our lethargic dreams, the [Far Eastern] territories will become saturated with foreign juices and when we awake perhaps they will be Russian only in name’” (Siegelbaum 1978:322). Historian Michael Odijie argues that the fear of the so-called yellow peril was, in fact, one of the contributing factors to the emergence of the European federalist movement. That is to say, the structures and organization of European governance came about due in part to the vague perceived threat of what Odijie summarizes as “nameless hordes of barbarous yellow people invading the European continent” (Odijie 2017:360). International relations scholar Monica Duffy Toft observes that in the Soviet Union, the results of the 1979 census “were so worrisome to Soviet officials that publication of the census was delayed for five years”

non-Gypsies and support for successful social integration of disenfranchised and marginal Roma/Gypsies in the country was becoming increasingly urgent for the overall health, peace, and economic stability in Hungary. But there was not strong support for the department and the field of study, in the students' perceptions. At the same Szakkollégium meeting in September 2011, one of the key student leaders, a young female student of Roma/Gypsy origin, expressed her concern that the future of Romology was in jeopardy with the major education reforms underway under the Orbán administration. In the meantime, however, the department continued to draw a stream of professionals, such as teachers in secondary education and those in law enforcement and social work, who sometimes commuted from long distances to attend classes as part-time students. The department had accommodated such students in various ways over the years, previously in evening classes and more recently in concentrated one- or two-day classes that in principle condensed a semester's worth of course material into a weekend.

Roma/Gypsy Language within the Romology Curriculum

On a typical day in the Romology department, a couple of times a week, a handful of us would be gathered in a small classroom awaiting the arrival of Szilvi to teach us a class in Romani language after one of the students had obtained the key from the secretary in order to open the classroom. Sometimes she arrived late, hurrying over from her spot at Amalipe on the other side of the city. She would write verb conjugations on the blackboard and we would write them down and practice these as well as lexicon. The Romani classes were delivered in

(2014:184) and she argues that the demographic changes revealed in the census had a part in the disintegration of the country.

Hungarian language, like all the other courses in the department — as was the standard in foreign language classes throughout Hungary.

A native speaker of the Lovari dialect of Romani, Szilvi taught the language to students without proficiency and/or full literacy in Romani. Her students were preparing for the *Érettségi* exam, an exam to demonstrate proficiency in foreign language that was required of all university graduates in the country of Hungary, and she taught Romani language courses to students both at the Romology Department as well as in the rooms of her community-based organization Amalipe. As the *Érettségi* approached that year, a group of older part-time students, mostly middle-aged female schoolteachers, gathered in the evenings around the large wooden table in the back room at Amalipe for several intensive lessons and study sessions with Szilvi, reviewing old examples of test questions to prepare themselves for the exam. Some students of Romani language in Hungary chose the language to fulfill their foreign language requirement because of its reputation as being easier than the alternatives. Others expected it to be helpful for their work, particularly in public sector professions like teaching, in which they had frequent contact with Roma/Gypsies. The students in this group treated Szilvi with respect and affection and gave the impression of having taken up the language at least in part out of genuine interest. Despite the obvious stress the student were experiencing as they anticipated this important educational requirement, there was a joviality and cordiality to these study sessions, a sense of camaraderie with both students and teacher. In contrast, two young Hungarian women in a Romani class I attended at a private language school in Budapest that year showed cold disdain for the Romani woman who taught their small class. Speaking rudely and dismissively to her, they seemed to blame her for the fact that the language and its grammar were far more complex than they had been expecting or had thought they were signing up for.

At the Romology Department, Szilvi's Romani language classes were offered in a curriculum that also featured Beash Gypsy language classes as well as a multidisciplinary set of offerings that introduced its undergraduate students to different aspects of Roma/Gypsy life, culture, and society through classes with emphases on history, sociology, linguistics, and folklore, among other fields. All the students studied one or both of the Gypsy languages that were offered; these were a primary *raison d'être* for the department, founded in 1998 in large part to provide the necessary qualifications for Romani and Beash language instructors to teach the language in public institutions in Hungary, where language teachers had to have completed university education in the language. Although future language instructors did not comprise the majority of the student body, they were active members of their academic community, in which some students from the department organized academic and community activities through the Wlislöcki Henrik Szakkollégium (Wlislöcki Henrik College, a small academic institute that was part of the Romology Department, named for a key early researcher in Romani Studies) alongside Gypsy-identified students from other fields across the university. When students gathered for a *szakkollégium* meeting in September 2011, they were planning for the Romology conference being hosted by the department in the spring and the meeting of a regularly occurring student discussion group, and discussing a particular school integration program for Roma/Gypsy youths in Hungary that had been successful. They expressed their disappointment that the attendance at the meeting was quite poor; there were only a few of them present for the conversation.

Mentoring and teaching practice were part of the preparation of future language instructors; on one occasion, a young male Romology student (who was of Gypsy heritage) taught a lesson in one of Szilvi's Romani language classes, after which Szilvi solicited oral, real-

time feedback from the class on the lesson we had just received. Another opportunity to develop teaching skills through practice experience was available across the city at the Gandhi high school, where one of the young female ethnic Hungarian Romology students taught language classes to the high school students in the 2011-2012 academic year.

Roma/Gypsy Identification and Ethnic Politics within the Romology Department and Beyond

The small faculty of the Romology Department comprised mostly non-Gypsy ethnic Hungarians. Szilvi was the one Vlax Romani faculty member. Anna Orsós, the one other Gypsy-identified member of the faculty, was from the Beash subgroup. The Beash comprised the smallest of the Gypsy subgroups in Hungary, but the one most populous in this southwestern region of the country, Baranya County. All the remaining regular faculty were non-Gypsy. A Beash Gypsy secretary also provided administrative support to those in the program.

Although questions of ethnic heritage and the ethnic composition of the faculty, staff, and student body were not commonly the subject of public discussion in the department, there was consciousness about this topic, both within and outside the department. It was talked about in individual conversations by members of the department in more private settings, as well as with me as a researcher, both in the context of private interview settings and also in classrooms of the department in close proximity to other students. Occasionally it also came up organically and explicitly in conversation among members of the department in more public group settings. This and other aspects of the personal background of students were the subject of conversation sometimes, to an extent that I found surprising and even uncomfortable as an American accustomed to a greater level of privacy vis à vis one's personal background in group settings. For example, the prominent Romology scholar Katalin Forray — who had been the Romology

department director from its founding until the end of the last academic year —asked several personal questions of one of the doctoral students about her place of origin, her family, and her parents' professions, at the beginning of a meeting of her doctoral student mentees at the beginning of the academic year. The multiethnic group of other students from various disciplines (who had in common research topics related to Roma/Gypsies) had already gathered around the table for the meeting at the time of the conversation.

In the same conversation, there was a brief exchange in the same meeting about the question of the authenticity of the Gypsy identity of one student who was not present. Having known József personally for a long time — being in the same social circles in Budapest with mutual friends and colleagues, conversing at social gatherings, having him in attendance at one of my birthday parties — I knew had been actively involved in Romani scholarship and activism for many years, that he self-identified as Roma, and that he was perceived in his personal social group as being Gypsy. He also had dark hair, dark eyes, and unmistakably brown skin — the distinctive phenotypic differences that since their ancestors' arrival in Europe from the Indian subcontinent had set many Roma/Gypsies apart from non-Gypsies, although there were also plenty of light-skinned, light-eyed Gypsies. To me, his ethnic heritage seemed self-evident by the way he identified as well as the way he looked. So, I wondered: Was it his diplomas and academic achievement, his professional success, his cosmopolitanism, or his geographic and social distance from his family and community of origin, or something else that raised doubts about his authenticity?

In fact (surely unbeknownst to the graduate students and faculty advisor touching on the question of his ethnic identity in his absence during a meeting), at one point several years before, I had subletted his flat in Budapest for a month or two one summer. I had been there when he

revealed his new living room decor to a group of his friends, smiling with pleasure and pride when he showed us his living room and entryway, which he had deliberately and stylishly decorated with brightly colored paint. One of our friends (who is ethnic Magyar) observed at the time what he saw as a whimsical and notably Gypsy style to the place. In the time I lived in his home during his travels abroad, I had listened my way through his personal collection of Romani language music. It was there that I had first come to listen to the music of Kalyi Jag, the Hungarian Romani band that up until then I had known only by name through ethnomusicological academic literature, as a folk revival band that had emerged as an offshoot of the Hungarian *táncház* movement and come out with their first album in the late 1980s, whose music reflected a rather radical and newfound embrace of Romani ethnic pride and the distinctive cultural features of Vlax Roma (Lange 1997). (It was several years later that I came to know Gusztáv Varga and spend time in the Kalyi Jag high school.)

It had been a singular experience for me, reading the liner notes and taking in the distinctive sound of Vlax Romani songs while sitting on a couch in the living room of a self-identified Rom, featuring decor in bright colors reminiscent to me of the Romani national flag. Studying the Romani language lyrics against the knowledge I'd developed in classes with the Romani linguist Ian Hancock, hearing the unique style of their vocal effects and percussion, I had experienced a convergence of the theoretical and the personal in the context of the domestic space of a Romani person I'd known for many years. I knew that József hadn't grown up speaking Romani; like another Romanian Romani activist friend I knew in Budapest who had learned the language as an adult to deepen his connection to his ethnic heritage, József had built this collection of Romani language music without having known these words in his childhood

growing up as Romungro in Hungary, but they had another kind of significance as the language of Roma.

So there, in the meeting in which doubt was cast on the personal identity of someone I liked and admired, I was very surprised and puzzled by the exchange. If he wasn't Gypsy, how were they imagining the category? Dr. Forray also pressed me with dogged intensity — disconcerting, given my very recent arrival to Pécs as well as my still-developing Hungarian language skills — about who I meant to refer to when I spoke of “Roma” as I described my research project. “Do you think that Anna Orsós is Roma?” she asked. I hesitated, and she displayed a rather inscrutable expression like a knowing smirk, which I suspected was reserved for outsiders who apparently think they know more and condescend to those who don't embrace “Roma” as a universal term for people sharing this ethnic heritage.⁵²

These references to the personal ethnic identification of individuals in the department sometimes came up in semi-public settings — which were generally ethnically mixed, mirroring the demographic diversity of the department as a whole. However, when I made reference to the Gypsy ethnicity of one of the students in the department who had briefly left the classroom in which I was teaching in spring of 2012, the students (comprising an ethnically mixed group) seemed somewhat shocked that I matter-of-factly spoke of an individual's Gypsy ethnicity openly. As in an article by Hungarian anthropologist Kata Horváth, “Silencing and Naming the Difference,” there was a complex system in place in the department of Romology, as Horváth

⁵² Marushiakova and Popov (2018), veteran Bulgarian researchers who have long been involved with the Gypsy Lore Society, identify the “Roma labelling processes” as an “‘outside’ intervention” (386). Although they acknowledge the legitimacy of the process of nation-building that was taking place in the 1970s with the formation of the International Romani Union and the Second World Romani Congress, a process that is associated with the rise of the term, they also describe the use of the term Roma as one of “imposing of the ‘Roma’ label in the political and academic spheres” (395).

had observed in a Hungarian village on the border between Borsod and Heves counties in northeastern Hungary, around the acknowledgement of Roma or Gypsy identity and the boundaries between Gypsies and non-Gypsies (Horváth 2012) — a system I did not successfully decode in the time I spent there. Although students and faculty talked freely about their ethnic backgrounds in individual interviews, in classrooms and meetings there was usually a different dynamic in place. An analytic distance of sorts was applied wherein the personal identity and life experience of individuals of Romani/Gypsy origin were de-emphasized in social situations in the department, and those individuals claimed no additional level of authority or expertise on topics related to Roma/Gypsies, over that of their non-Gypsy colleagues. In a sense, this created a kind of equalization that supported the family-like environment in the department that more than one member referenced — both because it circumvented the problem of stigma attached to Gypsy identity that might embarrass the Roma/Gypsy individual who could be called upon to discuss their own experiences, and also because it supported an equal level of authority on the topic of Roma/Gypsies between those who came from the minority and those who did not.

However, it created an oddly theoretical and detached frame of reference for talking about and learning about Gypsy issues in Hungary, as if the population being studied were external and separate from those individuals sitting in the room, many of whom identified as Gypsies. One non-Gypsy student of Hungarian ethnicity talked to me about his frustration with this dynamic. Sitting with me at a picnic table outside on the edge of the university campus with a couple of beers we were drinking from cans we'd bought at the nearby Spar supermarket in the mild September weather (at his suggestion, the alternative to going and having a drink at a neighborhood establishment), he told me that he wished that Roma/Gypsies in the department would share from their own experience and not only what they had learned from reading and

lectures. He specifically referenced a couple of classmates by name, students who took a leadership role in the program who were also from the Roma/Gypsy minority themselves.

Szilvi herself, although she was very open about her Romani ethnic identity and talked about it often in public contexts, also demonstrated this analytic orientation and distancing when we talked about my research project in the fall of 2011, shortly after I had arrived in Pécs for the 2011-2012 academic year. I had explained that I was exploring racial ideologies and practices within institutions working with Roma/Gypsies, including Roma organizations as well as other institutions — and varied institutions, including those that employed both Roma and non-Roma. Initially she was quite confused by the way my project was formulated. As she came to understand, Szilvi demonstrated surprise as she said, “Oh, you’re not studying *the Gypsies*; you’re studying those who work with them.” The way she expressed her understanding of the project, it suggested that those of Roma/Gypsy origin who worked in the field were outside the frame of the category she referred to as “The Gypsies.”

There was clearly awareness and consciousness around the fact that a large component of the student body in the Romology department was Roma/Gypsy. As Hungary prepared in fall 2011 for the upcoming national census with public service announcements and publicity in the form of television ads and pamphlets distributed throughout the country, I observed one such flyer in mid-September that made its appearance for display in the Romology department office: “*Én cigány vagyok. És te?*” (“I am Gypsy. And you?”) It was part of an active campaign to promote formal self-identification as Gypsy among those of that ethnic origin, to obtain accurate demographic information on the current population of Hungary. One day that month, one of the female Romology students spontaneously exclaimed to a group of us in the department: “I just filled out a census questionnaire in Hungary! Now there is going to be one plus Roma counted!”

This public declaration of her Roma ethnicity represented a departure from the norm in the country — as in the broader East European region — which is why there was such a widespread and concerted effort, in which Roma/Gypsy institutions also participated actively, to promote identification as such. Gypsy identity was stigmatized, so having that label applied to oneself often involved shame. For this reason, the official demographic data from the state was always accepted by experts as representing a significant undercount of the real population of Roma/Gypsy people in Hungary — as was the case in most countries.

Personal tensions in the department occasionally seemed to fall along ethnic lines that were also fault lines outside the university, but strongly appeared to be driven by personal and professional differences rather than ethnically based discord. Outside the department, however, the ways questions of ethnic heritage of those at the Department of Romology were understood and discussed were often tense and stark. On one occasion, when I was discussing the University of Pécs Romology Department with a Romani elder who lived in Budapest and had long been heavily involved in Roma/Gypsy work in the capital, he was dismissive and somewhat hostile. *Yes*, he thought that it was valuable and important to have a department of Gypsy studies in Hungary, but not *there* in Pécs (a provincial, far-away, irrelevant location), and not led by *a Jew* (i.e. Katalin Forray). The latter sentiment reflected an emerging concern that became even more prominent in the years following my field research, with “Nothing about us without us” becoming a rallying cry for many Roma/Gypsy-identified scholars and activists in Hungary and beyond. Budapest was a hub of discussion and organizing around this political project due to its concentration of domestic and international institutions working in the area of Romani rights and advocacy (ERRC 2015).

Since the early 1990s, there had been many non-Gypsies actively working in the field of Romani studies and Romani rights, some indeed drawn to the field due to a personal sense of affiliation or kinship in a family or personal history of persecution — Jewish and LGBTQ North Americans, members of other ethnic minorities in Hungary, persons with traumatic family backgrounds. Others were simply liberal-minded members of the majority. Over the years, many of the non-Gypsy persons working in the field had left for various reasons including advancing their own education, pursuing new job opportunities, and so on; but some of them explicitly cited the changing climate surrounding non-Roma engaged in this domain as a significant factor in their moving on to other work. Some found the changing politics distasteful, exclusionary, even suspect. The legitimacy of an individual’s claim of Romani/Gypsy identity increasingly became the subject of discussion, because that identity had become one of the core criteria in evaluating the authority with which one engaged in the field. It was an interesting shift in that an identity that was highly stigmatized and undesirable in the broader society had become a form of cultural currency within the academic field.

Other non-Roma/non-Gypsies — regardless of their personal views on the subject — chose to continue to engage and participate in the dialogue, and a new branch of scholarship in “Critical Romani Studies” emerged out of these multiethnic conversations based in Budapest (stimulating another wave of critique and even outright hostility from some in the established circles of international Romani Studies scholars). Non-Romani scholars, such as Márton Rövid, Andrew Ryder, and Katya Dunajeva, continue to be a part of those discussions, and the openness of other academic institutions in Budapest (such as Corvinus University) to host them has allowed them to continue to the present day (as we enter the fourth decade of the postsocialist era) even as the Central European University transitions out of Hungary. However, as separatism

and postcolonial critiques of knowledge production became increasingly hegemonic and central to the orientation of some of the scholars and activists working on Romani issues in Budapest in the mid-2010s, their project of international community organizing and (in some cases) nonterritorial nationbuilding became more and more at odds with the environment of illiberal and antic cosmopolitan politics becoming increasingly entrenched in Hungary. Interestingly, more than one member from the Romani elite born and raised in Hungary has come to take a leadership role in the organizations that have made their international moves away from Budapest or been established as a new emergent institution in another location. Berlin has since become a new international hub, and ERIAC, the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture, appears to be establishing itself as the new international institutional leader in defining the conversation and priorities of international Roma intellectuals and activists (much to the anger and chagrin of some of the longstanding leaders in Romani Studies scholarship, as reflected in lengthy, divisive arguments in one of key academic email listservs for those in the field). Art historian Tímea Junghaus, a scholar who is Hungarian-born Romani, became their executive director in September 2017.

There were pressing questions about whose voices and presences should be included, whose excluded, from work in the overlapping fields of Romani/Gypsy Studies and various initiatives related to Roma/Gypsies, including education, the promotion and support of cultural expression and revitalization, human rights, social services, and more. In Hungarian language, a shorthand expression I often used to describe this multifaceted work was *A cigánysággal foglalkozom*. While this might be translated as simply “I work with the Gypsies,” it had other layers of meaning not captured in that translation. *Cigányság* reflected the Hungarian grammatical convention in which the addition of “-ség” or “-ság” (or essentially, “-ness”) to the

end of an adjective turned the word into a noun (e.g. “szép,” “beautiful,” “szépség,” “beauty”), but in the case of a national or ethnic group, it was a way of invoking the collective of a group and also the essential characteristics of that group, namely linguistic, cultural, and so on. There was a semantic distinction between referring to *Cigányság* and *Cigányok* (“Gypsies”) in that the former referred to a collective with inherent shared qualities, like “the French,” and the latter, which indicated multiple individuals sharing that ethnic identity but without signaling those essential features that defined them as a bounded group. The distinction doesn’t neatly translate, because it is not simply a matter of definite or indefinite, or including or lacking an article (e.g. “Gypsies” vs. “the Gypsies”), but neither does “Gypsiness” satisfactorily capture “*Cigányság*,” because “Gypsiness” refers *only* to those characteristics that distinguish (or are believed or imagined to distinguish) Gypsy people from non-Gypsy people, without including the persons themselves in the meaning. *Cigányság*, however, referred to the people, the population, with the implicit assumption that they could be named and counted and that they had things in common as a collective group (i.e. the population that exhibits and is defined by some set of characteristics we could refer to as “Gypsiness”).

Whereas in Budapest, the question of an individual’s ethnic identity had come to be of primary and central concern in Roma/Gypsy-related institutions and Romani Studies, establishing or jeopardizing the epistemological validity of what one said and the authority with which s/he could speak on questions related to Roma/Gypsies, in Pécs, these questions were sidelined in public discourse within the Romology department. This setting aside of identity questions seemed to facilitate and support the collegiality and collaboration of a primarily non-Gypsy faculty and multiethnic student body. After all, there was a certain peculiarity in non-Romani adults lecturing to Gypsy students about Gypsy language, culture, history, and social

features of Roma/Gypsy communities — when those very students had often grown up in the very communities that were the subject of the lecture.

Besides the questions around the ethnic heritage of the faculty and administration, meanwhile, the equal emphasis the Romology Department gave to Romani and Beash linguistic and cultural systems was controversial outside of Pécs, where it was not uncommon to encounter the sentiment that “real,” authentic Roma/Gypsies spoke Romani, and the rest of the people who claimed Gypsy identity without speaking the language were not as authentic, were not “real Gypsies.” A Romani youth expressed precisely that sentiment in a discussion in a classroom in the spring of 2012 at the Kalyi Jag high school, prompting a challenge by the teacher to try to mitigate the tensions and rising emotion in the room from the students, many of whom were from the Romungro sub-group of Roma/Gypsies, who did not speak Romani. The leaders and pedagogues at the Kalyi Jag school in Budapest, a high school that emphasized Romani/Gypsy identity and support of students from this minority, had a delicate role to play in promoting and maintaining harmony and mutual understanding among Roma/Gypsy youths from the three main subgroups in Hungary, who sometimes experienced conflict across the subgroup boundaries. This delicate navigation of subgroup dynamics was an element pertinent to many of the Roma/Gypsy institutions in Hungary, one especially prominent in those devoted to education and learning as well as community organizing and community empowerment through culturally specific pedagogy — as they had at the Kalyi Jag schools in Budapest and Miskolc as well as at the better known and older Gandhi high school in Pécs. At Gandhi, too, as in the Romology Department, Beash language was taught alongside Romani as a central feature of the curriculum. As the school director Erzsébet Gidáné Orsós explained in a conference presentation at the Romology department in fall 2011, this could lead to some “interesting experiences,” such as

Lovari families learning Beash language when their children came home from school and taught their parents what they had learned.

In some smaller communities, the subgroup dynamics were less of an issue because the Gypsy population was exclusively of one subgroup — as was the case with the Beash Gypsy youths at the small school Kis Tigris in Alsószentmárton, a village in Baranya County in the vicinity of Pécs. However, in any institution geared toward Roma/Gypsy community empowerment and community organizing, addressing these historical tensions had the potential to promote coalition-building among Roma/Gypsies that overcame mistrust and social distance.

Broader perceptions of authenticity aside, Beash language and culture received equal weight in the studies at the Romology Department, and Beash Gypsy students constituted a large portion of the multiethnic, multiracial student body there. And although there were circles in which their Gypsiness was perceived as “less than,” there were plenty of others in which they were welcomed as persons sharing Roma/Gypsy culture and endowed with the requisite characteristics to model and carry Roma/Gypsy traditions (without reference to whether it was *Roma* or *Gypsy* and which they were and who they belonged to and where the boundaries lay between them and the Vlach Roma with whom they collaborated in institutions). As one example, the Romani Design initiative, which a Hungarian Vlach Romani woman named Erika Varga started in Budapest sometime after completing a degree in Ethnography, invited interns to participate regardless of subgroup identification, and the project was explicitly one of inclusion and mutual empowerment. Aliz Balogh, a teacher of Romology at the Kalyi Jag (Romani language for “Black Fire”) High School in Budapest who was one of the masters-level graduates of the University of Pécs Romology Department (who had also been a student participant in and volunteered at the Romaversitas educational initiative based in Budapest), is a Beash woman

who moved to Budapest and worked as one of the interns at Romani Design. Varga's initiative was about bringing together the world of high fashion and traditional Roma culture with the goal of promoting pride among Roma in their identity and heritage, by highlighting traditional Romani motifs and clothing styles in new, stylish designs to be worn by persons of any and all nationality or ethnicity. In crossing over to non-Roma persons, it had the potential to challenge stigmatization of Roma/Gypsy distinction; the choice to wear on one's body a brightly colored garment that looked distinctively Romani indicated appreciation and value of the beauty and desirability of that aesthetic, and for a non-Roma person to do so required at least some level of respect and acceptance of the producers of that object. Further, in bringing these designs into the *haute couture* space of international fashion shows and putting young Romani women on the runway, Varga was claiming prestige for Roma/Gypsy persons and their cultural products.

Meanwhile, for persons of Roma/Gypsy ethnicity, it meant literally wearing their ethnic identity legibly, without attempting to "pass" as non-Gypsy, and as Erika Varga and Aliz Balogh discuss in the media, this is a powerful thing. In both cases, the intention was about confronting stigma and building acceptance — cultivating self-acceptance of Roma *qua* Roma and acceptance and appreciation of *Others* on the part of people who might previously have looked down on members of the minority and its cultural distinctions. As Varga stated in a YouTube video about her initiative, "Romani Design works for an opened and accepting society." Roma empowerment was a component of that vision of an "open society;" Varga stated in the same video, "we have a lot to do for the Roma communities, for Roma culture, and we feel it is our duty to preserve a part of its heritage" (Rostas 2012). As Balogh said in a featured article published in October 2012 about her as one of the participants in their scholarship program, "It is time for the folk culture of Roma to be known" (Coolromani1991 2012a). Balogh reflected on

the powerful personal meaning in another featured article published in English on the blog in November 2012.

The last time I wore Romani Design I was invited to a restaurant with Romaversitas Foundation and with a group of foreign teachers and experts who work on the field of Roma educational issues in their native countries. As a beginner in my profession, I felt very excited to hear foreigners' experiences. The dinner was in a nice and intimate restaurant. I really enjoyed wearing the clothes and the accessories because I felt more self-confident, however, on the way I was thinking about the reputation of my [costume].

When I wear Romani Design, I feel like I have to sit straight and I am stronger. The guests were questioning about the clothes I wore and they asked whether it is typical or not wearing traditional Roma motifs [these] days. I talked about the goals of the mission and the general thought of it, and then I offered them an evening in the saloon” (Coolromani1991 2012b).

The cultivation of a positive perception of Roma/Gypsies and their visibility as people worthy of recognition that could be seen in the work of Erika Varga was a very active project in Budapest at the time. This objective was reflected in many public Roma/Gypsy-themed events in the time between summer 2011 and the end of 2012. The grand opening of the special house of culture called “egyHáz” next to the St Stephen Basilica in central Budapest, in which Romani Design now would share space with an art gallery space was just one such event. In and around Budapest, some others included the *Chachipe* photo exhibition in Szabadság tér (Freedom Square); the Romani Holocaust memorial at the Nehru bank beside the Danube; the opening of a new Romani archive in Gödöllő; and many concert performances by Romani/Gypsy bands. All these events asserted and presented a Romani/Gypsy presence publically.

The celebration that honored and celebrated the Romani poet and scholar Károly Bari on the occasion of his 60th birthday, though it was open to those who wished to attend, was a more private affair, expressing affection and appreciation for an elder who did just that in his personal life, proudly proclaiming and embodying his identity as a Romani person living in Budapest. In

the main room of the Roma Parliament, surrounded by the paintings of Roma/Gypsy painters, were friends and admirers of this influential, learned elder.⁵³ Sadly, the beloved poet was unable to attend his own party, due to illness, but a video recording of the evening was prepared for him, capturing the recollections, readings of his poetry, and greetings and words of appreciation. At the microphone at the birthday celebration, Ágnes Daróczi marvelled in retrospect at what a strong impression Károly Bari's courageous stance made on her and others at the time, when it was completely radical to walk with pride through the streets of the capital as a Romani person. It was still unusual and countercultural even in the early 2010s, as I've discussed above. As a point of contrast, when I was interviewing Roma/Gypsy housing beneficiaries of Habitat for Humanity in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and my translator asked one of the beneficiaries (in Romanian) if she was a Gypsy, she seemed embarrassed, and responded most circuitously. "Well, if others say I am a Gypsy, then I guess I am a Gypsy." To acknowledge one's Gypsy origins and claim a Roma/Gypsy identity was generally understood to entail assuming stigma and therefore naturally to involve shame or at least resignation, not pride. If one could "pass" as non-Roma and one had the opportunity to free oneself and one's family from the experience of constant discrimination, this was almost universally understood to be the preferred approach.

A similar dynamic reigned with regard to Jews in Hungary. An American friend sadly told a story about a long-time friend from Hungary initiating a conversation with her in which she finally, after years of friendship, disclosed her Jewish heritage, fully anticipating that the knowledge of her Jewishness would irrevocably change — and, indeed, potentially end — their

⁵³ The Roma Parliament was an organization that had existed since the beginning of the postsocialist period. It was led by Aladár Horváth, an outspoken civil rights leader who was born in the northeastern Hungarian city of Miskolc in 1964 and who had begun engaging in civil rights work "in 1988 when he became the head of the Anti-Ghetto Committee in Miskolc." From 1989, he had also been local leader of the Phralipe Independent Roma organization in Miskolc (Kóczé ND). He continues to this day to be one of the most important Romani activists in Hungary.

friendship. Julia was shocked and saddened by the disclosure, not because of the fact of her long-time friend's Jewish heritage, but because of the reluctance and shame she had felt about disclosing her identity. The degree of stigma she perceived and experienced in connection with this identity in Hungary created fear and avoidance in identifying as Jewish, to the point that she actively hid it from people in her close social circle. Her reticence was understandable, however; public humiliation when outed as Jewish was a real threat. Another friend of mine, Erzsébet, told a story about her grandson, who was called out publicly as Jewish in his classroom at school. This action of public antisemitic shaming was making a resurgence in the current political climate, and it was intended as an insult to embarrass someone profoundly, to shame them and put them in their place if the speaker perceived that the recipient of the insult seemed to think too much of themselves.

In the context of a mainstream society in which stigma could be used as a weapon to shame someone, and an identity perceived as subordinate was sometimes called upon publicly to dismiss or embarrass another, the subgroup dynamics within the Roma/Gypsy population in Hungary had real potential to be fraught, which made the project of bringing together Roma/Gypsies from different sub-groups to collaborate in communal ventures, and to promote and perform a shared public culture, all the more progressive. The moment I observed in a classroom at Kalyi Jag high school, in which a Beash teacher stepped in and claimed the “teachable moment” after a Vlax Romani boy dismissed other Roma/Gypsy groups in Hungary as not being real Gypsies, demonstrated a critical intervention that was made possible by the institutional development in Hungary at this time as well as the cross-pollination across these institutions and the barriers that had already been broken down among the subgroups within those organizations. A Beash Gypsy woman had achieved the level of education to be able to

teach in a high school in the Hungarian system, which required a higher educational infrastructure to acquire the degree (i.e., the University of Pécs Romology Department). The supports were in place to facilitate the transition from a Beash Gypsy family into higher education in the first place and to help her to succeed and complete the degree in spite of a climate of stigmatization in the mainstream society that was only becoming more divisive at the time with the right wing and neo-Nazi elements in Hungary gaining traction. And the environment in a high school founded and led by Vlax Roma was one in which a Beash woman was employed. Not one of these elements was to be taken for granted; they all represented achievements and movement against the grain.

Michael Stewart's account of village Roma in Hungary in the 1990s illustrates the extent of the prejudice and discord that existed in some places among the subgroups. He explained the situation of Roma in the village community in which he conducted fieldwork as living in a "state of siege" in which there was a "radical restriction of differentiation [that] led inevitably to a situation in which the Gypsies were either 'in' or 'out' of the ghetto" and "the Gypsies rejected the possibility that there could be a group of people 'in between.'" The brotherhood demanded total commitment" (Stewart 1997: 93). Stewart relates the sub-group dynamics between the Vlax (among which he conducted his fieldwork) and those of other subgroups. He writes,

The example of the Romungros who had over the previous one hundred years tried to assimilate into Magyar society was, paradoxically, an ever-present instance of this Manichean logic to the Rom. So despised were the Romungros that the very term *muzsikus* (musician), which was one of their own qualifying ethnonyms, was used in Romany as a general term for two-faced behavior. These "sellouts," who used their Gypsiness when it suited them (as musicians) but denied it when it did not (when it might be associated with the even more despised Romany-speaking Gypsies), were in a sense worse than the *gazos*. That they constituted living proof of the possibility that some form of mediation with *gazo* culture made their denigration all the more vitriolic. They were despised by the Rom as no other group was and their poverty held up as living proof of the idiocy of trying to build bridges between the Rom and the *gazos*" (Stewart 1997: 93).

The high school students at Kalyi Jag in Budapest in 2012 came from diverse backgrounds, some undoubtedly from communities or even families in which this level of divisiveness and spite reigned in relation to Roma/Gypsies from other subgroups, although the student body comprised youths who traversed subgroup lines, some who might individually come from a mixed background — whether one Romani and one non-Romani parent or, for example, one Vlax Romani parent and one Romungro parent. For a Vlax Romani boy to dismiss as inauthentic those who did not grow up speaking Romani language meant that he was deriding most of the children in the classroom. Intervening in a moment of shaming was an action that many teachers in Hungary did not do for a variety of reasons. The Beash teacher spoke up and challenged the logic. She affirmed the heritage of all Roma/Gypsy people, regardless of their mother tongue, and in the process reinforced the message and curriculum of Romology as one of inclusion and celebration of the diversity of Roma/Gypsy people and the value of the cultural traditions of all of them.

This was a countercultural message in mainstream society as well as in many Roma/Gypsy communities, both in Hungary as well as elsewhere in the East European region, but in certain educational settings as well as public cultural events and forums in Pécs and Budapest in the early 2010s, it was one that was being communicated clearly and broadly. At the time, the Romology Department at the University of Pécs was a key institutional space that facilitated the cultivation and diffusion of this message: it brought together a diversity of Roma/Gypsy people together with non-Gypsies, it cultivated their knowledge and expertise about Roma/Gypsy people, it instilled an ideology of inclusion and mutual respect of Roma/Gypsies and their diversity, and it provided them with credentials to be able to move into other avenues to spread a message of inclusion and address ignorance and prejudice among both

non-Gypsies as well as Roma/Gypsy people. In the process of the diffusion, faculty and graduates actively attempted to challenge stereotyping and discrimination by cultivating a more accurate picture of Roma/Gypsy people in a wide range of other contexts through trainings and collaborations with professionals in education, law enforcement, and social services, areas where there was extensive contact with Roma/Gypsies.

CHAPTER THREE

Situating Amalipe within the Physical and Sociocultural Landscape of Pécs

Pécs City Tour, c. 2012

Walking eastward in the spring of 2012 along Pécs's pedestrian street from Saint Francis Church in the direction of the old Zsolnay porcelain factory, one was greeted with all the hospitality and charm Hungary's fifth largest city had to offer. In an urban municipality of roughly 157,000 people, there was a striking small-town feel in the mostly cobblestoned inner section of Pécs that had been part of a walled city in the Medieval period. Right here beside the church, beside a smattering of trees at the base of the pedestrian zone of Ferencesek utcája (the street of the Franciscans), was one of the many unusual archaeological features of the city, the ruins of the old Turkish baths of Memi Pasha. There wasn't a lot to them, and you could tell from scattered trash and bits of graffiti that it was sometimes the site of some young people's parties, as you could walk right down a small staircase into them. But there was a striking, fascinating sense of the incidental ancientness of the site that made for an interesting juxtaposition against the surrounding Habsburg-era buildings, in their characteristic yellow, including a bank, the "Chinese shop" across the way, offering an assortment of cheap goods imported from China, and a bridal shop, a fashion boutique, and another import shop with water pipes and Middle Eastern spices just up ahead.

You passed the Owl's Nest Bookstore with its bohemian, gregarious owner and his friendly, geriatric Golden retriever who passed freely in and out of the entryway, often lounging

in front of the store and accepting the greetings of passersby — who'd been trained over time to direct their pets and pats to his back, but not to touch him on his head, because of an old injury. Stuffed with used books on many different subjects, the shop was a beloved and longtime fixture in Pécs's downtown. A nearby glove shop, with beautifully crafted men's and women's leather gloves in a range of hues in a delicious display in its front window, hearkened back to the celebrated old glove factory that began to operate in Pécs in the 1860s and had been expanded and modernized in the socialist period, and represented one of several vibrant industrial elements in the city's past. But the boutique-style display on Ferencsek utcája in 2012, artfully arranged with carefully executed lighting highlighting the artistry of each expensive pair of gloves, brought to mind artists and artisans rather than any factory-based industry. The glove factory was closed; so too, the cell phone factory and the uranium mines. The glove factory had been broken apart into a number of smaller companies that still made the gloves. The mines were completely empty. The entrance to a replica mine into a former wine cellar in the center of the city was fashioned into a museum staffed by a couple of the retired miners. With the dwindling economic activity in a place that had previously been a settlement to the Celts and the Romans, the current population — comprising ethnic Magyars, Roma/Gypsies, Croatians, Serbians, Swabians, Greeks, and more — was falling, through heavy outmigration as well as the low birthrate that was typical of Hungary as a whole. The situation left Pécs with a feeling of a quaint, beautiful city, rich with history yet struggling to locate its sense of purpose in the present and future.

As was common in other places of heavy industry, the mines had brought an influx of new migrants to work them when they were still open. In Pécs, the workers had come to the city from many places, including the former Yugoslavia, to go deep underground to draw out uranium for uses in other heavy industry. The multilingual signs still in place in 2012 at the entry

of some of the empty mineshafts at the mining museum a few blocks from here were a reminder of the diversity of the workers, many of whom had settled in the abundant panel houses in the Uránváros (“Uraniumtown”) neighborhood. Now, in 2012, the economy relied heavily on Pécs’s large student population and its tourists. Both groups were drawn to these few blocks of the city, along with some of the permanent residents of Pécs, to access the restaurants, cafés, shops, and other small businesses concentrated in the charming pedestrian zone, although most of the residents did the bulk of their shopping at the larger (and cheaper) chain stores like the massive TESCO out on the eastern side of town. The local green market a few blocks down from here was also a popular place for shopping when it came to purchasing produce and other fresh foodstuffs.

You encountered members of the ethnic minority groups of Pécs as well as ethnic Magyars and foreigners in the shopping zone, although the Roma/Gypsy residents of Pécs were concentrated in the neighborhood farther east as well as other more remote sections of the city, and a large part of the county’s Roma/Gypsy population lived in small, rural villages, many of them close to exclusively composed of members of their minority. The Croatians of Baranya County, meanwhile, though there were also some in the city of Pécs, were more heavily concentrated in the areas to the south, closer to the border, where signage was reliably bilingual. You didn’t often hear Croatian spoken on the street here in the center like you would in the market in the spa town Harkány, nine kilometers from the Croatian border. It was also rare to hear either Beash or Vlax Romani, the two Roma/Gypsy languages that were spoken in Hungary, in the streets of Pécs, though I did a few times during my time there.

In Pécs, walking eastward on this stretch of road from the glove shop after spending a few months in the city, it was nearly inevitable that you would encounter a familiar face and

exchange friendly greetings with a shopkeeper or other acquaintance or friend. For me, walking with a recently adopted puppy, I would also encounter even tough-looking men squealing with delight over a cute animal and moving closer to request to pet her — another of the many reminders of the small-town feeling of the provincial city. They were almost universally shocked to discover that she had come from a shelter after being found with a sibling in one of these streets. Pécs projected an image of itself as kind and welcoming, and many of the people were very much so, such that encountering cruelty or neglect there was jarring and came with a kind of cognitive dissonance when it was made visible. I did a double-take that year when I encountered a matter-of-fact handwritten sign on the door of a convenience store a block down from here alerting would-be customers: “No stinky people” allowed.

Other shop windows in the pedestrian area displayed new and antique fine jewelry, vintage sunglasses, and numerous other wares. Perhaps not surprisingly, in a country where being *ápol*t (roughly, “well-groomed”) was so heavily emphasized, there were many places to be found to purchase clothes and accessories or get one’s hair done or one’s face professionally and meticulously cleaned in a beauty salon.⁵⁴ There were antique stores, opticians, tobacco and souvenir shops, a picture frame and mirror repair shop, a CD shop, watch shops and watch repair shops, a mobile phone repair shop, and countless ice creameries. You passed travel agents; an herbalist; a Hungarian massage studio; a Thai massage studio; an insurance agent; a fruit and vegetable stand; a teddy bear shop; a yarn shop; the Corvina book shop; a shop with Hungarian

⁵⁴ A Hungarian-American friend had told me in 2009 that you could tell most of what you needed to know about a person from their fingernails and their shoes. As Krisztina Fehérváry has observed, teeth have also become a more important marker of social class status in the postsocialist period (Fehérváry 2015). There was not such a high level of pressure to maintain meticulous grooming of skin and hair if you were a heterosexual man, but for women it was a normative expectation, and the value of this quality of tidiness was also visible in the preferences for housekeeping and the landscaping and arrangement of public spaces. Grassy areas beside carefully tended flower beds often were held behind a barrier with a sign reminding passersby to keep off the grass.

delicacies such as plum, pear, and apricot brandies and homemade chocolates; many residences in the floors above the shops; many small restaurants. Some of the many 19th century Habsburg-era buildings greeted passersby with imposing, heavy, ornate doorways, others with archways opening into atmospheric, quaint inner courtyards often lined with additional businesses. Along the way, there were scattered bits of graffiti on the stuccoed walls and the occasional political advertisements. Some buildings were freshly renovated; others had a dilapidated appearance with faded paint or damp or crumbling stucco. Some of the storefronts were empty.

Although few Pécs residents were even aware of its existence, there was a very nice Roma/Gypsy cultural center tucked in amidst the residential buildings just a couple blocks up from here. Like the other Roma/Gypsy-themed institutions in Pécs whose existence was so emphasized in the bid for the European Capital of Culture title, the Cigány Kulturális és Közművelődési Egyesület (“Gypsy Cultural and Community Cultural Organization”) and its programs were virtually completely unknown to the general population of Pécs. The organization ran various community programs, including a club for Roma/Gypsy children of middle school and high school age and arts-, literature-, and music-themed activities, many geared toward youth. The space also housed the Erdős Kamill Cigány Múzeum (“Gypsy Museum”) and the Racz Aladár Romano Kher (in Romani language, “Romani house”), named, respectively, for Kamill Erdős, an ethnographer and linguist who conducted research on Hungarian Roma/Gypsies; and Aladár Racz, for a player of international standing of the cimbalom, an instrument central to the famous 19th century Hungarian Gypsy orchestras. They hosted performances of Roma/Gypsy performing arts like folk dance and music as well as presentations on social issues of pertinence to Roma/Gypsies. They had once had a demonstration of basket weaving, and they were in the process of working toward creating a Roma/Gypsy Holocaust

memorial for the city of Pécs. Exhibits of paintings by Roma/Gypsy artists displayed on its white and deep red walls created an environment reminiscent of that of the Roma Parliament in Budapest; both were repositories for displaying fine cultural products from Roma/Gypsy people in a space devoted to them and their contributions. A couple of small flags at the end of the table during one of their presentations reminded the attendees of the cultural heritage of the space: one flag for the country of Hungary, one for the Roma nation. From the outside of the building, though, the small sign designating the “Rácz Aladár Közösségi Ház” and “Romano Centro” with an image of a cimbalom instrument would not necessarily be read clearly to a passerby as being specifically Roma/Gypsy, although “Romano Centro” (Romani language for “Romani Center”) contains the word “Roma” that would be familiar to Hungarians. The unique design of the door, with mirrored glass and red wood radiating from a center circle like the spokes of a wheel, might draw attention, but they would unlikely note the resemblance to the red wheel (chakra) that is featured at the center of the Romani flag.

Back on our tour, a few blocks, down, arriving in Jókai square, you stepped onto tiles of neutral beige stone punctuated with a modernist outcropping of rock yielding a fountain that had been installed in the summer of 2009 in the flurry of renovations in anticipation of the European Capital of Culture year. Outside the optician’s shop, stationer’s store, and battery store there, I once ran into a Beash basket weaver carrying a large load of baskets he was trying to sell, and he talked to me outside on the square to ask if I might be interested in purchasing a basket. This particular day, I didn’t really consider buying one, whether it was because I didn’t have the money to spend or I didn’t want to be carrying around a basket until I got home to the flat and having to navigate the space of the city with a large object like that. It wasn’t out of resistance to buying in an informal sale outside a shop; I did so fairly often in Hungary, like when I bought

little bouquets of flowers from the elderly ethnic Magyar peasant women you used to see often at the exit to the metro in Budapest. Nor was it a question of buying from a Roma/Gypsy person; it was simply a matter of the circumstances and the good. I was accustomed to being approached sometimes by Roma/Gypsy salespeople who sometimes sold their own handicrafts, other times imported manufactured goods. I had once bought a faux sheepskin blanket from some Roma/Gypsy salespeople who were selling at a stall the flea market on the other side of Pécs, and once I had bought a brightly colored, sequined turquoise fan from a Romani woman in the street in Budapest near Blaha Lujza square. On the other hand, I was not interested when a Roma man approached me with a large selection of leather belts.

Sales were a common traditional livelihood for Roma/Gypsies in Hungary. The trading and sales of horses, in particular, was a longstanding traditional occupation among Vlax Roma, one that had a mythos of being a core cultural practice for them. I was aware of it from my reading, for example about the community in which British social anthropologist Michael Stewart had conducted his research in Hungary toward the end of the state socialist period, and I had heard from many sources that the name of the largest and best-known group of Vlax Roma in Hungary, the Lovari, had come from the Hungarian word for horse, *ló*. One Lovari woman during my fieldwork in Hungary contested this commonly understood fact and stated that the name actually came from the Romani word *love*, “money,” because the Lovari were traditionally businesspeople. I have encountered a number of Roma salespeople engaged in informal sales over the years in the urban settings in which I’ve lived in Budapest and Pécs, but the literature I have read points to the horse etymology from the Hungarian lexical origin.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ On the other hand, I also know from experience that so-called facts about Roma/Gypsies often get repeated and re-cited without being verified through other methods besides through reading secondary sources. A Romani friend of mine was outraged when she disputed what was presented as a basic fact by a highly regarded scholar, expecting

I never personally lived in a community where horse trading was practiced. In central Budapest, though, I once had to be very firm that my dog was not for sale when a Romani man was very captivated by her as I was walking beside one of the fountains at Blaha. He was quite persistent. If he had been aggressive, I would have felt differently, but the encounter was amusing rather than worrisome to me. He seemed to have interest arising out of genuine admiration for her qualities and belief in her monetary value because of those qualities. I considered his interest in her to be a compliment, because I love my dog and heartily agreed with his assessment, though I wasn't about to sell her.

This encounter reminded me of some other ones that were similar in that they felt in some way to be inflected with "Gypsiness" in ways I feel uncomfortable examining. Sometimes my perception of distinction is one I question, out of discomfort with racism, whether it's my own internal prejudice or that which I have absorbed from the mainstream social environment in Hungary. And yet if it weren't for the profound weight of stigma, the idea of my perceiving someone as Roma/Gypsy and perceiving them as acting like someone who is such, would not feel so problematic. Moreover, there are the questions of how I know whether they are or are not Roma or Gypsy, given how many variables there are where there are no clear and consistent boundaries between Roma/Gypsies and those who are not Roma/Gypsy.

Through the many years I've spent there, a total of about six out of the past twenty, Budapest has presented me with a long history of encounters that fit this mold, one best described as a scenario that seems distinctively inflected with Gypsiness in a subjective way difficult to articulate. For example: One time, in the early days of the appearance of internet

him to appreciate new data on the topic that he hadn't been aware of. He had made a statement about the absence of Romani speakers in a particular area of one country, one in which she had encountered and spoken Romani with other Roma. When she told him her observation and experience, he flatly refused to believe it.

cafés in Budapest, I was at one of the computers in the small space of such a café near Oktogon, seated very close to a young Roma girl and what appeared to be a couple of her siblings, perhaps her friends. Spontaneously, without greeting or other conversation, she pointed to the single long braid I was wearing down my back and said, “that’s good.” I assumed she was Romani because of her brownish skin tone, her long black hair, her native Hungarian speech. A set of variables are assembled that sometimes form what seems to be a clear picture of one’s race or ethnicity as a Roma/Gypsy person. But what rendered the encounter “inflected with Gypsiness”? It was a simple compliment about my hair. Yet there was something about it that seemed to be driven by normativity. She knew what was good and what was not good, and the single, thick, long braid down my back was good. It conformed to her sense of goodness according to an evaluation that, in the way the assessment was delivered, sounded as if it were objective rather than based on her own aesthetic tastes and preferences — she had an internal schema of feminine beauty or virtue by which she was measuring me, and she found my hair to be good according to the objective standards she knew to be valid. Why she chose to speak to me to tell me so, I didn’t know. But I had the sense that in conforming to an aesthetic that was valued in a traditional Romani cultural context, perhaps she experienced a sense of kinship or connection. In any case, the fact of her being Romani (from my observations of her phenotypical characteristics), I received her behavior in a different way, that left me reflecting (even years later) about how it embodied Roma/Gypsy distinction in a way that I found notable.

Another time, a stout older Roma woman with a gold tooth came to the edge of the patio where I was eating at a sandwich shop and, as she was asking me for money, said it would be lucky to give it to her. She was chased away by the very angry shopkeeper from the sandwich shop. Here the gatekeeping and boundary maintenance was very clear. She was begging for

money from a customer, a behavior that the shopkeeper would not allow. But would the encounter with the shopkeeper have been different if she did not look so distinctively Romani, I wondered? Brightly colored clothing, a gold tooth, black hair, brown skin, and further, engaging in an undesirable activity that was ethnically marked as something stereotypically Gypsy. She told me it would be lucky. That too struck me as something I had never heard from an ethnic Magyar, and couldn't in fact imagine hearing from a non-Gypsy person delivered in the way she said it. I wondered, too, if she had come to the door of the shop and tried to buy a sandwich, rather than asking me for money, how would she have been received? Would the shopkeeper have served her? What was her experience of inhabiting this role that so embodied stereotype? I had never had an encounter that quite so firmly conformed to the schematic of narratives about Roma/Gypsy people. I filed it away with the observations of brown-skinned violinists in the underground passageways beside the metro, another observation of a Roma/Gypsy person who mapped neatly onto a pattern of culturally defined expectations of *what they are like* — unlike, for example, my English-speaking Romani friend visiting from Toronto, walking right across the boundary usually firmly in place for racial others at the pizzeria in Ráday utca (see footnote 16 of the introduction), or one of the members of the touring Serbian Romani brass band Boban Markovic Orkestar, who retrieved my lost purse from the bus depot in Szentendre and returned it to me, of course with money, passport, and everything else in place. We had to laugh, knowing how unlikely it must have seemed to the attendant that an American woman was instructing her on the telephone to give her purse over to a Balkan Romani man who would be fetching it for her. The boundaries were fluid and inconsistent in their application. The understanding of who embodied Gypsiness in a version or iteration that was unacceptable was not straightforward.

Finally, another time in Budapest, there was a young boy who was on the *földalatti* (underground railroad, also called M1) by himself, some distance away from the other passengers. He was hanging from the leather hand straps at the ceiling of the vehicle. At one point, he started making noises imitating the sound of moaning during sex. I and the rest of the passengers successfully managed not to crack up, but it was a struggle. No one chided him or corrected the behavior; we all simply stayed silent and did our best not to laugh. In this instance too, a young boy riding unattended, his brown skin and dark hair an unmistakable indicator of his racial background, the child embodied a certain set of stereotypes, an archetype of sorts, the trickster Gypsy child. He knew well that the behavior was unacceptable, he knew the sounds were inappropriate, and he chose to make this performance to a non-Roma public on the underground — to what end? Almost certainly to amuse himself. But the choice to do so in that way created another instance of an incident in which a person of Roma/Gypsy origin who was well aware of social norms and expectations made a choice purposefully to defy them — as when the little boys in the Mátras chose to swear in earshot of the outdoor classroom (see introduction). It was an explicit performance of defiance, and in being performed by a person who was visibly distinguishable as Roma/Gypsy, it took on a quality of conscious engagement with social expectations and stigmatized identity in a distinctive way that seemed — for lack of a better explanation — inflected with Gypsiness.

With a man at Blaha Lujza square trying to convince me to sell my dog, the long-skirted woman selling me a brightly colored fan beside the bus stop, the young woman in the internet café complimenting me on my braid, the older woman with the gold tooth asking me for money so I would be lucky, the young boy mischievously making sex noises on public transportation, the other little boys swearing: in this handful of these situations out of a twenty-year period, I

saw a performance transpiring in which the characters seemed to read from the script that everyone knows and understands in Hungary, a script of stereotypy and expectations. The countless other Roma I have known well, who are teachers, university students, social workers, NGO professionals, musicians, painters, and more — some with PhDs, some with master's degrees — they embody Romani identity with no less authenticity than those with more limited social capital, those who look and play the part they are expected to play. But they had a different mobility with their degree of assimilation, most of the time.

I went once with one of the Romani guys from the Romology department to one of the cafés here along this route in Pécs, a few blocks up from where we paused our street tour. Together with another researcher, Katya Dunajeva, we sat down and did an interview at one of the tables, without a second thought. His skin was brown, his hair black; he was unmistakably Romani. In some places in Central Europe, I have no doubt he would have been turned away from places he wanted to go to, with differing degrees of rudeness and cruelty. But here in Pécs, in the social environment here, I don't believe he would have had any difficulty entering the place as a patron without our presence. But the Beash basket maker? Could he have gone for a coffee, set down his wares, rested in a chair inside surrounded by his baskets? I couldn't imagine the scenario. The gates might indeed have been open to him, but I couldn't imagine him passing through them, even if he could afford the cost of the cappuccino, which of course, he could not. There were many who did not have the disposable income to spend at such places, and Roma/Gypsies in the informal economy were not the only ones.

Across the square from where I had run into the Beash basket maker was the long-standing Italian eatery, the Elefántos Étterem (Elephant Restaurant), with tables spilling onto the square beneath giant beige umbrellas with a surprisingly unobtrusive Coca-Cola brand displayed

in neutral tones, a departure from the usual and familiar, loud, bright red. The bland old brown, graffitied, utilitarian park benches of the state socialist era coexisted with an unusual sculptured bench in stonework coordinating with the other recently laid masonry to provide public seating on the square, for example to sit and eat an ice cream cone from one of the many ice cream shops nearby. A small shop there celebrated unique, fine Hungarian crafts and specialties like mangalica pork sausage, regional wines, wooden handicrafts, and brightly colored embroidered clothing. Warm, personable shopkeepers came out of this store and onto the square in the warmer weather to greet you with samples of their delicious treats like handmade lavender or elderflower syrup to sweeten and flavor carbonated water. They delighted in sharing bits of “Hungaricum” — quintessential, treasured elements of Hungarian cultural heritage — with foreigners and swapping stories with travelers about experiences of life and travel in faraway places.⁵⁶ Some of those involved in this business project had spent time abroad and were very interested to meet and speak with foreigners.

In 2012, there was a distinct divide in the city in attitudes toward foreigners; some, like these entrepreneurs, demonstrated warm friendliness and an attitude of openness and curiosity

⁵⁶ One of the many political developments in the 2010s, reflecting the government’s increasing control and active administration in the domain of cultural affairs of the country, was creating legislation around the idea of “Hungaricum” in order specifically to designate items of particular note to the Hungarian nation. The term “Hungaricum” (with the spelling taken from its Latin roots) predates the state intervention to reify Hungarian national heritage that came with the new law in 2012, by which “Hungarikums” were now to be evaluated and administered by committees, curated, categorized, and featured as “Hungarian values” on a centralized website.

The “Act XXX of 2012 on Hungarian national values and hungarikums,” emerging out of Article P of the new “Foundational Law” or new Constitution of Hungary from 2012, established the principles of Hungarikums and their administration. As of January 2020, the central Hungarikum website offered the following definition: “hungarikum: a blanket term indicating a value worthy of distinction and highlighting within a unified system of qualification, classification, and registry and which represents the high performance of the Hungarian people thanks to its typically Hungarian attribute, uniqueness, specialty and quality” (Hungarikum ND).

Contemporary Hungarian sociologist Endre Sik has used this process as a metaphor and lens for describing the current political environment under the government administration of Viktor Orbán in the media, arguing that the migrant crisis in Hungary is a moral panic consciously constructed and institutionalized by Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz party and identifying the “moral panic button” as the true Hungarikum, or “Hungarian trademark” (Barlai and Sik 2017; Farkas 2016).

about those who had come from elsewhere to land in a provincial city in a small country. Others, often from the older generations, showed their resentment and annoyance with frowns, tense bodies, and gruff impatience. Hungarians in Pécs were conscious of the tension. During one encounter in a bookshop in the downtown mall, an older man was noticeably angry and hostile when he arrived to the line behind me as I was checking out with my stack of books and having a brief but animated conversation in Hungarian with the young clerk about a recently published edition of a beautiful book about Hungary from the Culinaria series. Celebrating Hungarian cuisine and culinary culture, it featured bright, colorful images of dry paprika; fresh Hungarian peppers; stews in great traditional metal cauldrons called *bogrács*; wild-foraged mushrooms from the forest; and handmade sausages, dumplings, and *pogácsa* biscuits; and gave history and detailed discussion on the cultural and culinary features of the different regions of the country.

The clerk seemed very charmed; she was appreciative and surprised by a foreigner's enthusiastic interest in and knowledge about Hungarian culture and language. The older man, who impatiently interrupted with rude and dismissive comments about me as well as the content of our conversation, clearly was not. After she let him go ahead to pay for his purchase, she looked at me with apparent embarrassment and resignation, sighed, and said, "*Ez a kultúra.*" "This is the culture." Whether it was xenophobia and active dislike of a foreigner or simply impatience and lack of tolerance of something that diverged from his desired routine (waiting for another customer whose transaction was slower than he wanted), he showed a rudeness that had a familiar quality to it as one that was widely perceived as a vestige of the state socialist period.

However, the divide of how people engaged with foreigners didn't simply follow generational lines, and there also wasn't a clear consistency to the nature of xenophobia or resentment toward Others. One attitude seemed universal as well as perennial: If you got just

about anyone talking about “the Gypsies,” Hungary’s internal Other, at any point in the 1990s through the 2010s, their dislike, hostility, and prejudice were evident. But no one seemed to have much to say about the Chinese immigrants who ran the handful of Chinese import stores and cheap Chinese *büfé* restaurants of pre-prepared foods mainly geared toward takeout. Chinese immigrants in Hungary mostly had arrived right in the early days of postsocialism in 1989 and early 1990s (Pal 1999), some very shortly after Tiananmen Square, and they generally kept a low profile with relatively limited assimilation.⁵⁷

By the late 2010s, after the immigrant crisis had exploded in Europe and Hungary had ended up as Ground Zero for those trying to access Western Europe, “*migáns*,” or “migrant” had reportedly become an epithet with weight that resembled that of “Gypsy” or “Jew” (Fódi 2018).⁵⁸ But then, too, some Others were welcomed and others were not — at least when it came to the Hungarians who were not universally and consistently xenophobic toward anyone exhibiting difference. In 2018, an older man who was owner of a bike shop in the provincial city of Debrecen in the eastern part of Hungary, showed genuine pleasure in a long conversation with me about my experiences in Hungary as a foreigner and in my interest in and level of proficiency in the language. He eagerly asked my opinions and elicited my commentary on many topics, and

⁵⁷ By Krisztina Fehérvári’s observation, the Chinese immigrants of the early postsocialist period were from her experience perceived to be “clean” and hard-working, diligent, and *rendes* (see section later this chapter), especially in comparison with *cigány*, often invoked (personal communication 2020). However, informal reports I have observed suggest that in the current climate at the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, these attitudes toward Asians, including the longstanding Chinese immigrant residents of Hungary, may be deteriorating.

⁵⁸ From an article on March 27, 2018, by Kitti Fódi of the online daily news site *abcug.hu*, translated by the Budapest Beacon staff: “These children often don’t know what exactly a migrant is, but the word now counts as a swear word like ‘faggot’ or ‘gypsy.’ . . . ‘Migrant’ has become a popular new term of derision among children, which they use for practically anyone that differs slightly from the average, like if they dress differently, for example.”

Discussing the experience of one family, she writes: “Kata Sóstai also thinks that “migrant” has become a completely ordinary swear word among children. Two years ago, Kata’s daughter was seven years old when her classmates began taunting her by calling her “migrant.” The little girl loved anime stories, and so she dressed like her favorite characters. Instead of the typical pink clothing of little girls, she wore a leather jacket. This was enough to get the children to make fun of her on the playground, calling her a migrant. She cried because it hurt her feelings, but she had to ask her mother later what the word meant” (Fódi 2018).

could not contain his amusement and delight in my knowledge of colorful Hungarian slang, prompting him to say laughingly, multiple times to his wife and colleagues during my several visits to his shop, that my Hungarian was *kurva jó* — “fucking good” (literally, “whore good”). In the end, he refused to take my money for the bicycle rental for the two weeks I’d been in Debrecen. But his generosity, appreciation, and warm acceptance of me — a foreigner from the United States — in no way extended to openness toward members of other Others. He persistently tried to engage me in a conversation about “The Arabs,” disappointed that I told him I didn’t want to talk politics. “Do you *know what they are like?*” he asked insistently. And I said yes, I knew many Arabs. He was determined to talk to me about the threat of immigration and the scourge of “The Arabs” and their culture. Having had many conversations over the years about Roma/Gypsies with xenophobic Hungarians, I felt it was a lost cause to discuss Arab cultural and religious diversity, friendships and collegial relationships with Arab- and non-Arab Muslims, Muslim- and non-Muslim Arabs – and knew it would also probably spoil the positive experience of cultural exchange that we’d all experienced together.

Age and generation were in fact found to be a significant factor in Hungarians’ attitudes toward Roma/Gypsies in a 2005 survey conducted by researchers at the Open Society Institute. They noted “sharply divergent attitudes toward the Roma” among respondents from Hungary that differed by age, noting:

Younger respondents (even those who were well-educated and widely traveled) were more likely to express uniformly negative attitudes toward the Roma, whom they regarded as a single, homogeneous group. ‘Their attitude toward work is in their genetic code; it’s in their blood.’ Older respondents were more likely to distinguish between two types of Roma: the traditional nomadic group, who generally conform to the negative stereotypes (poverty, criminality, etc.) expressed by other non-Roma respondents, and Roma musicians, artists and other professionals who, through hard work and talent, had made the effort to enter into and make a positive contribution to Hungarian society. ‘As a musician, I used to play together with Roma people, and that’s a completely different

world. They were nice; there's no problem with them'" (Open Society Institute 2005:11)⁵⁹

The attitudes toward Others that the older man in Debrecen exhibited in 2018 showed potential consistency with these findings, in that my level of linguistic and cultural assimilation was relatively high, and he appreciated the efforts I had made in that assimilation. His experience with Arabs was limited to highly biased portrayals he had been exposed to in the media through inflammatory anti-immigrant propaganda in the midst of the immigration crisis in Hungary, so from his perception, they were Others exhibiting a radical alterity that was to be feared and reviled

Back in Pécs in 2012, a few blocks up from our starting point at St. Francis Church, you arrived at the main city square, Széchenyi tér, with the famous mosque/church at its center, ringed with these familiar Habsburg architectural aesthetics, with institutions old and new present in the space. There were old local businesses like a classic Hungarian bakery, an ice creamery with a terrace with its pleasant view and table service in the summertime, the Pomegranate Pharmacy (Gránátalma Patika) in the historic building it had occupied since its inception in the late 18th century, founded along with the clinic a few doors down by an order of Jesuit brothers who had established hospitals in cities around the kingdom of Hungary. The neighborhood also boasted a small shoe shop proudly displaying the vintage Hungarian sneaker brand Tisza in its bright plate glass shop window; old-school, dark Hungarian restaurants down the stairs to the basement, with stick-to-your-bones meals heavy with fatty meat, sour cream,

⁵⁹ See discussion on patron-client relationships of assimilated Romungros in footnote 5 on xix, and how evictions and concomitant population movement disrupted these long-established social relationships between Roma/Gypsies and non-Gypsies. Emerging external factors in the postsocialist period have been destabilizing to the previous social order and the level of integration that existed for Roma/Gypsies who were relatively assimilated.

potatoes and noodles; and an edgy local place called the Kanta Bár hidden in a peaceful inner courtyard with bikes locked all about, serving coffee, alcohol, and a daily vegetarian lunch item to the regulars who frequented the place.

Unless you were looking for them, you likely wouldn't see the swastikas drawn on the wall behind the Pomegranate Pharmacy as you walked into the side street; they were small and not especially noticeable to passersby, similar to the ones I found scrawled on the entry door to my residential building a few blocks east-southeast of here. Dislike and prejudice against both Roma/Gypsies and Jews were commonplace in Hungary at this time, and in Pécs, even many liberal-minded people who were well traveled, fluent in English, and closely connected with networks of foreigners, would make reference to “stinking Gypsies” or tell me that they were “*nem normálisak*,” (literally, “not normal,” but with a strong set of meanings beyond the basic English translation, including the suggestion that they were insane, uncivilized, and inhuman.)⁶⁰ On the other hand, although the Magyar Garda (a right-wing vigilante militia) was active in the country in spite of being illegal (Stewart 2012: xvii), and neo-Nazism was on the rise at the time, it was still a small segment of the population who espoused these views or supported the activities of violent white supremacists. And a few blocks from here, you could find an active synagogue where the members of the small Jewish population of Pécs, who had comprised a part of the community since at least the time of Ottoman rule, could attend services. As the website of the synagogue indicates, their building had fallen into disrepair after most of the Jewish population was killed in the Holocaust, and those who survived were no longer financially able

⁶⁰ Fehérvári offers extensive analysis on the “discourse of the normal” in Hungary in her work (Fehérvári 2002 and 2013).

to care for the synagogue. At this time, though, in 2012, the exterior condition looked good, and the synagogue was fully operational.

The mosque/church at the center of Széchenyi square was the single most distinctive and memorable architectural feature of the city of Pécs, with its characteristic Islamic elements. It was featured in every tourist guidebook depiction of the place and had a prominent place in the “mental map” of the city for foreigners and locals alike (Takáts 2006). It was seen as a reflection of the unique multicultural history and heritage of Pécs, which under Ottoman rule (1529-1686) had been a fortified city and administrative center where the Ottoman Turks established “remarkable Muslim religious and cultural institutions” (Dávid 2012) and built Turkish baths and minarets, madrasas, and a bazaar, as well as turning two churches into mosques (Romváry 2010: 317-325). The mosque/church had undergone shifts in its function over the years, serving first as a mosque, then a Catholic church, and now a museum. However, there was also an actively functioning mosque in Hungária street, a couple of blocks down from the St Francis Church, where we began our city tour: there were pamphlets at the entrance providing information about Islam and services provided a couple of times a week that were attended mostly by the small population of Muslim foreigners enrolled at the medical school.

From Széchenyi tér, where the road continued as Király utca (King Street) moving east from the central square, after the corner with McDonalds, the next stretch was paved with the older, dingy-looking pink and gray brick, and featured an increased concentration of eateries and pubs — Murphy’s Pub, Replay Steakhouse, Korhély Pub, the quick Italian restaurant Massimo — and somehow also a higher density of shops and services: more souvenir shops, a one-Euro shop, a “retro museum,” a shop from the German toiletries chain DM. On the right was Enoteca, with its fine dining restaurant Corso overlooking the square with the national theater, graced with

a fountain decorated with bronze sculptures with the masks of comedy and tragedy on either side. Enoteca had an excellent delicatessen and market along with its eatery on the lower floor, one of the only places where you could find lamb in a city where even hamburgers were frequently made with ground pork. The theater square and the cobblestone pedestrian street were also lined with ice creameries, atmospheric small pubs and cafes with their lovely facades; a Turkish kebab shop; an art gallery; the posh old hotel Palatinus. The center of this square, too, featured a lovely geometric design in slate gray cobblestone and a neutral beige stone like sandstone, the margins still with the remaining gray and pink wavy concrete bricks that continued to the east of Theater Square. The theater square too featured a handful of the same old basic brown painted functionalist benches you saw along Király utca, for seating to consume an ice cream or drink a beer from a can while watching an open-air concert being presented on the steps of the National Theater. This had been the location of a well-attended open-air concert of Roma/Gypsy music by the band Kanizsa Csillagai (“The Stars of Kanizsa”) in the summer of 2009, which I describe in greater detail later in the chapter. Around the corner, I had once encountered a small group of Beash men and women I mentioned in chapter two, who were spontaneously making music for themselves, singing in Romani language. They were gathered on the street there around their accordionist who was seated there on one of the public benches.

Despite the massive economic downturn that had hit Hungary in recent years with the Swiss franc crisis, which had its effects on this city as in every other place in the country, Pécs’s city center boasted myriad options for relaxing, socializing, and celebrating that attracted both Hungarians as well as some of the 1,762 foreigners in the small city, many of whom were part of the population of 30,000 students at the University of Pécs. The pedestrian zone seemed to provide endless opportunities for a pint of beer, a cappuccino, a cake, or an ice cream to the

tourists, students, and middle-class Pécs residents who had the disposable income to be able to go there, and many of those establishments demonstrated careful, deliberate, and conscious attention to presentation in their names, décor, and choices of offerings. Many projected a distinct sense of pride in being Pécsi as well as being Hungarian.

One tiny, newly opened coffee place there was named Eozin, for the famous and distinctive green/gold glaze for which the Zsolnay porcelain factory was particularly known. An element of Pécs's cultural history of which the city (and the country as a whole) was enormously proud, the fine porcelain of the Zsolnay factory, particularly pieces glazed with Eozin, were distinctive and familiar to most in Hungary and in the past had been considered desirable in places in the West, as well. In Hungary, you would often find Zsolnay porcelain in the old-fashioned curio display cabinets you saw in some middle-class homes.⁶¹ Distinctive brightly colored roof tiles and other decorative ceramic elements from the Zsolnay factory were incorporated as key components in an emergent style of Hungarian national architecture Ödön Lechner was forging at the turn of the 20th century, drawing on Hungarian folk motifs as well as Art Nouveau style (Frigyesi 1998: 100-102); the notable public buildings that still exhibit this style, like the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, affirm the value of distinctive Hungarian aesthetics and architecture to visitors both domestic and foreign, who cannot help but notice their

⁶¹ See, for example, Fehérváry 2013, plate 5b, a photograph depicting “a panel concrete apartment interior in Dunaújváros, decorated with typical *polgári* (bourgeois) furnishings of inherited antiques, rugs, and art, that had not changed for decades. This décor gained renewed prestige among some sectors of the population in the 1990s.” The living room of one apartment in which I lived in Pécs had been decorated in this style and featured fine porcelain. Hungarian author István Bart notes in his Hungarian cultural dictionary that “the ‘modern’ vases and other *objects d’art* made with a special, greenish, iridescent eozin glaze invented by Zsolnay were coveted at the time of the *art nouveau* in Paris” and that Zsolnay dinnerware was still in the 1990s “an elegant present to newlyweds,” taking “second place to Herend porcelain” (Bart 1999: 197). Fehérváry, citing Nadkarni, notes the significance of Zsolnay porcelain as a “Hungarian-made” good in promoting a sense of national pride. In fact, it has been designated as a *Hungarikum*. (See page 45, footnote 56 above.)

unique character.⁶² As a notable part of Hungarian cultural heritage, the Zsolnay porcelain factory was a treasured feature of the cultural geography of Pécs, and its renewal and grand reopening of its grounds as a cultural quarter a few blocks farther to the east of here, in the spring of 2012, was a much anticipated and core part of the plan of reshaping the city's urban space for the European Capital of Culture.

Just beyond the Eozin café, there was another newer establishment, the Cooltour Café, a *romkocsmá* (“ruin pub”) in the fashion of the fiercely popular establishments first seen in Budapest's old Jewish quarter — its garden peppered with mismatched vintage furniture, the inner areas appointed like cozy adjoining living rooms with subtly different decoration to each room. These sorts of whimsical pubs were becoming increasingly common in the city of Pécs; for instance, you could drink a beer in a boat down one of these side streets in the courtyard of Strausz Ti-Ti-Tà, opened in June 2011 and named for the method of counting dance steps in traditional Hungarian folk music and, presumably, the famous classical composer who had composed the piece “The Blue Danube.” At Cooltour, Ti-Ti-Tà, and the newest of the lot, Csinos Presszó, the eclectic vintage styles of the fonts and furnishings drew from many different distinctive eras and aesthetics that seemed to honor and celebrate the diversity of Hungary's material culture of the past and present.

⁶² Frigyesi notes that the Zsolnay factory “experimented with the synthesis of folk themes as well as the curved designs and exciting colors of art nouveau patterns” (Frigyesi 1998: 100-102). As Hungarian-born tour guide author András Török reports about one such building, that of the Postatakarék (Post Office Savings Bank), “The greatest attraction of the building is undoubtedly its roof of green, yellow, blue and brown hexagonal tiles, hidden behind the yellow majolica waves that crown the top of the main walls. The roof is full of flowers familiar from folk embroidery, angel-wings, Turkish turbans and scary dragontails. This, however, can only be suspected, even from further down in Nagy Sándor utca or opposite the market. A disciple of the architect asked Mr. Lechner, ‘But tell me, Master, who will enjoy those wonderful ornaments on the roof, if they can't be seen from the street?’ Lechner answered: ‘The birds will’” (Török 2001: 85).

Nearly every establishment had its own specific beverages it featured, often advertised with a sign outside indicating the beer on tap or the coffee being served. Some offered the local Pécsi beer brewed just down the hill from the university campus. Pécsi beer had its faithful adherents, some of whom had stuck with it even through the economic transition in which the financially ailing Pannónia Sörgyár had been privatized, purchased by the Ottakringer-Wenckheim company, and rebranded as Pécsi sör. Like the sneakers bearing the Tisza brand established in 1971, Pécs beer also seemed to attract a younger generation of Hungarians, as well, some of whom were embracing the material legacies of an older Hungary with a sense of pride and nostalgia for a faltering country. Although the beer circulated beyond Baranya County, Pécsi beer undoubtedly had its highest popularity among drinkers in Pécs, some of whom, at least, expressed their regional allegiance through their consumption of the locally produced product.

In some of these very pubs, that year, young Hungarians eloquently articulated to me their aspirations, disappointments, joys, and sorrows about their lives, their country, and the time in which they were coming into adulthood, narrating their worldview over another glass of beer, as they did many nights, in a social ritual core to the social life of the place, where most of the visiting that happened occurred in public places rather than in the dormitories or other tiny domestic spaces they called home (Drakulić 1993). Drinking the local beer in a provincial place in Hungary entailed an assertion of value of a place often overlooked — even unknown — by people who didn't live there. The sense of being dismissed seemed even more tender in regard to Hungary's capital city than in connection with the rest of the world, since in Budapest, the disregard was that of co-nationals of their own country. Moreover, it constituted a kind of double dismissal, being from an apparently insignificant place in an already small and little-known

country. When one young Hungarian man at Ti-Ti-Tá referred to his city as being part of the countryside (*vidék*) of Hungary, I teased him a little; a city of almost 160,000 people being part of the countryside seemed silly to me — even a little ridiculous. *But no*, he said with great seriousness, emphatically. In Hungary, there is only Budapest and the *vidék* — everywhere else outside Budapest is the countryside. In this cultural geography he presented of his own country, the resentment about the center-periphery dynamic regarding power and influence was abundantly clear. Rather than swallowing the shame of irrelevance the rest of the worlds seemed to cast on Pécs, Pécsi beer drinkers embraced the flavor of their own homeland, sometimes out of bland appreciation for its lower cost (local beer was cheaper), but sometimes with a flair of rebellion against mockery and derision.

Another related sentiment I heard more than one young person verbalize in these spaces of camaraderie and truth-telling was about the woeful lack of economic opportunities in their home — not only in Pécs, but indeed in their country as a whole. One young female university student told me one night about her sorrow and conflict over wanting to stay in the country when she graduated, but feeling that the only way to earn a living was to go abroad to the UK or perhaps Germany. This was a major recurring theme in the stories people told me that year, whether I was talking to Pécs university students in the bar or the courtyard outside the faculty of humanities — or to poor Roma in an illegal dog park beside a playground between Communist block housing units. For homecare labor in the UK, manual labor in Germany, IT professional work in Belgium, and more, the out-migration was at the forefront of people’s consciousness in Hungary at this time, both on the individual level and also at the state level. The Pécs ECOC2010 program was explicitly trying to counteract “brain drain” and cultivate desirable, promising opportunities for bright young people in Pécs. The Orbán administration’s educational

reforms included controversial legislation creating an obligation for those on state-financed scholarships in higher education to remain in-country for a certain period of years, prompting massive student protests.⁶³ It was part of an even broader tension between protecting and retaining Hungarian national resources and participating in a global network and marketplace with a flow of commodities and human resources in which desirable imported products could be procured and the labor and skills of persons from Hungary had a market value outside the country that far exceeded what earnings they fetched domestically.

Back to our spring 2012 street tour of Pécs, we could see Hungary's position within this global economy reflected materially in the beer selections on offer in the local bars and cafés. The local allegiances aside, most establishments in Pécs along the central pedestrian zone of Király utca offered more nationally popular brands, such as the Hungarian beer Dreher or more internationally recognized brands such as Krušovice, Carlsberg, Tuborg, Zlaty Bažant, or Guinness. The café Eozin offered the Croatian beer Ozujsko, an unusual offering, a nod to the country just across the border of Baranya County. This, too, echoed a feature of the ECOC Pécs2010 program — the emphasis on Pécs as a borderland city, a gateway to the Balkans. The proximity of Croatia was not reflected in Pécs in too many ways discernible to the outsider; unlike in towns closer to the border, like the popular spa town Harkány, Pécs was not a place where you regularly heard Croatian language in the street or Croatian language translations on the Hungarian street signs. Apart from the presence of a couple of Croatian cultural institutions, there were few outward signs in the public space that reflected cultural or linguistic features of their southern neighbors. Shops and restaurants featuring Balkan foods were no more frequently

⁶³ Beginning in the 2012-2013 academic year, students were required to sign a contract to work or raise a family in Hungary for twice the duration of their studies, if they were admitted into state-funded spaces in higher education (Ámon 2013).

seen than they were in the capital, where burek pastries and savory meat dishes like pljeskavica and čevapčići were seen on menus in a handful of restaurants around the city.

Inside the walls of homes and other interior spaces was a different story, one in which many neighbors from former Yugoslavia had sought refuge and found homes amidst the upheaval of the Balkan wars in the 1990s, and the older migration had brought a multilingual, multiethnic workforce to the mines. When I commented on the instruction signs in multiple languages I saw at the entrance to the replicated mineshaft at the mining museum in 2012, the attendant, who was a former miner himself, responded with grave seriousness: They were crucial, because they gave direction to the miners (in language they were sure to understand) to help them safely navigate this highly dangerous, hard manual labor in heavy industry. The former miner turned museum attendant told me also that Roma/Gypsies, too, were part of the work crews, but the dynamics of division that existed in many factories with respect to them and the non-Roma didn't exist. This was potentially deadly work, he explained, so there had to be solid trust and cooperation if you had someone on your team, otherwise the worker couldn't make it in the industry at all.

In 2012, though, a sign in Croatian was no more likely to be found in Pécs than one painstakingly written in the symbols purported to be an ancient Hungarian runic alphabet by the occasional Hungarian enthusiast of the original Hungarian nation. Neither was frequently to be sighted, but there was a business with the runes displayed on an exterior wall in one spot in Pécs, as one could see on rare occasion on the occasional restaurant menu or village street sign in this period in places where passionate Magyar nationalists sought to make more widely known the ancient cultural heritage with which they identified.

As you moved east of Theater Square in Pécs, here on this side of Király, you were more likely to come upon Roma/Gypsy people from the surrounding neighborhood to the east, like a pair of nicely dressed young women walking together with their purses, or a Gypsy family, along with the other Hungarian speakers and foreigners along the way. You might see an older Hungarian couple sorting through their shopping bags together on one of the brown park benches or a fellow sitting and reading. That one group of Beash Gypsies I had encountered spontaneously making music in the street, singing in Romani, had been gathered around one of these same old benches. I don't remember seeing the local Roma/Gypsies enter the stylish restaurants or bars to have a drink along this path, however. One time I ran into a half-Beash guy at the bar at the Uránia cinema. Another time, a Beash woman invited me for a drink in the dingy old local place called the 100 Éves Borozó (One hundred year-old wine bar), down the road just outside the pedestrian zone. Borozós were places with cheap wine on tap that catered to the proletariat, places that historically had their rush hours twice in the day, once in the very early morning, and once in the later afternoon: at the beginning and end of the factory shifts.

Back here just beyond Theater Square in the pedestrian zone, you passed the porcelain shop of the famous Hungarian brand Herend; an art and wine shop that sold the fine local wines of the well-respected Villány wine-producing region in Baranya County, among others. There was a shoe store; a Benetton shop; an outdoor adventure gear and camping shop; a shop with paintings and fine furnishings; a picture shop; the popular café, pub, and gallery space Nappali in a section of the street with some of the only full-size trees to be seen. People riding bikes, people walking their dogs, people drinking a coffee or a beer on the outside patios of one of the cafes. Bike racks with bicycles, planter boxes with greenery. An old electronics shop, another optician.

As you approached the farther eastern end of Király utca, you came to another Catholic church on the right, another fruit and vegetable shop on the left, a convenience store from the chain Tom Market, an ancient-looking watchmaker's shop with signage looking like it dated back to the interwar period at least, along with a modernist one from the state socialist period. Windows in the upstairs floors of this old building with curtains, deep brown wooden shutters, red geraniums in window boxes. The crossing at Lyceum utca (where automotive traffic re-entered the landscape of the pedestrian zone) was marked dramatically with gray cobblestone, four large stone pillars. Here on this side of town the shops became a little sparser again, with more residences mixed in, a couple of banks, a bakery featuring the celebrated Balkan specialty *burek*, with meat or farmer's cheese filling in a deliciously greasy pie made with filo dough. Some of the exterior stucco walls of the old buildings here had noticeable water damage, damp spots and paint peeling. There was a local government employment office, another bakery. A remaining bit of the ancient wall of the Medieval walled city at the Buda Gate (Budai Kapu) was also marked dramatically with a boxy, headstone-like placard in beige stone marked with the seal of the city of Pécs from 1445 and identified as such in bold capital letters. Here was the exit from the inner city and the end of the pedestrian zone.

From here it was one long block going east, shared by cars and pedestrians, to get to Búza tér ("Wheat Square") and the roundabout that marked the very end of Király utca. A block with a gift shop, two flower shops, a small supermarket, a musical instrument shop, a real estate shop, an open gravel area used as a paid parking lot, a cheap old-style workers' lunch counter, a butcher's shop. This block, its sidewalks laid with concrete paving stone on either side of the blacktop, gave a sort of peripheral, dowdy impression of old businesses in old buildings catering to older, poorer people than the edgy, revamped spaces closer to Szechenyi square on the

western side of the pedestrian zone. But then, here was Wheat Square, newly renovated with raised beds of landscaping, a few small trees, ringed by buildings housing offices, residences, a newer Italian restaurant with al fresco dining available in the square, catering to a far wealthier clientele than the dim, grubby Hungarian lunch restaurant just around the corner. Continue on past the roundabout ahead, and go a few more blocks on Felsővámház utca, and you would get to the Zsolnay Cultural Quarter that had been under construction all through 2011, finally opened in spring of 2012. Farther beyond, about a kilometer and a half from the Tesco supermarket out in the Budai Vám neighborhood, with about a 20-minute bus ride from the center of the city, you could get to the Gandhi high school, the most widely known of the Roma/Gypsy-themes organizations in the city. It was still relatively obscure to people who didn't take an active interest in Roma/Gypsy issues — and most people didn't, unless the interest was fueled by white supremacist sentiment.

And here, beside the edge of Wheat Square, at the end of King Street, is where my mind lingers, when I think back. This was the familiar, friendly road I constantly walked, day and night, to get through the heart of the town, to move between the places I lived and studied and socialized; and it was also the one Kata Bándy walked on her last night, before she crossed to continue those few blocks on Felsővámház utca and was brutally murdered in the shrubbery just beyond the newly opened Zsolnay Cultural Quarter in July 2012. The rape and murder of the pretty twenty-five-year-old ethnic Hungarian woman, who worked as a psychologist for the police department in Pécs, rocked the sleepy city of Pécs — and, indeed, the whole country — just a couple of months after our tour through its charming streets. We had all held our breath, collectively, across the country, after her disappearance, hoping something unusual could have happened that could explain her going missing besides the awful possibility we all feared.

Facebook posts circulated with her image, pleading for any information that might lead to her being found, until her dead body was finally located. The identification of her assailant, László Péntek, prompted a surge of vigilantism from white supremacists reactivated to fight what they believed to be a plague of “Gypsy crime” in their country, because the assailant, was Roma/Gypsy. Through social media, a national group of semi-militarized right-wing activists was mobilized to come to Pécs and aggressively police the community, shouting “Gypsies come out!” from the streets.

In this way, the Kata Bándy murder in Pécs and its aftermath followed a script that had emerged over the previous several years in Hungary following Olaszliszka (see Stewart 2012 and Zolnay 2012 and discussion on *cigánybűnözés* in chapter one), in which isolated incidents of crime perpetrated by a Romani individual were treated in the media as “events,” receiving “alarmist and stereotyped reporting” (Stewart 2012) and advancing a “powerful and persuasive narrative” in which the Gypsy ethnicity of an assailant was treated as an essential fact, and evidence of the danger that the group as a whole presents to Hungary and Hungarians.

In Pécs, Roma/Gypsies and non-Roma alike grieved for Kata Bándy and experienced the alarming, violent disruption to the sense of security we had felt in the streets of Pécs, when her body was found. Of course, the experience of being targeted as responsible for her death was one that was racialized and specific to the Roma/Gypsies in the community, and it added a whole other layer to the sense of physical insecurity and unsafety. It was one thing to receive an insulting letter on the doorstep of your civil society organization, but it was another to be called out into the streets by angry white thugs who believed you were to blame for a grisly crime and that the streets needed to be policed and the community protected from people like you.

For better or worse, I wasn't living in Pécs anymore to witness the vigilantism and my friends' and colleagues' responses to the climate and how it evolved. But seeing how the national white supremacist element could be mobilized and called to action from across the country, and observing the process happening through social media from Budapest, created a totally different frame for looking at the Roma/Gypsy organizations operating in Pécs between September 2011 and May 2012 when I was there as a researcher based in an organization a few blocks from where Kata Báandy's body was found. It laid bare the tenuousness of their position in the community and provided different insight into the significance of their community spaces and their ability to interact within them with a different sense of safety in their environment.

One of these spaces is where I was leading you at the end of our tour in spring of 2012, a couple of months before that grisly turn of events. From here at "Wheat Square," tucked away behind the next side street after you turned right, was Amalipe, my organizational home during my nine months of intensive fieldwork in the city of Pécs.

Welcome to Amalipe

If you crossed Wheat Square, and took a couple of turns to the right into very narrow side streets, you would arrive to the side of an old two-story white stucco building with brown trim, owned by the local government of Pécs, with the same rosy terra cotta clay tile roof that topped nearly every building in Pécs. If you passed a tiny corner store selling goods like cheap wine, mineral water, canned beer, chewing gum, and cigarettes, and the window boxes of the beer joint on the corner, you arrived in a small square with cracked, aging concrete and filled with parked cars, but graced with the first full-size trees we have seen in several blocks on our journey through the city center of Pécs. The square had a feeling of being "betwixt and between," not

entirely forgotten, but not exactly remembered either. Beyond a chain link fence there was an uneven mound of soil with bits of concrete, separating the square from the neighboring street. Beyond an aging wall on the back, westerly side of the square, its plaster crumbling away to reveal the clay bricks beneath, there was a very modern-looking panel of glass windows to a different building I never identified.

On the lower level of the white, brown-trimmed, tile-roofed, government-owned building, a pub's umbrellas advertised the Hungarian working class-associated Borsodi beer with their slogan: "Az élet habos oldala," (literally, "the frothy side of life"), perhaps best translated as "the sunny side of life," which called to mind the Hungarian saying "Az élet nem habostorta" – literally, "Life is not a whipped cream cake;" similar to the English saying "Life is not a bowl of cherries." Life can be hard and doesn't deliver all the joys and pleasures that we might wish for. But the Borsodi beer advertisement promised a taste of the kind of joyful life that could be so elusive. Like Baranya County (the county in which we found ourselves, to which Pécs is the seat and the largest, most prominent city), the northeastern Hungarian county of Borsod was in a provincial region whose economy had relied intensively on heavy industry during the state socialist period and which had been hit hard in the "regime change" (*rendszerváltás*) from 1989 to 1991, with privatization and the collapse of state-owned industries in Hungary. With crippling unemployment levels and a large, impoverished Romani minority plagued with particularly entrenched unemployment, Borsod didn't give an especially "sunny" impression from the outside. But they made a comparatively cheap beer that had a more widespread following and domestic distribution network than the local Pécs beer. Here, under these umbrellas, you occasionally encountered small groups gathered to socialize, sometimes associated with the local nongovernmental organizations housed in the adjacent building.

Beyond the Borsodi beer umbrellas, behind the trees, there was a tiny kitchen hidden in the far corner that prepared basic meals for local people living in poverty. Beside that, there was another Romani/Gypsy organization led by a Beash Gypsy man. Unless you were looking for it, you probably wouldn't even notice, and likely wouldn't recognize, the Romani flag with its green fields below, blue skies above, and the red wheel symbolizing the journey of the Romani people. Another civil service organization in the upper floor marked its entrance with the seal of Hungary and the Hungarian flag.

If you climbed the stairs and pressed the buzzer to be admitted to the upper level, you could open the locked gate to walk along the wooden upper deck and find your way to Amalipe, the organization led in fall 2011 by soon-to-be Dr. Szilvia Lakatos, a personable, heavy-set, middle-aged Vlax Romani woman with light brownish skin, dark eyes, and long black hair, who usually was wearing a smile.

There, someone would open the door for you and greet you warmly, and invite you into the entry room, with couches in a formation that felt noticeably home-like. Someone, often the leader of the organization, would immediately offer you coffee and whatever food they had available, most often an inexpensive, store-bought, traditional white crescent roll called *kifli* out of a thin plastic bag filled with more of the same.

The first time I arrived at the organization, in 2006, I was met by a large group of social workers who had been involved with its operations for several years. We sat down in a circle together, and I was struck by the sense of cohesion, the power of the group participation. In light of the organization's name, Amalipe, Romani for "friendship," the experience seemed particularly apropos. It was a striking contrast to my experience in many other institutions, where I was typically met by one or two workers representing the organization. As we sat together

during that first meeting, each of Amalipe's workers described his or her role in its many programs and activities: social workers doing public health community outreach to pregnant Romani mothers, supporting academic achievement of elementary school students, and various other social initiatives serving the public in Pécs.

When I arrived for the beginning of my tenure as a researcher based at that organization in the academic year 2011-2012, the organization was operating with a skeleton crew. My presence there seemed uncomfortable in some ways, to both me and the staff, because I was not actively engaged in the work that they were doing, and, in fact, there was little work that they were doing as an organization, because they were experiencing a severe shortage of funding for programs. They kept the office open for people who came to their door and did what they could, as they searched for grants and considered partnerships to re-engage more actively in community activities.

Those who were still working at the organization in 2011 were a small group of Roma — Erika, Péter (Peti), Csaba, and Szilvia (Szilvi), their leader. Nóra (Nori), a young Hungarian woman who attended university in the Romology department along with Csaba and Szilvi, also volunteered sometimes at Amalipe, and other students from the department occasionally helped with specific actions in collaboration with the organization. Amalipe joined with the Maltese Cross organization in 2012 to begin a needs assessment in an urban Romani/Gypsy “slum” community (*cigánytelep*, also sometimes translated as “Gypsy settlement”), and the students participated in the initial site visit there. In another collaboration in the past, a Romology student had provided illustrations for a Romani language picture book written by Szilvia.

A day at Amalipe in Pécs in 2009

On the day that Csaba's mother died, August 3, 2009, I went to Amalipe unannounced, because I'd run out of credits on my prepaid mobile phone and I couldn't reply to Szilvia's message. I went seeking help with a difficult housing situation I was dealing with. Ági-néni, the elderly woman from whom I was renting my living space for the couple of months I was in the city, was terminating our contract early and harassing me to leave so she could move in a longer-term tenant who had approached her and needed to move sooner than the end of the summer, when I was supposed to be leaving. I could have tried to fight the eviction and stay, but the situation had already been virtually unlivable, with her insane and erratic behavior, her Doberman Pincher with kidney problems who urinated constantly all around the yard onto which my windows faced, bad mildew in the walls, concentrated above my bed, and terrible mosquitos attacking all night long, an infestation surely exacerbated by standing water around her large yard. Finding decent and affordable housing in Pécs proved to be a challenge for me throughout my time in the city in both 2009 and 2011-2012. A lot of housing arrangements were made informally in Hungary, and you were at a disadvantage if you did not have the established social connections to be able to find something suitable. The options were even more limited when you were looking for a shorter-term contract. Now, in early August 2009, with only three weeks left in my stay, Ági-néni was calling to me through the open window as I was sleeping early in the morning, telling me I needed to leave and lying, saying our contract was ending.

I was near my wit's end. I knew that if I went to Amalipe, Szilvi and her staff would listen and help me find a solution to my problem. It seemed no matter what issue I was facing, I could trust that they would help me if I asked. I knew they wouldn't blame me for not responding to the text message; nearly everyone from Hungary that I knew was used to the

problem of inconveniently running out of credits on their phone when they also didn't have the money to purchase more. In fact, one of my Hungarian friends told me that summer "It's so nice, you're just like us ... it's so strange to have a foreigner also who [sic] runs out of money ... who sometimes can't reply to a text ... because normally when foreigners are here, they have so much more money than us ... they don't understand when we can't call them back ... but it's like you're one of us."

Being on a tight student budget that summer, living in a crummy rental housing situation, fieldwork in this unfamiliar city left me feeling uncomfortably vulnerable and dependent. In Budapest I could have asked for help or pooled resources somehow with my large network of friends, Hungarian and foreign. But here in Pécs, I was at the mercy of the handful of people I knew here, and I had a small taste of feeling stuck in the city, distressed, with limited options. I knew I was still in a position of privilege in many ways, relative to many people there, but in the moment, I had no choice but to rely on the assistance of others in the system of mutual interdependence that was key to survival in Hungary. It was a leap of faith for an American raised in a cultural system with the reigning ideologies of autonomy and independence.

So I went unannounced to Amalipe, knowing I'd find an open door and friendly faces of people willing to help me escape a hellish living situation. And as expected, I was buzzed up to the second floor, where I encountered Péter out on the balcony, talking with a couple of men I didn't recognize. The older one told Péter that he had something he wanted to communicate to Szilvia, but he didn't want to bother her, so he would write her a note. He sat down on the sofa in the dark blue sofa set in the entry room while Peti made coffee in their mini espresso machine on the counter there. The man finished his note and left, and Péter offered me a coffee, which I

accepted and drank in the entry room while waiting for Szilvi and the others to finish their discussion.

At one point, Csaba got up from his chair in the second room and walked to the third room, toward the back, and I could see as he stood up that he'd been crying a bit. Szilvia got up and brought him a tissue to wipe his tears.

A few minutes later, Szilvia came in to talk to me. She explained that Csaba's mother was very ill, and it was for that reason that he was crying a little. Szilvia and I talked a little more; she said she'd have time to talk to me later, and I said that sounded great. Then I said, "I have a problem. . ." We got interrupted by some other process, as was common there, because there were always problems to be sorted and solved, but a minute or two later, she said, "What's the problem you're dealing with?" I explained that I would need to move from my flat soon and wondered if they knew some place I could go. Szilvia immediately mobilized her team to get me new lodgings in my budget. She got the numbers from Nori, then called the numbers for two student dorms (*kollégium*) that turn into student hostels in the summer, she patiently explained to me. She gave me the information I needed, then got me settled at Nori's computer to look at the room photos of the Boszorkány dormitory online. I was feeling vulnerable, strange, and indecisive, so it took me a while of looking, thinking, and sitting before I decided anything at all. I checked in with Nori a few times to make sure she didn't need to be at her computer to work, and I just stayed for a while checking my Gmail, chatting with my partner in the US on Facebook, and doing the other typical stuff online as I reflected.

As I was sitting there, I heard Csaba take a phone call in the front room, and then I heard him cry out with the most agonizing cry I had ever heard, a series of sounds of weeping, crying out words and phrases, and crying out in agonized, mournful, wordless sounds.

I immediately had the strange, mixed reaction of feeling deeply empathetic and also a little awkward and embarrassed — that maybe I shouldn't be there, that I was a voyeur in a private moment of grief, that his wide-open expression of emotion was something I'd never experienced before and I wasn't sure what I should be doing in response. I was oddly concerned that the other Roma would be worried about me and my reaction as an outsider and a foreigner, and I didn't want to interfere in any way with his expression of what, I immediately sensed, was the moment of his mother's passing and his discovery of the tragic news. Among his expressions I heard and understood (with my still work-in-progress Hungarian language abilities) were "I don't believe it . . . my sweet little mother (*édes kis anyukám*) has died . . . fuck . . . she died . . ." So my worst suspicions were confirmed — from my best understanding of Hungarian at the time — and I doubly confirmed it when Szilvia came into the second room with eyes full of sadness. I looked at her and whispered, "She died?" and she nodded. I put my hand to my heart to express my sadness, compassion, and sympathy.

Szilvia sat with him for a while and they tried to comfort him in the first room, while I sat and stayed at the computer and tried to stay out of their way. Everyone was quietly busy and subdued the rest of the afternoon, with signs of tears appearing in their eyes intermittently, and I was struck again by what a family home-like environment it was there. It wasn't too long before Csaba drove off and the group returned to work, but quietly, slowly.

At some time during the afternoon, I saw the news online that Mária Balogh, a Beash Gypsy woman, had been killed near Nyíregyháza that morning, the latest in the series of anti-Gypsy murders that had been happening over the past year.⁶⁴ I mentioned the news to Erika and

⁶⁴ See chapter one for discussion of the series of murders.

forwarded her the article. And after a while I got packed up and left, saying goodbye to Erika and Nori and signaling from across the balcony to Szilvi that I was going, that it was okay, that I'd come tomorrow.

The funeral for Csaba's mother happened later that week. I was in the office for a little while the day before, and as I was leaving, I saw Erika and Csaba talking. I waited for them to have a break in their conversation, and when they did, they looked up, and Erika said to me, "So, are you leaving?" I said yes, then I did my best to offer an awkward expression of condolences and sympathy to Csaba. I said, "Csaba, you know that I don't speak Hungarian so well, but I wanted to say that I'm very sorry, and I wish all the best to your family." He said, "that's completely adorable" (*tiszta aranyos*) and Erika said, "*Igen, nagyon rendes a Heather.*" "Yes, Heather is very decent."⁶⁵ This little sign of their approval, of my having expressed my care in a way that was understandable and received with appreciation, meant a great deal to me. I felt somehow that in being there at the moment that Csaba heard the news, that it was even more important for me to find the way to say — if not "the" right thing, at least something that would be received as appropriate and respectful and sympathetic given my position as an outsider.

The whole experience of that week made clear some important characteristics of the organization and the people who were a part of it. It was a space where Csaba was able to experience his deepest sorrow freely and be supported in his grief and his outward expression of emotion. In spite of the crisis that was happening, it was also possible for me to walk in and be warmly received and accepted, my needs attended to with respect and promptness. There was room for my bumbling, awkward foreignness even in this most personal of times for one of the

⁶⁵ Below, I delve into the term *rendes* at greater length to explore further meanings related to this interaction.

members of the organization, and appreciation even for the effort I made to offer my sympathies. And even on the awful day as Csaba's mother was dying, Péter didn't fail to offer me a coffee the moment I walked in the door.

***Rendes Cigány* (“Proper Gypsy”)**

Rendes is a difficult term to translate into English without losing the depth of cultural associations it holds in Hungarian and the importance it holds in designating approval. Krisztina Fehérváry also deconstructs the term in her monograph (2013, e.g. 28-29; 45-48; 249n13). Varga and Lázár's Hungarian-English dictionary includes the terms “tidy,” “neat,” “orderly,” “nice,” “presentable,” “proper,” and “regular.” (Varga and Lázár 2002: 1040). The SZTAKI online dictionary also includes the terms “ordinary,” “normal” as possible translations of *rendes*. In relation to people, Varga and Lázár translate *rendes ember* to be a “nice/regular person” (Varga and Lázár 2002: 1040); SZTAKI to be “he's all right,” “he's a decent fellow,” or “he's a good egg.”

In a sense, it is easier to consider the meaning of *rendes* through its opposite. *Nem rendes ember* is a “bad sort,” or a “bad egg.” (Varga and Lázár 2002: 1040) ***Rend*** is a noun, meaning order, orderliness, tidiness. *Rendes* is the associated adjective, meaning possessing the quality of *rend* (Varga and Lázár 2002: 1038). ***Rendetlen***, the opposite, means lacking the quality of *rend*, and it is translated as “untidy,” “disorderly,” “careless,” “negligent,” “sloppy,” “abnormal,” “anomalous,” “irregular” (Varga and Lázár 2002: 1038, 1040). In Hungary, *rendes* and *normális* (“normal”) are close cousins; if you fail to be either *rendes* or *normális*, you face the threat of serious social stigma, of even being a social pariah.⁶⁶ If you succeed, it means you have passed

⁶⁶ Fehérváry (2013) also discusses the connection between these terms in her monograph.

the test, that you are worthy of being part of the collective. In being called *rendes* by Erika, I knew that my behavior was appropriate, that they accepted me as I was in their environment. It was no small thing to receive that stamp of approval. And yet, there was also something notably striking and somewhat ironic about being designated as *rendes* by Erika, a Beash Gypsy woman, in the offices of a Roma/Gypsy organization. Erika was not establishing distance between us by calling me *rendes*, differentiating me as embodying different values and characteristics than they had; rather, I understood that this was an indication of her recognition of my being like them in a sympathetic, human fashion. I demonstrated an understanding of what was right through my expression of sympathy, an understanding that we all shared. In this family-like space, in spite of being a foreigner, I was also part of the family, and she communicated this kinship through her marking me as *rendes*.

Efforts to assimilate Roma/Gypsies on the part of the Communist Party were essentially thought of as an attempt to move them from a state of being *rendetlen* to *rendes*. As Michael Stewart observed in the village community Harangos, many of the “Gypsies found themselves at the rough end of council efforts — of a more or less symbolic nature — to bring their “disorderly” (*rendetlen*) lifestyle to an end” through regulations like restricting horse ownership “to cart drivers and home-based craftsmen” in the town. “People who lived from keeping and trading in horses, that is, the Gypsies, were forbidden to own the animals” (Stewart 1997:124).⁶⁷ The goal of social reform in assimilation, to see them “living as proper Hungarians” (113), was conceptualized (at least by some) as transforming them from an animal state to a human state — as Stewart wrote, “A Harangos report early on in the [assimilation] campaign commented that

⁶⁷ Stewart argued that “the ideology of work contained in the Hungarian authorities' concerted attempts to generalize socialist wage labour is destructive of cultural identity. In the new labour market situation which has arisen Gypsies are still disadvantaged, in the second economy as well as in the first; but Magyars should recognize Gypsy entrepreneurial abilities, and respect their resistance to all forms of social and political hierarchy” (Stewart 1990).

the Gypsies ‘need very much help if they are to find their place in the great human family, if society is to raise them into human beings’” (Stewart 1997: 264n5, citing a report from the town of Harangos from 1964 entitled “A Cigánykérdés” (The Gypsy Question), p.3).⁶⁸

As a counterpoint to his depiction of Roma/Gypsies in the village of Harangos, Stewart weaves in material from the Hungarian national ethnographers Edit Fél and Tamás Hofer’s study of Hungarian peasants entitled *Rendes paraszt* (“Proper peasants”), to capture the distinction between the values and ways of life of the peasants and the Roma in a Hungarian village context. As he explains the title of the book, the name “was taken from the *Átány* villagers’ own lips, and it perfectly captures the prescriptive, moral sense of their use of the word ‘peasant.’” They “set the tone of village life, were ‘at the center of society,’ and provided the values by which most others judged themselves. They were not, however, seen as a class separate from and above the other[s] . . . rather, they represented an ideal toward which less successful farming families strove” (Stewart 1997:116). And in this framework, there were specific guidelines that defined being a “proper” peasant and living up to that ideal. As Stewart quoted Fél and Hofer, “For proper peasants, agriculture and work were an art . . . Following the rules of this ‘art’ gave one security and pride and gained him the esteem of the community” (Fél and Hofer 1969, as quoted in Stewart 1997).

Of course, there is nothing surprising about Roma/Gypsies, too, having standards and ideals of behavior or expressing evaluations of such to other people in their social environment, as Erika did to me. Indeed, Stewart’s monograph about the Roma in Harangos is mostly devoted to mapping out the internal system of cultural values that defined their social world and the

⁶⁸ Consider the discussion in chapter one on “Gypsy criminality” and ideologies of activism circulated by 19th century criminologists.

ideals within that system. However, the term *rendes* was in the mainstream vocabulary antithetical to embodying Gypsiness; to be Gypsy was to be “nem normális” according to the perceptions of most Hungarians, and in order to be *rendes*, one had to be cleansed of the traces of Gypsiness through assimilation. A radio program on Klub Radio in Budapest in December 2019 entitled “*Cigány, de rendes*” (Gypsy, but *rendes*) features the photographer Judit Horváth, who talks about her experience as someone with a heritage as an assimilated Gypsy. In the expression “Gypsy, but *rendes*,” the category Gypsy is designated as oppositional to that of being *rendes*, not impossible to reconcile, but requiring labor to overcome one’s deficiencies.

What was important in this instance was that Amalipe was a familiar, family-like space in which that internal evaluation was how the people there judged one another, insulated from the racism and violence that were becoming increasingly stark over the time that I knew the workers there.

Amalipe After the European Capital of Culture: 2011-2012

Even in the context of severely limited resources, being without grant funding to pursue the kinds of social problems they had done in the community in the past, the organization retained this overall character throughout my fieldwork there in 2011-2012. Without the ability to pursue much in the way of community-level, mezzo-level social work projects, they mostly just kept the doors open and provided micro-level interventions in the form of problem-solving and counseling as situations came up.

For part of that year, Csaba led after-school tutoring for elementary school students in a small room tucked away behind the organization’s office. Szilvia occasionally taught language lessons to ethnic Hungarian students in the evening to help them prepare for their Érettségi exam

in Romani language. They were able to organize a simple children's summer camp for a week on Lake Balaton. But most of all, the office remained open as a welcoming, safe space for people to come to have a friendly face to meet, someone to counsel them with their everyday problems, and a warm place to step away from the rest of the city for a short break. One older Romani woman came by one day to drink a coffee and chat for a while, setting down her many bags for a few minutes. The staff told me after she left that she walked around the city all day selling clothes and things informally in the street. Although there were endless places to go for a coffee or a drink in the town, the woman came to Amalipe for her drink of coffee. She was safe and at home there, and she did not need to explain herself or worry that she would be looked down on or ridiculed for her poverty, for the large bags she carried, for the ways she took up space in different ways from the people who drank and talked in the cafés along the pedestrian zone. I never saw the Beash basket maker at Amalipe, but I never saw a Romani craftsperson or informal salesperson in one of the cafés along the pedestrian zone, either.

Another day, a Romani man came and talked to Szilvia for a while about his joblessness and she counseled him and gave him advice to try to locate employment. The situation was so hopeless, though, that the counseling mostly entailed validation of his difficult situation, recognition of his humanity in spite of the hardship he was experiencing. It was widely known that Roma/Gypsies had been devastated economically in the transition from state socialism when so many of the state industries had shut down. The Communist Party had made it their mission to assimilate Roma/Gypsies by turning them into workers and putting them to work in factory jobs. The popular explanatory story in the narratives from the international NGO sector was that the Roma had been the "losers of the transition" and their massive unemployment was due largely to the discrimination they faced in the labor market, where they were the "last hired" and "first

fired.” Given the extent of poverty among Roma/Gypsies, the widespread joblessness, and their profound social exclusion — that is, the racialization of poverty — two of the most prominent Hungarian sociologists who studied Roma and their social circumstances concluded that they constituted an underclass in Hungary (Ladányi and Szelényi 2006).

The economic situation was stagnant in Pécs at a community level, and the jobs were scarce for everyone. For those Roma/Gypsies who had no employment, who also faced labor discrimination, it was a dire situation, and the prospects for breaking out of the cycle of poverty were very grim. When there was money for the organization to run programs, Amalipe could hire people and there were at least a few more jobs made available for Roma/Gypsies in the community. At this point, in 2011, they didn’t have that option, either.

Most days in 2011-2012, it was pretty quiet in the office at Amalipe, with the part-time staff who were there usually searching online for another elusive grant opportunity for the organization. There were often one or two people who had come by, sometimes friends or family of the staff members, who had come by to use the computers to check their email, play an online video game, look at Facebook, or watch YouTube videos together. Szilvia sometimes worked on her dissertation, on Romani language education in Hungary, with her piles of texts spread across the large tables in the back room. There was one day I arrived when they were coordinating to obtain and transport a desk to the home of a local Roma girl, because she had nowhere to study but on the floor.

In one sense, Amalipe seemed to offer a space where Romani/Gypsy identity did not have to be the primary lens through which individuals were seen. It was a known characteristic of many of the people who worked or received services or support in their offices, but it did not necessarily need to be the subject of discussion. Their personalities, stories, and individual

characteristics had room to step forward in a space where the question of Gypsiness was moot, in a sense. In the Hungarian hospitals Roma women were sectioned off into separate wards for giving birth; in the Hungarian schools, Roma/Gypsy children were often segregated; in the nail salon, they might have to come during evening hours so the ethnic Magyar clients wouldn't have to encounter them while they were receiving their services. In every mainstream institution, Roma/Gypsy people ran the risk of being sidelined, turned away, or given different treatment on the basis of their race. But at Amalipe, Roma and non-Roma (Gypsies and non-Gypsies) alike were welcome into the organization's offices, and the fact of one's ethnic identity — and/or Gypsy sub-group identity — was not a matter of everyday concern. Non-Roma, Vlax Roma, and Beash Gypsy people worked side by side. The target population for their interventions was Roma/Gypsies, but their work focused on health and education. Despite its Romani language name and the fact that their services were explicitly intended to help the Roma/Gypsy people in the community, the question of Romani identity took a back seat.

At the same time, however, Szilvi and the other staff were usually present at community cultural events pertaining to Roma, such as concerts or dance performances by Romani/Gypsy performers. And on one occasion when a prominent Romani dancer/choreographer/dance educator/arts education leader was in town, I found him and his crew there at the outdoor table at the pub outside the other neighboring Roma/Gypsy organization, beneath the Borsodi beer umbrellas, downstairs from Amalipe, sitting over drinks and discussing their projects. The cul-de-sac housing these two Gypsy organizations was a sort of hub, a safe gathering space that attracted Roma engaged in Roma-related activities. There was room to recognize, practice, and celebrate Romani cultural heritage such as folk music and dance, but you could also watch breakdancing videos on YouTube, talk about baseball, drink a coffee, eat a *kifli* roll, talk about

weight loss strategies and housing problems, grieve openly for the loss of a loved one, and otherwise be normal or *rendes* without being marked as Other or bearing the weight of stigma that Roma/Gypsies generally carried with them everywhere. It wasn't that they were always treated differently outside the walls of the organization because they were Roma/Gypsy — but that there was always the potential to be, the expectation that they would be.

I heard Szilvia tell a story a few times to different groups of non-Gypsies about a time she went into a shop and she could tell that she was being watched carefully as she moved through the space. She felt very uncomfortable, assuming that she was being watched because of her race, given the widespread stereotype of Roma/Gypsies as thieves. She was very surprised when it turned out that the person thought they recognized her due to her role in the community as a teacher and community leader, and they were interested in her for that reason. She seemed to be communicating through telling the story that race wasn't always at the basis of every social interaction between Roma and non-Roma and that not everyone exhibited prejudice in every situation. At the same time, though, she was telling this story against a dominant narrative and a mainstream cultural context in which the outcome was a surprise for her. The fact that the story was important for her to tell ultimately reinforced the fact of how ubiquitous racism felt for Roma/Gypsy people as they were navigating everyday society in Hungary. Through the whole town, all the places we saw in our city tour, they carried with them the uncertainty of how they would be received and what kind of treatment they would experience, and when they would be reminded that they didn't belong.

Moreover, the way that the organization itself was situated in the city was reflected in part by the funding crisis in which it found itself in 2011. The European Capital of Culture program had promised great things for the city of Pécs. The bid document spoke sweepingly

about democracy and inclusion in the *Borderless City*, and Roma institutions like this one had been held up as evidence of the city's multiculturalism, a key part of the argument for why Pécs deserved recognition as a European city. Yet the political economy of the ECoC program was laid bare in the way that the squares and Zsolnay factory territory were renovated, but the civil society institutions — at least the Roma ones that I observed — experienced no lasting effects from the massive influx of money from the European Union. As Lähdesmäki observed, culture in the ECoC program was conceptualized in largely aesthetic terms and minority cultural features were thought of without reference to power, inequalities, or histories of violence (Lähdesmäki 2014). Gypsy culture could be celebrated in festive concerts on the square, but community health outreach programs for impoverished Roma were on hold until they could secure the resources to be reinstated.

Inclusion in Public Space of the City

At times, in some contexts, however, there was a space of openness and inclusion that was explicitly created in the city, through Roma/Gypsy-themed public events in open, public spaces of the city. One example of such a Gypsy-themed community event was an open-air concert performed in the summer of 2009 by a Gypsy band from the town Nagykanizsa, called Kanizsa Csillagai, or “Stars of Kanizsa.” The crowd gathered in Theatre Square was decidedly mixed: Gypsy and non-Gypsy, yes, but also children and adults of all ages, families eating ice cream, seedy-looking fellows sharing cheap tap wine out of a liter-sized plastic bottle. An older ethnic Hungarian woman with a cane sat on the brown public bench beside a Romani woman. There was a young Romani woman in tight jeans, an ethnic Magyar woman in a long skirt. Szilvi and some of the others from Amalipe were among those in the crowd. As the band was setting

up, children were climbing and playing on the fountain in the square, on the sculptures of the comedy and tragedy masks.

During the concert, a toddler boy held a toy wooden violin and bow in his hands, moving them about as the music played. A pretty, young Romani/Gypsy woman, dressed in a long skirt, who was part of the ensemble, demonstrated folk dances to accompany the music, shaking her skirt to and fro with her hand as she stepped about. A large circle of concertgoers formed around her to dance according to her instruction. One of the musicians played percussion on the traditional *Ceglédi kanna*, a large metal water jug that is commonly used in traditional Romani folk music of Hungary, and the band sang songs in both Romani and Beash languages. It was a joyful, pleasant, relaxed, warm summer evening in Pécs, where the diverse population of the city was represented in the crowd gathered to enjoy free musical entertainment.

It was fitting for the band Kanizsa Csillagai to perform to such an audience. Their ensemble embodied diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion; their music involved collaboration and community of Roma/Gypsy people across subgroup divides and their multilingual repertoire included songs in Romani, Beash, and Hungarian languages. As they explained their origins in the liner notes on their 2010 album “M-o piskát puriku/Megcsípett a bolha/2010” (translated by them on the album cover as “bit me the flea”), “The Kanizsa Csillagai band was formed in 1993 by Vlach (*Oláh*) and Beash Gypsy youths from Nagykanizsa. With their appearance, the music and dances of the Hungarian Gypsies were introduced all over the world.” With performers and collaborators from both Beash and Vlach subgroups of Roma/Gypsies, their existence testified to cooperation across subgroup lines in institutional and artistic projects. In fact, their list of persons who had assisted them on their 2010 album included both Anna Orsós and Szilvia Lakatos from the Romology department.

Conclusion

At Amalipe, Roma inclusion was practiced on a day-to-day basis by creating an environment in which Roma/Gypsy people could come and exist as they were, exhibiting or talking about their ethnic identity and cultural background as much or as little as they chose to. As opposed to the integrationist model assuming an obligation to assimilate, the older Roma woman with her huge bags of clothing for sale could come and have her coffee in peace, and the unemployed man could come to talk about his problems without worrying he would be perceived as “work-shy” and lazy. It was a retreat from the majority-controlled society that defined the geographic spaces of the city of Pécs and its behavioral standards. A parallel might be drawn to the value of Black churches and Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the lives of African-Americans in the United States and the ways they help to mitigate or reduce social isolation, feelings of being an outsider, and experiences of racism that all have a destructive impact on health and well-being of people from that minority.

The spaces of the city outside of the organization were *not* universally hostile and anti-Gypsy. It was usually possible to inhabit public space without harassment in the center of Pécs as a Roma/Gypsy person doing everyday activities amidst non-Gypsy people, like shopping, attending a concert, or even playing music in a group of other Roma/Gypsies in Beash and Romani languages. There were times when Roma/Gypsy cultural distinction was publicly displayed in the form of artistic performances by Roma/Gypsy people and enjoyed by a multiethnic audience, as was seen in the Kanizsa Csillagai concert as well as the ECoC-related performances of Bea Palya, the Boban Markovic Orkestar, and others. However, the multiculturalism observable in Pécs was superficial, conceived in aesthetic terms and scrubbed of the evidence of power inequalities, and these concerts represented the sum total of the

engagement most ethnic Magyars had with Roma culture. From what I observed, democratization of the city did not include support for minority civil society beyond funding arts events.

Also, although Roma/Gypsies could often inhabit public spaces without harassment, there was also always the potential to be publicly shamed or threatened on the basis of one's race when you lived as a Roma/Gypsy person. The periodic reminders of this danger lingered in different places, for example in the form of little swastikas you could see around town in the fall of 2011, the sign "no stinky people allowed" on the door to a shop, or the "Gypsies get a job!" letter that appeared on the doorstep of Amalipe around 2009. But a crisis could lay bare how serious this risk really was, as in July 2012 when white supremacists took to the streets of Pécs to terrorize the Roma/Gypsies throughout the community in the wake of the rape and murder of Kata Bándy by László Péntek.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discipline and Furnish: Habitat for Humanity International's Roma Poverty Housing project

“. . . There needs to be a good foundation for any Roma project. We need a certain stage of development. Mental hygienic education, to be done before we go anywhere. Are they all ready to be helped with the housing element? We can't just go. There needs to be community development — to teach them how to work, how to use a bus, how to use a phone. Until they're taught we cannot enter.”

What is mental hygiene, I ask.

“I don't know. That's the honest answer. It's social behavior, development of a vision of the future in their minds, knowing how important education for their kids is, because sometimes they don't know that. Not to marry — like cousins marry each other. . . not all Roma kids are mentally disabled, but a lot of them are because of this.

“[It's about imparting] values of majority society — like not to steal when there's no work, and knowing the value of work. They've never seen so they do not know; there's unemployment, and this leads to crime, and this leads to issues with the majority. The social subsidies put a burden on the majority.” — Hungarian Habitat for Humanity employee, 2006

“If the Roma do not take part in constructing their own housing, they will always be regarded by other people as freeloaders that have been given everything and give nothing in return.”

— *Mirka Hapalová, Člověk v tísní (People in Need) (Slovak Spectator 2008).*

Introduction

The snapshots of competing racial ideologies captured in this chapter come primarily from the summer of 2006, framed with some additional material from a few years on either side, from an international NGO with its regional offices for Europe and Central Asia based in Budapest, namely, the international Christian housing organization Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI). At an empirical level, the text sheds light ethnographically on an approach that was observed more broadly across the East European region at this time in the work of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) (Vermeersch 2006; Alexandra 2004, as cited in Vermeersch 2006: 453-454), and it situates this material in the context of evolving politics of representation of Roma/Gypsies. In many INGOs' advocacy apparently on behalf of Roma/Gypsy people in the early postsocialist period, their misery, desperation, and stigma were strategically depicted on a global stage in order to achieve visibility for the minority and accomplish other objectives with regard to their work with its members.

In the chapter, examining program documents in juxtaposition with promotional materials of the broader organization and secondary sources documenting HFHI's earlier interventions, and referencing my own field interviews and observations from Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania, in 2006, I uncover some of the contradictions and complications inherent in the planning and execution of Habitat's interventions with Roma and the early development of their Roma program. I analyze this program and their interventions with Roma in relation to the broader mission and philosophy of the organization as the basis for uncovering the assumptions and beliefs about Roma. In situating HFHI's work with Roma in relation to other organizations' approaches to working with Roma and some of the responses to the projects

of these organizations, I offer a glimpse into the intensely politicized field in which they were operating and the conflicting perspectives on what the problem was and how it should be solved.

As one of the snapshots of the regimes of divergent racial ideologies operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period, that of HFHI offers a point of contrast from the others I discuss in this dissertation. In distinguishing between “indigenous” Hungarian institutions (e.g. the Romology Department, Amalipe, and Romaversitas) and the “international” institutions (e.g. the ERRC and OSI) operating in Hungary in the previous chapters, I have also acknowledged and discussed how cross-pollination, mutual influence, flow of personnel, sharing of resources, and overlapping funding streams have blurred these lines. HFHI as an organization defies these categories in other ways. Neither Hungarian nor entirely not-Hungarian, the US-based organization HFHI operated in the early 2000s in many ways like a multi-national corporation that came to the region with its own preconceived ideas and operational model into which local staff were inserted for the purposes of implementation.⁶⁹

Although the story is specifically about HFHI, and the institutional characteristics depicted here are distinctly of their organization, HFHI was just one of many international NGOs working in Hungary and the broader East European region at the time, and their approach and the visual and verbal language with which their narratives were constructed were grounded in logics and cultural practices that were hegemonic in international development circles at the time, which extended far beyond Budapest, Hungary, or even the East European region. The impact of neoliberalism as a framework has been observed and critiqued by many scholars

⁶⁹ In this way it bore a resemblance to the baby food factory in Poland in which American anthropologist Elizabeth Dunn conducted research in the early postsocialist period. Alina had been a Polish company, but had been taken over during privatization by Gerber and transformed in ways that made for difficult adjustments for the longtime workers there (Dunn 2004).

already, both specifically in relation to European Roma (e.g. Sigona and Trehan 2009) and more broadly globally. HFHI's operations, like those of all the other organizations working in this context at the time, were shaped and structured by that hegemonic framework and the political economy and discourses of the global development industry.

Two important considerations must be addressed before delving into the ethnographic material, however: one of geography and the other of temporality. These points are important for clarifying the contribution of this work to the field — both what it offers and what it does not — because from both standpoints, this work entails a divergence from what might be expected, given the traditions of scholarship in the field of anthropology as well as the framework of this particular scholarly project, namely, that of shedding light on the racial ideologies operating in postsocialist Hungary and how they come to bear on Roma/Gypsy people.

With regard to geography, this material confounds any sense of the local from any empirical standpoint. Situating it within any geographic frame at all, beyond that of the planet Earth, is hardly feasible, because, as noted above, there is a flow of personnel, capital, narratives, discourses, and more, that is constant and is an integral part of the situation I am depicting. Methodologically too, in keeping with the project of capturing a picture of this situation faithfully, my attention and my field research have involved movement. The research for the entirety of this manuscript is fundamentally multi-sited, but the other sections of the dissertation are firmly grounded in spaces in the country of Hungary. This segment involved a short period of traversing international boundaries, conducting interviews through interpreters in Slovak and Romanian languages, and reading and interpreting primary source materials generated in multiple countries in order to capture the issues at play in the work with Roma by a single institution. These complications of gathering data to tell a story are telling with respect to the

content of the story itself; and, in fact, they help to clarify precisely the influence that the international NGO sector has had in the specific sociocultural and political environment of Hungary in the postsocialist period.

Although some of the fieldwork on which this chapter is based took place in Slovakia and Romania, and the notable projects referenced herein are based in Slovakia, the programs and interventions being implemented there were being planned and administered by the regional office that was based in Budapest at the time. From their prime location in the heart of Budapest, Habitat for Humanity International – Europe and Central Asia (hereafter called “ECA,” as it was most frequently referenced by those in the organization), later moved to Bratislava, Slovakia, where it is still located as of the completion of this dissertation in January 2020.

One might inquire as to the relevance of this multi-sited fieldwork in the region to the question of racial ideologies operating in postsocialist Hungary. The value of this examination of the operations in a major international humanitarian organization is in demonstrating the complicated flow of ideas, concepts, and technologies as they relate to and are applied to Roma and their social circumstances. It sheds light ethnographically on how this social life of technologies operates across boundaries of geography and organizational hierarchy and structure.

It also offers insights into neoliberalism, in demonstrating how through cooperation and blended funding between governmental and nongovernmental organizations and the flow of personnel, ideas, and technologies, it becomes difficult to characterize projects, programs, and initiatives as state or non-state enterprises. This liminal character of the organizations and their agents has implications for accountability when it comes to the outcomes and consequences of a particular intervention and who is responsible for its successes or failures.

As far as insights into discourses, ideologies, and practices in postsocialist Hungary *per se*, the analysis of HFHI's operations illustrates the way alternative approaches to and understandings of the "Roma problem" coexisted within this temporal, cultural, and geographic space, and even within a given organization. It also shows how both Hungarians and ethnic Roma could be distanced from the planning and implementation of a program being conceptualized in Budapest, which has implications for the evolution of both international Romani politics as well as Hungarian national politics.

The second consideration to address in terms of the scope of this chapter is that of temporality. This text does *not* track the evolution of strategy and conceptualization of Roma/Gypsy issues in the organization of HFHI as it has continued its work in the region. Rather, it captures a snapshot of a moment when an international NGO first became involved in work with Roma in the Central and East European region. It reflects on the organization's approach over approximately a ten-year period at the turn of the 20th century, with reference to its initial entry in rural Slovakia around 1998 and the early development of its Roma Poverty Housing Program around 2005 to 2006. This temporal grounding is very important for at least two reasons. First, because the organization's approach has undoubtedly evolved since that time in ways that are not addressed in this text, and I make no claims to the contrary. Second, the attitudes and tactics that are depicted here, which were illustrative in many ways of the overall approach taken by international NGOs at that time, have influenced the work of Roma/Gypsy activists and intellectuals and their priorities and concerns in the elapsed time since then.

A simple chronological structure of the text of this dissertation would place this chapter first, before the material on the city of Pécs. However, providing a clear chronology in depicting the racial ideological regimes operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period is not a

straightforward project, because each regime was grounded in a different set of legacies that were bound to a different context geographically, temporally, and otherwise. Their prehistory leads in many directions and to many different times. Time, or the historical moment at which the snapshot is taken that is included in this manuscript, is one of many different factors that influenced the contours of the ideological regime, and it is an important consideration that the Habitat for Humanity International material comes from c.1998–c.2009; the European Capital of Culture bid document for the city of Pécs was submitted in 2006 (in the same year as my field observations from HFHI in Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania); the bulk of my observations of institutions in Hungary were made between 2011 and 2012; and the time of completing the writing of this manuscript is in the final days of the second decade in the 2000s, roughly thirty years from the beginning of the postsocialist period.

The Fight over Rights of Representation of Roma

Every April since at least the early 2000s, the occasion of “International Roma Day” has been recognized and celebrated at the Central European University in Budapest. The holiday, April 8, is designated as a commemoration of the First World Roma Congress, a storied event that took place in Kent, outside London, in 1971, in which Roma/Gypsy leaders traveled from their home countries to gather for conscious political organizing, discussing of social issues pertinent to Roma/Gypsy people, and attending concerts and performances of Roma/Gypsy music and dance ensembles (Puxon 2019; Kenrick 1971).

In 2005, the festivities and events to honor this occasion had been expanded into “Roma Week,” which included a public screening of the documentary film *The Gypsies of Svinia* in the CEU auditorium. Attended by a mixed audience of students and other university-affiliated

individuals as well as members of the public, the screening caused a great deal of anger and frustration among some of the Roma/Gypsies at the university, including students in the Roma Access Program. A few of these bright Romani college graduates, who had come to Budapest to learn English and obtain advanced academic preparation for graduate study, passionately argued that this film, about a Romani “ghetto” in Eastern Slovakia, where disease and substance abuse were rampant, and unemployment was roughly 100%, was not the image of Roma that should be presented to the public in the context of a week dedicated to the memory of a groundbreaking event of international Romani organizing.

It seems their protest had an impact, because in recent years the students from the Roma Access Program (now officially called the Roma Graduate Preparation Program) have had a prominent role in organizing events for the commemoration: a YouTube video from 2013 features the group rather woodenly standing in the distinctive circular entry hall of the Central European University building on Nádor street, singing the Roma national anthem, “Gelem, Gelem” and proclaims in text radiating on a screen, “YES! WE DO HAVE . . . FLAG ANTHEM LANGUAGE HISTORY LANGUAGE 10-12 MILLION POPULATION.” The university’s 2016 ceremonies included “Remember, Retell, Reclaim,” “an exhibition of community artworks made by students and alumni of the CEU Roma Access Programs and Matej Bel University, instructed by Emilia Rigova visual artist.” As Yulian Kondur, one student in the program, explained the event, “It was initiated by the Roma Access Programs, on which I am a student. I’ve seen it as an opportunity to express ourselves in a bit different way, and to present the eight[h] of April as a . . . commonly accepted as a more political celebration or event, in a more personal, intimate, individualistic approach.”

The core theme of the exhibition was the attempted destruction of the Roma/Gypsies during World War II, called “Porrajmos” by many in the field. The same student stated (in English) in a YouTube video about the event, “We are as offsprings [*sic*] of those who survived, we’re still alive, we are developing, we are kind of keeping those memories in us, and we are, of course ... we do understand the necessity of transmitting the knowledge.” A text displayed at the exhibition stated,

“In search of a theme that might provide space for idiosyncratic statements and artistic expressions of individual Roma authors, we arrived at the theme of the Romani genocide and its political implications, which may seem as challenging in the least [*sic*]. The vantage point for the one-minute statues memorial was our critique of appropriation of Romani memorial events by the politicians and states contrasting with the simultaneous absence of willingness to do justice to the victims of the Roma genocide, contests over the representation of history, and conflicts in approaches to memorial ceremonies and over the authority to administer memorial sites. In developing the formal and content framework, we were driven by an effort to build on the trends in contemporary art and to allow for the maximal individual input of the co-authors” (Central European University 2016).

The controversy around the representation of Roma/Gypsy people that was apparent in the 2005 International Roma Day events at Central European University was reflective of a tension that had been present within Hungary for at least several decades, related to the depiction of the abject impoverishment of many Roma and what was perceived as a failure to recognize the cultural characteristics in public representations of the group (including in scholarship). Hungarian Romani sociologist Angéla Kóczé explains that even the sociological study of Roma in Hungary conducted by István Kemény and his colleagues in the early 1970s was met with resistance by members of the Roma/Gypsy community there because of these issues. As she wrote on the newly minted website RomArchive, “The Roma representative survey of 1971 was criticised by Roma intellectuals, in that it exclusively focused upon poverty and did not

recognize Roma as an ethnic group with a distinct culture. Moreover, questions of Roma ethnicity and poverty were articulated as exclusive issues, rather than as intersecting categories, with the question framed as one of ‘Gypsy Culture’, or a ‘Culture of Poverty’?” (Kóczé ND). And, as Kóczé observes, “Kemény’s research made a significant impact on the later representation of Roma in film, photography, and literature. They were depicted as a group that illustrated one of the “failures of socialism”, materially deprived and trapped in generational poverty, a “pariah” underclass who live outside the society in “Othered” unknown collectives” (Kóczé ND).

The evolution of the content of the Central European University’s International Roma Day celebration and its emphasis on participation and input from Roma parallel the transformations in scholarly work on Roma in this period, which I discuss also in the previous chapter on the Romology Department. In fact, the RomArchive, where Angéla Kóczé wrote these observations in a piece about the history of the Roma Civil Rights Movement in Hungary, is itself reflective of those evolutions. The website, developed between 2015 and 2019 as an international collaboration of Roma and non-Roma scholars, activists, and intellectuals from across Europe (together with professor Ethel Brooks from the United States, who has emerged in the past decade as a leader and collaborator in Roma projects in Central Europe), indicates that it is a project about “reclaiming culture,” “creating visibility,” “deconstructing identity,” and “decolonizing knowledge.” Quotes from prominent international Roma intellectuals elaborate on these ideas, including one from fine arts curator Tímea Junghaus from Hungary: “We need to decolonise existing knowledges and start writing Roma history with Roma voices” (RomArchive ND).

Although these issues were present even in the 1970s in debates in Hungary, the conflict came to a head in the early 2000s. There were several factors at play in that eruption. First, the internet facilitated communication and community organizing of Roma/Gypsies across geographic boundaries.⁷⁰ Second, the numbers of Roma with formal higher education, including graduate degrees, was rising, in large part due to the specialized educational initiatives supporting their academic advancement, such as Romaversitas, the Roma Education Fund, and the Roma Access Program. Although still small, the group was achieving a critical mass to be able to take ownership of institutions that had previously operated without significant Roma representation in the professional staff — and also to form new ones. Third, conversations and connections had been actively fostered in camps and trainings, like institutional incubators for Romani intellectuals, such as the summer training program through the European Roma Rights Center, and the Open Society Institute’s Barvalipe camp. In these settings, many of them based in Budapest, alliances were built among Roma from different countries of origin and different subgroup backgrounds as well as with civil rights leaders and advocates from other ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds, and they received training and education in theories and organizing tactics from other historical and geographic contexts (such as the African-American civil rights movement, postcolonialism, and international human rights). As others have observed, this process of drawing together Roma/Gypsies from such varied backgrounds, coming from all over Europe — and even occasionally from beyond, such as North America — promoted the forging of a collective diasporic identity and locating a sense of unity even in the extraordinary diversity

⁷⁰ The centrality of online communication has had language impacts, also. Ian Hancock observed in 2002 that he had seen an evolution in orthographic conventions in Romani language that he attributed to the frequency of online communication in Romani using standardized “QWERTY” keyboards. Diacritical marks that were part of the international standardized orthography were more difficult to reproduce when typing on a keyboard than when writing by hand (Hancock 2002, personal communication).

of the participants. Fourth and finally, the tensions around representation had intensified and become increasingly fraught from narratives generated in international nongovernmental organizations in the early postsocialist period, through the 1990s into the early 2000s.

The Belgian political scientist Peter Vermeersch observed in 2005 that many the NGOs that were advocating on behalf of Roma internationally, including the ERRC and OSI in Budapest as well as many of the others operating outside of Hungary, like the Project on Ethnic Relations, European Roma Information Organization, and Minority Rights Group, were actively generating and circulating narratives about Roma that from some perspectives were highly problematic. “Like many other advocacy actors in the rest of the world,” he observed, these organizations “have become known mostly for their information tactics. Through providing facts and testimony of marginality and discrimination, they have tried to hold governments accountable and instigate them to introduce new policy initiatives” (Vermeersch 2005: 453). Vermeersch, drawing on other scholars and intellectuals raising similar concerns, noted that “Strategies that may be persuasive for governments and international audiences may be experienced as counterproductive and stigmatizing at the local level” (Vermeersch 2005: 453). Vermeersch quotes the Bulgarian ethnographer Popov who, in an interview with journalist Polia Alexandrova in 2004, stated that Roma could not rely on the NGO sector (i.e. to advance their political empowerment:

“The new approach of presenting the Roma through horrifying images of misery on the margins of society and personal degradation, with the aim of impacting foreign sponsors and public opinion in Western Europe, only serves to increase the negative stereotypes about the Gypsies, which in the long run is as obstacle to the solution of their problems. This new public image fits perfectly into the framework of the rapidly developing "Gypsy industry," which now has become a state policy in Eastern Europe, supported by different European programs (Popov, quoted in Alexandra 2004; cited in Vermeersch 2006: 453-454).

Further, Vermeersch cites the executive director of the Roma Press Agency:

“It worries me deeply that the media present only the poorest of the Roma, a kind of substandard layer of society. From the outside this creates the impression that all Roma are uneducated and live in isolated settlements. This is, however, simply not true. But . . . *we are only able to see them when they are completely debased. Only then . . . we appear to be deeply moved*” (Váňová 2005 as cited in Vermeersch 2006: 454; emphasis is my own).⁷¹

Vermeersch and the quoted scholars and journalists from the region were speaking to a broader trend in the ways that international NGOs were framing narratives about Roma in the early 2000s, whose poverty living conditions were often likened at the time to those of the Third World. The perception — which may have been accurate — was that only the depiction of outrageous suffering would gain the attention of a wider global audience to solicit their involvement, compassion, and support; in fact, only in the process of being recognized as miserable and degraded could they be rendered visible at all. As Vermeersch and the others note, however, this recognition comes at a cost at the local level, reinforcing stereotypes and, I would add, undoubtedly contributing to so-called Roma Fatigue (as I discuss elsewhere). Misery and stigma were invoked, and in the act of invocation, they were reinforced.

The Roma Access Program students who protested the screening of *The Gypsies of Svinia* at the Central European University International Roma Day festivities in 2005 were exhibiting a reaction to this broader trend in which they felt disenfranchised from the representation of their own people, one that Roma intellectuals had experienced and fought against in Hungary since

⁷¹ Vermeersch (2005) cites “Váňová, Jarmila 2005. Magdolenová: Riešenie rómskeho problému? Rómska tlačová agentúra, June 29, available at <http://www.rpa.sk>.” Váňová is a Roma Press Agency journalist who has written many articles on Roma issues and is apparently well recognized in Slovakia, but I have been unable to access the original source or confirm the name of the quoted director of the Roma Press Agency in Slovakia at the time.

the 1970s, as the socialist-era sociological scholarship shone a light on Roma communities and the extent of their crippling poverty. This was a tension that had existed since the inception of research on Roma/Gypsies that non-Roma had begun undertaking in the 18th century and which had intensified in the postsocialist period with the global attention of the NGO sector. The authors of the RomArchive argue,

“It is not Roma who determine what image of them is circulated in public. Instead, the age-old clichés prevalent in the majority societies continue to dominate, with perennial ascriptions imposed by others which are characterised by a mix of fascination and disdain. There are virtually no positive counter-images or enlightened sources of information on Roma cultures and their genuine social realities. Ultimately, exclusion and contempt are also expressed in the fact that the many different Roma cultures remain largely ignored by European cultural institutions” (RomArchive ND).

With the extensive involvement in Roma advocacy of international NGOs, to which Marushiakova and Popov cynically refer as the “Gypsy industry” (Alexandrova 2004) and others have described (in other contexts globally) as the “NGO industrial complex” or “non-profit industrial complex” (INCITE! 2007; Gereffi et al 2009; Paley 2013), liberal narratives about Roma that circulated globally reinforced the portrayal of them as the “losers” of postsocialism and emphasized the extreme poverty and social exclusion in isolated rural Roma communities.

In January 2006, Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) joined the ranks of international organizations planning a Roma program in Europe. Undertaken by the Budapest-based regional office for Europe and Central Asia (ECA), the new project was called the Roma Poverty Housing Program. Based on field research I undertook at their organization in the summer of 2006, the remainder of this chapter explores some of the complexities of HFHI’s work with Roma, the approach taken in formulating and advertising its work in the area of “Roma poverty housing” in the 1990s and early 2000s, as one ethnographic example illustrative

of the broader trend of NGOs' involvement with Roma in East-Central Europe in the early postsocialist period.

HFHI's work with/for the Roma minority in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) and South Eastern European (SEE) regions represented the first time the international organization had ever targeted a specific racial or ethnic group for a program. Given the fact that Roma were being treated as an exception, the Roma Poverty Housing Program offered a valuable opportunity to explore perceptions and beliefs about Roma that had led to their being singled out and marked as a target group. HFHI had begun their work targeting members of the Roma minority several years before in Slovakia; the emergent regional Roma program was intended to build on the organization's work in this pilot program in the community of Svinia.

The Roma Poverty Housing Program and practices with Roma within HFHI in Hungary and Slovakia represented one field of contestation in which competing logics and technologies met, challenged one another, and were blended. Isolated, segregated communities of Roma living in extreme poverty conditions in rural Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe presented a challenge to the existing logic and intervention model of HFHI, highlighting the limitations of their existing approach of providing "simple, decent, affordable" housing to specifically designated beneficiaries to lift them out of poverty, with the ultimate goal of eliminating poverty housing worldwide.

As I argue in this chapter, Roma may have been singled out for a program of their own because of the challenge the structural features of poverty in their communities posed to the model of change operant within the organization of HFHI. Indeed, the social and economic conditions in the isolated, segregated, highly impoverished Roma settlements variously referred

to as “ghettoes,” “slums,” or sometimes simply “illegal settlements” represent a hard limit to HFHI’s logic of intervention, their fundamentally unattainable goal of eradicating poverty housing worldwide and doing so with “sustainable” interventions.

I argue further, however, that the ways Roma were represented in HFHI promotional materials, the ways they were talked about within the organization, and the strategies employed in interventions with them, also reflected the common perception of Roma exceptionalism and reinforced stereotypes about the way they are Other from majority populations in the region. Moreover, the program model employed in early interventions targeting Roma in Slovakia held the promise of reinforcing their exceptionalism from HFHI beneficiaries at large and from the majority populations in the communities in which they lived by reinforcing material inequalities and worsening geographic isolation and segregation.

Habitat for Humanity International – An Introduction

Habitat for Humanity International is one of the largest and most well-known not-for-profit organizations in the world, which describes itself as a “nonprofit, Christian housing ministry that works both to eliminate poverty housing around the world and to make adequate housing a matter of conscience and action.” It began in the United States in 1976 and is based in Americus, Georgia, but as of the early 2000s, it operated around the world, with more than 2,300 affiliates in every state of the US as well as nearly 90 countries, in Latin America, Africa, Europe and Central Asia. As of 1996, the organization was the fifth-largest home-builder in the United States (Herget, cited in Weil 1997). As of September 2008, the organization had built 225,000 houses, providing shelter for more than 1 million people. Its revenues in 2007 totaled over 355

million dollars. In 2008, the organization purportedly had a “brand recognition” in the United States that rivaled that of McDonald’s.

The administrative structure of the organization as it operated internationally involved the use of regional offices, country offices, and local affiliates, and relied heavily on volunteers. In Central Europe, Hungary and Romania had country offices overseen by the Europe and Central Asia regional office (ECA). (Slovakia had a somewhat different structure in that HFHI did not have a country office there; rather, they worked closely with a partner called ETP Slovakia.) The organizational structure of the organization was decidedly hierarchical: organization-wide managers in the United States, oversaw the work of the regional managers in the ECA office in Budapest (as well as the other regional offices on other continents); the ECA managers, in turn, oversaw the work of the country office staff; they, in turn, worked with volunteers as well as local affiliates scattered throughout a given country. American fundamentalist Christians drove the mother ship from Americus, Georgia, but the religious faith, cultural background, and political orientation varied significantly among those who worked in the other offices. Ideologically, HFHI as it operated in Hungary embodied a number of contradictions that were partly a function of its administrative structure, partly a function of its blended character as an international development agency in one sense and a fundamentalist American Christian organization in another.

Like most other international NGOs operating in Hungary in the postsocialist period, HFHI-ECA also was grounded in Western liberal values, but there was a tension within the organization between the priorities of the broader organization of HFHI, many of whom came from a socially conservative American Christian tradition — and those of some of the staff who worked the ECA office in Budapest, whose backgrounds were more aligned with those noted

above who worked in the other international organizations in Hungary. The overriding priority of HFHI (which was shared by all those within the organization) was mainly to address the material conditions of poverty in which much of the Roma/Gypsy population lives in Central and Eastern Europe (including in Hungary). However, the approach of HFHI was fundamentally grounded in a set of beliefs around selective support and uplifting of individuals deemed to be worthy of help — those who managed to distinguish themselves from the undeserving poor, to use the language of Michael Katz (Katz 1989) — rather than a more radical, structural approach to counteract poverty at the societal level, which would not be conditional on the apparent moral rectitude of a given person or group.

In this sense, HFHI more closely resembled the philosophical and ideological orientation of an international evangelical Christian mission project than it did many of the other international organizations that were working on/with/around Roma and Roma issues in Budapest during this period. Interestingly, this orientation seemed more uniformly present among the staff in the Habitat-Hungary office than it was in the ECA office. Habitat-Hungary was the local branch of HFHI that was dedicated specifically and only to managing and implementing projects in the country of Hungary. Their office was staffed by Hungarians and sometimes foreign volunteers. ECA staff mostly comprised highly educated members of an international elite cadre of professionals, fluent in English and trained in professional areas such as international development or business. Most of them worked as managers who balanced budgets, developed strategy, wrote reports, and managed all the country offices for the entire region of Europe and Central Asia.

Although the organization employed local ethnic Hungarian staff in their Habitat Hungary country office, it was within a hierarchy in which “local hires” received considerably

lower wages and held considerably less institutional power than those who comprised the international staff at the ECA office. While ethnic Hungarians were eligible to apply for the positions in the ECA office as well, the staff members I knew in the regional office (where the language of operations was English) were from elsewhere: Britain, the United States, former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, South Africa, and beyond.

As I depict ethnographically later in the chapter, the variation of ethnic, national, religious, educational, and social background of the people within the organization of HFHI set the stage for some significant cultural clash around the fraught ideological territory of race. Most of the members of the international elite who comprised much of the ECA staff espoused Western liberal values and operated within a racial ideological regime wherein the Roma/Gypsy situation in Hungary, as elsewhere in the world, was viewed through the lens of ethnic discrimination and racism against a stigmatized minority. As I illustrate later, the country-office staff and those working in local affiliate offices did not necessarily share these views.

Apart from the moralistic principles driving the process of beneficiary family selection in which the United States-based evangelical Christian heritage of HFHI was legible, the logic of the intervention strategy also was grounded in a post-World War II North American context in which homeownership had the potential fundamentally to transform the socioeconomic circumstances of a family living in poverty. The basic mode of operation for the organization was for families to be selected as beneficiaries, country offices to secure funding for the building of a new house for the beneficiary family and to administer the mortgage repayment, and local affiliates to handle the logistics of building together with volunteers. (The volunteer labor was solicited through various means at various levels, including through the country offices as well as through the publications circulated by the central office in the United States.)

In order to be selected as a beneficiary of HFHI, a family had to be in a position to repay the low-interest mortgage loan provided by the organization and to participate in the building of the home to provide “sweat equity” toward its value. In the context of these existing programs, at least a few Roma/Gypsy people had been beneficiaries. In Cluj-Napoca, Romania, the director of the local office identified three beneficiary families of Roma/Gypsy origin who invited me and my Romanian-English interpreter into their homes to show me the spaces and talk about their lives and experiences with HFHI. Their participation had been blind to their ethnic heritage and their selection as beneficiaries had been based on the same criteria that other potential family beneficiaries of the HFHI programs were evaluated. In fact, when I was speaking to the mother in one of the families, her light complexion and the fact that her neighbors in the row houses were ethnic Romanians made me question for a moment if she was indeed a Romani woman. The interpreter awkwardly asked the woman whether she was Roma/Gypsy. She seemed embarrassed, and she responded most circuitously. “Well, if others say I am a Gypsy, then I guess I am a Gypsy.”

The example of the beneficiaries of Roma/Gypsy origin in the Transylvanian city of Cluj-Napoca illustrates three points: one, that stigma was so firmly entrenched in many communities that to acknowledge that ethnic designation was one that provoked shame and was avoided whenever possible. Two, there was socioeconomic diversity among Roma/Gypsies, such that some of them could, in fact, be incorporated into existing HFHI programs without special accommodations. And three, following from the first two points, attaching an ethnic label to those who received the housing support of the organization might be met with awkwardness and was unnecessary from the standpoint of their participation. Neighbors and others in the town might be aware of their ethnic heritage as well as of the fact that the family had been an HFHI

beneficiary and had a new house, but they also could be conscious of the fact that members of the ethnic majority Romanians as well as members of the ethnic minorities of Hungarians or Roma/Gypsies were eligible for such support irrespective of their origin.

However, staff of HFHI serving Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia were also aware that the majority of Roma/Gypsies in those territories were ineligible for HFHI programs given their existing intervention structure, because the extreme poverty that was so widespread among Roma in the region rendered them incapable of ever paying back the mortgage. From the time HFHI was recruited in the late 1990s by the Canadian anthropologist David Scheffel to come to the community of Svinia, Slovakia, and do something to help the destitute Roma living there, and they were confronted with an extreme example of disenfranchisement of Roma in a segregated community, members of the staff were grappling with this problem. The Roma Poverty Housing Program that managers at ECA began planning from their offices in Budapest in 2005, together with the help of members of the country offices in Hungary and Slovakia, was the outgrowth of this dilemma.

Habitat for Humanity's First Roma-Specific Intervention

The first visit by a Habitat representative to Svinia, the first site of a Habitat intervention in Slovakia, is documented in the film *The Gypsies of Svinia*, which was produced in 1999.⁷² Svinia, a town in rural eastern Slovakia that at the time had a population of 1346, was a locality that was highly segregated into “white Svinia,” the residential area of its ethnic Slovaks, and

⁷² This documentary film (MacDonald 1999) introduces the viewer to a segregated Romani settlement in eastern Slovakia and traces the early stages of the intervention primarily from the perspective of Canadian anthropologist David Scheffel, who narrates the film. He first visited the community in the context of a field visit with a group of Canadian anthropology students in the early 1990s. Convinced that he has happened upon “a ghetto” and inspired to *do something*, Scheffel initiates contact with a number of nongovernmental organizations, including Habitat for Humanity. Scheffel has since published a book about the community (Scheffel 2005).

“black Svinia,” where the ethnic Roma lived on a drain swamp approximately 300 meters from “white Svinia” (Scheffel 2005: 27; Macdonald 1999).⁷³ Upon touring the settlement and inspecting its dwellings, small huts made by the residents of mud and wood from the forest, and being told by the residents in detail about the housing collapses and rats the size of cats, Doug Dahlgren sat with anthropologist David Scheffel before the video camera over cappuccinos at a table under a bright red Coca-Cola umbrella in the Košice town square outside the Hotel Dukla. Dahlgren delivered his assessment of situation, following the organization’s parameters for the assessment of need that prefaces any intervention by the organization:

Dahlgren: If *this* isn’t poverty housing, I’ve never seen it. It is the worst living conditions that I’ve ever seen anywhere. Where I see the tight spot is that Habitat is, uh, providing home ownership and is providing interest-free mortgages. And one of the qualifications of the homeowner is that he must be able to pay for an interest-free mortgage, usually say over twenty years, something like that. And here we’re dealing with almost 100% unemployment. It seems to me that the most ideal situation would be to find, uh, some authority here that is working or is willing to work, uh, on the economic well-being of these folks.

Scheffel: I think that the symbolic value of this undertaking is quite important as well, and it is that the village is talking about building housing for a relatively small percentage of the Romani population in Slovakia. But we are talking about having outsiders coming in here and telling Slovak society that these people *count*, and what we are doing here is making them visible” (MacDonald 1999: 10:00-13:00)

As of 2008, the Habitat for Humanity Slovakia webpage explained the Svinia project thus, including the photograph and caption below:

When Habitat representatives first visited the Roma ghetto of Svinia, Slovakia, they were shocked by the desperate poverty. Some families huddled in earthen huts infested with rats; others lived in concrete boxes dating from the communist era. None of them had running water or electricity. Life expectancy in the ghetto was 40 years.

⁷³ Demographic information is from 2001 (Scheffel 2005:27).

Habitat partnered with ETP Slovakia, a Slovak NGO, to deliver a project tailor-made for this community: renovating homes and improving the general health of the people in the settlement. All existing 120 homes were renovated, disinfected and pest-controlled; all water wells were cleaned, disinfected, repaired and sealed with concrete lids to prevent pollution.

The project in Svinia was an innovative attempt to reach out to the poorest of the poor. Given the extent of poverty in the community, the first aim of the project was not to eradicate poverty housing in the ghetto but to make living conditions healthier, cleaner and more decent. The impact of the program and the level of improvements have been remarkable. Living in clean, heated apartments without rodents and insects has drastically improved the health of the people. The provision of safe, clean drinking water has greatly reduced diarrhea in children and eradicated hepatitis.

(Habitat for Humanity Slovakia ND).

From the way it is described in the case history, one would think that Svinia was a great success. Yet, as I mentioned previously, there are avid critics of Habitat's role in the locality, where "they left without building a single house," in the words of one source. In fact, according to him, the intervention that was "tailor-made" for Svinia was one that was settled on after much back and forth and an ultimate decision by the organization that the signature Habitat houses that were initially promised to the Roma there would be unwise to build, because of issues of "sustainability." As one of the employees of ETP Slovakia explained the problem sadly, a change in leadership in the municipality meant that the hard-won confidence among "white Svinia" was destroyed. There was a collapse of the partnership between HFHI and the majority leadership in the community, who resisted the funding of a project that would benefit the Roma living in "black Svinia," who are highly stigmatized and discriminated against.

What is puzzling in this story is why there was an expectation of cooperation with the municipality in the first place, and why the plan was developed in a fashion that depended on their support, given the virulent racism that is obvious even if the only exposure to the

community you have is the 50-minute documentary prepared by MacDonald and narrated by Canadian anthropologist David Scheffel.

Another depiction of the community appears on the English version of the website of HFHI's partner organization in Slovakia, ETP Slovakia, reflecting the evolution of the Romani settlement in Svinia from the involvement of HFHI.

“On March 22, 2006, Don Haszczyn and Paul Eckelschot from Habitat for Humanity visited Roma settlement in Svinia:

The contrast is stark. On the fringe of the village of Svinia, set in the picturesque Slovak countryside, but a different world away, lies an illegal Roma settlement, home for 137 families. Seeing the living conditions, visitors receive a jolt to the system and are incredulous that this is within European Union boundaries.

But it used to be very much worse. A recently completed Habitat for Humanity project, delivered with partner ETP Slovakia, has mobilized the Roma community and, as a result, the rats have fled, hepatitis and parotitis is no longer common, the constant knee deep mud has gone, water in the new water reservoir is now drinkable and constantly flowing from the natural reserves of the nearby forest, and homes are brighter and cleaner. Many families now sleep on proper beds – some the first they have ever had - with PVC flooring and wood burning stoves to mitigate the harsh Central European winter.

All 137 families have actively participated in the home renovation project and through training and under supervision; new skills have been acquired together with a sense of responsibility and motivation to further improve homes. The change in habits has been marked as, in return for material help, families have been required to work in clearing and cleaning the settlement.

Just as important has been the shift in attitude of the Local Council and the perception of non-Roma people in the village who observe not simply the improved living conditions but the basis upon which it has been earned.

Perhaps most important of all some dignity has appeared in the lives of Roma families (ETP Slovakia 2006; emphasis added).

Another lasting question is how the issue of sustainability is effectively addressed with the intervention they pursued in Svinia. The same tough critic likened the mindset of the ECA office in Budapest to Alice in Wonderland, arguing that the individual house renovations that were made and furniture that were provided would never last more than a few short years in Svinia, and then the Roma would be right back where they'd started from.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to settle exactly what happened in Svinia, and to analyze the outcomes and the critiques of the intervention in that locality. What does concern this analysis, however, is the question of how the organization places the "Roma" label, what that label is meant to communicate, and to whom. I will discuss these issues at greater length below, in reference to the emerging Roma program at the regional level in the Europe and Central Asia office of the organization, and *vis á vis* the publicity materials for the organization, which are reviewed and controlled in a centralized fashion at the regional and headquarters levels.

The Emergence of the Roma Poverty Housing Project

In the Habitat for Humanity Hungary newsletter *habitathèrek* from summer 2006, a short article appeared entitled "Roma Housing," which began as follows:

"One of the most vulnerable groups of people in Central and Eastern Europe are the Roma. This is also true in Hungary. Most of the Roma are chronically poor, often destitute, and they face extreme prejudice from all parts of society, often including public officials.

Although improving the Roma situation entails a large spectrum of needs, these social improvement, including improvements of the housing conditions is critical. Roma people often live in informal or illegal settlements in substandard housing, lacking most basic utilities. A large percentage of homeless people are of Roma origin, who were evicted from their homes.

In the new strategy of Habitat for Humanity Hungary, Roma and mixed (Roma-Roma) housing projects are included. The development of income generation, workforce training, family care, will be part of the projects to ensure stability and long

term success of the community. Habitat for Humanity is a housing organization, not specialized in these other social areas, and we will partner with appropriate social experts to compliment our housing expertise” (Habitat for Humanity Magyarország 2006).

This text above introduced the newly emerging Roma Poverty Housing project to the stakeholders of Habitat for Humanity Hungary. Although the program represented a departure from the usual formula employed by Habitat, the argument for the organization’s involvement was that housing was a major social issue for many Roma people. But because of their “large spectrum of needs,” the program necessarily called for a new strategy incorporating other domains beyond that of housing. In outlining the principles behind the emerging Roma program, one manager from the Europe and Central Asia regional office (ECA) wrote:

“Habitat for Humanity’s ultimate goal is the eradication of Poverty Housing worldwide. In doing so HFHI is looking into innovative and sustainable financing and building approaches to communities and families living in such circumstances. The main activities with direct effect on the lives of families in ECA have been construction and lending programmes leading to the re-housing of families in simple and decent new housing. Until very recently ECA has been working with families on the borderlines of poverty for whom, poverty housing has been the cause of ongoing poverty or the inability to climb out of poverty.

There is however, a large segment of the population in the CEE and SEE countries of additionally marginalized and poverty stricken groups in their target countries, whose poverty extends well beyond the problem of housing. This people live in destitute poverty, and the representation of the Roma in this group is disproportional. Poverty housing is one of the biggest manifestations of the level of housing the Roma live in. Previous experience of Roma poverty housing in ECA is confined to one pilot project developed in Eastern Slovakia.

With this in mind, and intending to inform and strategize its intervention towards the Roma population, in January 2006 ECA launched the so called Roma Poverty Housing project.” (HFHI Terms of Reference document 2006)

In terms of HFHI's understanding of the need for a Roma-specific program, there are three points from the ECA text that bear highlighting.

The intervention model HFHI has employed to date, seen as largely effective, has entailed moving certain families out of poverty housing that was apparently "the cause of ongoing poverty or the inability to climb out of poverty." This model revolves around the central and ultimate goal of the "eradication of Poverty housing" but utilizes "sustainable financing." However, this model has depended on a set of conditions for the beneficiary that do not apply to the intended target group of the Roma program and who therefore cannot be served using this existing model.

The poverty of some groups extends "well beyond the problem of housing," and there are different aspects to the marginalization they experience.

Roma are disproportionately represented in this "large segment of the population" who live in destitute poverty.

As the Terms of Reference document continued:

"The [Roma Poverty Housing] project goals are threefold:

- a) **Develop/strengthen a knowledge base** on the specific needs of the target communities in relation to the core competencies of Habitat for Humanity (*What are the common characteristics of Roma poverty, how is different from the poverty of other groups? What are the characteristics of the current Roma housing and a description of housing settlements?, What are the common problems and barriers in solving poverty housing for Roma?*

- b) **Identify and document existing poverty housing programmes/interventions** that exist in the region in contexts that demonstrate similar conditions focusing on factors of success and failure of those programmes

- c) **Create a process to develop an ECA pilot strategy** in Hungary and Macedonia on the basis of the results of the background research and needs assessment that will include the perspectives of the relevant organisations and the communities of concern. These pilot interventions will serve as a basis for longer-term planning at ECA.

This project is still ongoing, with a number of communities in both countries being identified and project ideas for the pilot being developed.⁷⁴”

The process identified was fairly straightforward: conduct a process similar to a needs assessment, explore relevant best practices, and develop a pilot strategy. However, each of these goals introduces elements bearing further explication. Point “a” is key to understanding HFHI’s logic behind the need for a Roma-specific program. The first aspect of this point as it relates to the need for a specific, different, distinctive strategy for addressing Roma poverty housing was the argument that Habitat as an organization was unqualified to address the needs present in Roma communities. As the Habitat Hungary article had noted above, “Habitat for Humanity is a housing organization, not specialized in these other social areas, and we will partner with appropriate social experts to compliment [*sic*] our housing expertise.”

More important was the underlying assumption that “Roma poverty” had its own distinct character that differentiated it from the poverty of other groups. At the time in 2006, as a student familiar with sociological literature on Roma and their particularly delicate position in the postsocialist “transition” in Eastern Europe, I was aware that the degree of impoverishment that was commonly found among Roma was much less likely to be found among non-Roma. Yet as I approached this emerging Roma program of HFHI, I did wonder what kind of differentiation was anticipated as the initiative set out to document the nature of “Roma poverty.”

With the assumption that “Roma poverty” was different seemed to come an accompanying implicit assumption that having more information about Romani culture and social characteristics would help elucidate the character of this category. There was a tension I

⁷⁴ The text of this comes from the Terms of Reference drafted for my internship at the organization; the full document is included as an appendix.

experienced in my own role in that I was brought into the project and the Habitat for Humanity Hungary country office in part as a so-called Roma expert, although ethically I was highly dubious and critical of such a category being inhabited by a non-Romani individual and I was resistant to being described as such. (And yet, functionally, it was a primary role I filled in the work I offered to the organization; one of the documents I provided them was a brief summary of cultural and social characteristics of Roma in Hungary.) Moreover, knowing something already about HFHI's involvement with Roma in Slovakia, I had significant reservations about the program itself as it was being formulated, and I was reluctant to engage in it in a fashion beyond documenting and analyzing its conceptualization, formulation, and early process of development in my capacity as a researcher.

This formulation/differentiation of "Roma poverty" as a distinctive phenomenon both interested and troubled me for several reasons. First of all, in describing it in this shorthand, rather than, for example, "poverty in Roma communities" or "impoverishment of Roma people," it reinforced an old stereotype that the two were somehow intertwined and inescapably linked: to be Roma meant to be poor and to be poor meant to resemble Roma in some fundamental way. As sociologist Gail Kligman spoke to this association in her article of 2001, observing that at that time, "today's poverty stricken have been metaphorically 'Roma-fied,' regardless of how they self-identify" (Kligman 2001:75). This attitude and perception, of Roma identity being inextricably linked with poverty, was indeed reflected in the ways Roma were represented and depicted by the organization, as I illustrate in the section "Envisioning Romani Dignity."

Somewhat less troubling to me was the second issue, that it suggested that poverty of Roma people had distinctive, different causes than the poverty of members of other groups. It was less troubling to me because to a certain extent, I knew it to be true. As I discuss elsewhere,

the legacies of earlier interventions and policies targeting Roma were major contributors to their contemporary marginalization. The widespread and persistent unemployment in predominantly Roma communities, their ghettoization and concentration in dilapidated material environments, and their geographic isolation, were dimensions that all had connections to earlier eras. Moreover, the intense ethnic/racial discrimination that contributed to the pervasiveness of their unemployment was unique to their own community's experience.

Third, and indeed troubling, was the notion that "Roma poverty" was a different problem from other peoples' poverty, calling for different strategies and solutions than the poverty of those from other groups. And indeed, as I describe and analyze HFHI's approach to the housing issues in Svinia in their earlier intervention, the organization did take a different approach with notable consequences for the beneficiaries of this project. One of the crucial elements to the model of change in the regular HFHI programs was the access to homeownership that was newly afforded them through HFHI's intervention, and this acquisition of new capital that could accumulate value over time was key to enduring poverty relief that was the objective in their involvement. Ironically, in excluding Roma from this opportunity for acquiring assets through property ownership, HFHI's Roma Poverty Housing Program arguably stood to reinforce the racial inequalities that were already so prevalent (and were crucially significant in defining the stereotype and stigma of Roma/Gypsies in the first place) because they would be passed over for a chance for wealth that could be held and expanded intergenerationally.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ American sociologist Dalton Conley demonstrates the significance of this question of asset-building in the entrenchment of socioeconomic inequalities between Blacks and whites in the United States context (Conley 1999). On the other hand, the value of a home is predicated on its desirability and its potential for resale, and given the context of racism and discrimination in many rural communities, and the enormous resistance to allowing Roma/Gypsies to live anywhere near members of the majority, there are other factors that would continue to be major barriers to asset-building even given homeownership. Redlining had a major impact historically in the United States on the potential for African-American families to build wealth through homeownership given their inability to

The misery of the conditions in which Roma lived in the areas of rural Slovakia where HFHI and its local affiliate ETP Slovakia became involved in housing interventions was very real. So too was the sincerity of the enormous gratitude of those who were able to renovate portions of their dilapidated, unsafe houses as a result of their support. When I sat down with one of the families to whom staff at ETP Slovakia introduced me, they took me to be a representative of HFHI in Budapest. They had tears in their eyes when they asked me to convey their thanks to the people in the Budapest office and told me about the change that had come from their lives from being able to be in a living room without breathing in mold spores from the walls.

The Perceived Difference of Roma Communities

Although I observed general consensus in the organization in summer 2006 that a different strategy for addressing poverty housing in Roma communities was necessary due to different conditions and needs, and the preconditions that needed to be in place to make a project successful, the way these differences and preconditions were understood and explained varied. A conversation I had with one Hungarian employee at Habitat Hungary illustrated this point. She told me,

“There needs to be a good foundation for any Roma project. We need a certain stage of development. Mental hygienic education, to be done before we go anywhere. Are they all ready to be helped with the housing element? We can’t just go. There needs to be community development — to teach them how to work, how to use a bus, how to use a phone. Until they’re taught we cannot enter.”

I asked her what “mental hygiene” is.

purchase homes in desirable neighborhoods. Further, the total dearth of employment opportunities in many Roma/Gypsy communities in which HFHI and ETP Slovakia were working created an untenable situation as far as having resources to be able to afford routine home maintenance.

“I don’t know. That’s the honest answer. It’s social behavior, development of a vision of the future in their minds, knowing how important education for their kids is, because sometimes they don’t know that. Not to marry — like cousins marry each other. . . not all Roma kids are mentally disabled, but a lot of them are because of this.

“[It’s about imparting] values of majority society — like not to steal when there’s no work, and knowing the value of work. They’ve never seen so they do not know; there’s unemployment, and this leads to crime, and this leads to issues with the majority. The social subsidies put a burden on the majority.”

Anikó’s explanation of the conditions in the Roma settlement of her imagination reflected numerous common beliefs and stereotypes about Roma in Hungary, namely, about incest and its role in mental disability, an adverseness toward work and education, the absence of a vision of the future, and the prevalence of crime and stealing. (The Roma’s “work-shy” quality was a prominent belief reflected in the program in the Mátras I described in the introduction, as well.) Anikó’s explanation of how these features would be addressed was also reflective of a common attitude among Hungarians, that the negative attributes common in Roma settlements were due to Roma cultural difference and the need to impart the “values of majority society,” i.e. to Hungarianize the Roma in these communities.

Those working in management at the ECA office in Budapest were conscious of differing perceptions of Roma across the organization that sometimes presented as virulent racism. This sense of differing views on Roma and the importance of programs to address Roma poverty housing is captured best by a story ECA manager Olivja told in the late ‘00s. Olivja, a warm and charismatic Macedonian woman with a biting, dark sense of humor, also liked to elaborate stories for the purposes of good storytelling. She had a deep commitment to supporting and helping those in poverty, including Roma, and she carried this commitment with her to a training she was involved in at a Habitat affiliate office in the eastern part of Hungary, a region with a large Roma population, much of which lived in isolated, highly impoverished, rural communities

that represented the target group of the Roma Poverty Housing project. At the training, during a break, Olivja was interacting with some of the Hungarian male workers involved with the affiliate, who were attending the training. They were making dismissive and disparaging comments about Roma people and the prospect of helping them with social programs. Olivja, with her characteristic dark humor, referenced the Holocaust in her response:

“Well, what are you going to do, make soap out of them?”

And the guy said, ‘Why not?’”

Olivja retold this story to me with a deep sense of disturbance, communicating to me how hopeless it seemed to work with local people when this was their underlying attitude.

The consciousness Hungarian Habitat employees had around Roma difference was generally far less menacing, but the sense was there throughout my time working as an intern in their country office that it was a population radically different from *us*, whether “we” were Hungarian or Americans. One day the office had a visit from the NGO leader and activist Tibor Derdák and a group of adolescent boys from the organization Kis Tigris in Baranya County near the city of Pécs. The boys, from the Beash Gypsy minority, who came clad in hip hop style clothing, talked about their experience going to school at Kis Tigris in their tiny village Alsószentmárton. As soon as they walked out the door, one of the Hungarian employees made a gesture with her fist to the other Habitat Hungary employees that was a clear reference to the toughness and distinctive style of the boys. To me it seemed to communicate a sense of dismissiveness and making fun of the youths. My document providing a cultural sketch about Roma in Hungary was also eagerly awaited as a reference to help explain the exotic others living in their midst; a fact I found ironic given that I was an American describing from books a population the Hungarians in the office encountered daily. The sense of Roma as embodying

radical alterity was reflected not only in speech, gestures, and everyday attitudes observable within the organization, however, but also in HFHI promotional materials.

Envisioning Roma Poverty

In the mid-2000s, every country office of Habitat for Humanity International Europe and Central Asia had its own individual webpage to advertise the local initiatives and activities of the organization, and every country office webpage was graced with a photograph that presented the image of the organization in that country. These images, when taken in collectively, gave a strong impression of the organizational character of HFHI, its values and concerns. The images of clean, fresh, smiling faces of families, of people working hard, of people praying and giving thanks, of older women nurturing children, and of families standing in front of their homes, offered a general sense of optimism, hope, racial and cultural inclusiveness, and unity, and also gave impressionistic clues about the character of the individual countries, especially paired with the captions.

The image for Russia presented a cheerful-looking family of Asian descent standing before their brand-new house made of warm, lacquered wood paneling, bright with sunlight and blue skies. The wife stood beside her husband, who held his adorable son on his shoulders. A Polish family was pictured on the future build site of their new home, blonde daughters in matching outfits. A Kyrgyz grandmother in a headscarf and boldly patterned traditional clothing held a well bundled infant with a pacifier in its mouth, in front of a dull stuccoed wall; a similarly clad Tajik grandma held her grandson close. The websites for Germany and Hungary depicted white people engaged in construction, for the Netherlands, brown people on a building site together. Northern Ireland presented "families from divided communities [celebrating] a

house dedication ceremony together" with an image of a crowd of adults and children standing before a newly constructed building adorned with brightly colored balloons. A Portuguese woman overwhelmed the viewer with her expression of joy and gratitude as she "praise[d] God that she no longer has to live in the shack visible through the window behind her."

In nearly every case, the mission was given a face or a number of faces that were individualized. Many of them were named. The images presented a sense of togetherness, industry, and possibility. There were, however, a couple of exceptions. The image of Bulgaria showed not a family or a volunteer, but a ramshackle building in the modernist style of the socialist period, laundry hanging on the balconies, with an off-kilter stop sign in the foreground. The caption read: "Behind the gray walls of ubiquitous soc-style blocks, families are trapped in deteriorated homes." Though the image was Orientalizing from the standpoint of a Westerner viewing a former Eastern Bloc country in Eastern Europe (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992), one was given the impression that the legacy of socialism in Bulgaria was a structural housing crisis, and that this universal problem was one facing all Bulgarians.

The other exception, though, is much more problematic. In the photograph representing Slovakia, a small brown child with unbrushed hair and dirty blue overalls ready to fall off her body walked on the edge of a rough sidewalk beside a gravel path lining a row of makeshift shacks with tarps covering the roofs. There was no adult in sight. The caption read: "Roma families often live in slums, with no access to running water or electricity." Slovakia's was the only website that singled out a particular ethnic group. It was not the only one that attempted to make a generalization about poverty; we were told by HFHI's website that "Substandard housing is a reality for many families in Macedonia, and "More than 80 percent of Tajikistan's population lives below poverty line." But in the case of Slovakia, the problem was situated

explicitly with Roma. Moreover, it was with Roma who are situated in neither time nor space. The ethnic identification of the families living in slums suggested that there was something culturally distinct about the poverty described. Moreover, the unhinging of Roma from a specific geographic and temporal location enhanced their Otherness.⁷⁶

The image of the unaccompanied child reinforced a negative stereotype of Romani parental neglect and promoted a sense of Romani family pathology. Why was she the only child without a loving grandmother, father, or mother beaming back at the camera, the viewer couldn't help but wonder. The unnamed child was not the only anonymous face on the website, but she was the only one who was not actively engaged in an activity or depicted with family members. Poverty was a condition that the other families appeared equipped to handle by virtue of their family solidity and the togetherness they conveyed in the images, or by virtue of the possibility embodied in physical labor or the material construction — whether present or future. The image of the child, however, seemed devoid of such hope and outside any network of care or support.

Meanwhile, the vulnerability of the unaccompanied child and the “spectacle of the child's suffering” promoted her situation into a sentimental rescue narrative, a “cosmopolitan Bildungsroman” in which the viewer had the potential to actualize him- or herself, subordinating the child's discursive agency and ultimately reinforcing her disenfranchisement from the public sphere (Hesford 2008). As a representative image of Roma, meanwhile, she ushered the entire

⁷⁶ Fabian (1983). Unfortunately, there are anthropologists who also promote a sense of an essentialized, alternative Romani temporality and culture of poverty. Consider the title of Stewart et al's book, including his essay on Roma in Hungary, along with portraits of peasants, gamblers, “untouchables” and prostitutes: “Lilies of the Field: Marginal People who Live for the Moment” (Scheffel 2005; Stewart 1999).

population of European Roma into this same rescue narrative promoted by the website's rhetoric.⁷⁷

HFHI-ECA Country Images



Figure 11. Image from Habitat for Humanity International's country webpage for Russia, c. 2007. Original caption read: "A homeowner family in front of their new home—the first newly built Habitat home in Russia."

⁷⁷ Wendy Hesford introduces these ideas in relation to Briski's film *Born into Brothels*. She employs the term "cosmopolitan" with multiple, "contradictory uses," indicating simultaneously a kind of "liberal self-invention," a "new class of transnational cosmopolitans, individuals with the freedom and capital to move about the world" as well as a kind of "discursive mobility" (Hesford 2008). The theory seems very apt here in how Habitat is framing the relationship between Roma and the website viewer, a potential Global Village volunteer and/or donor to the organization and its mission. This same type of global savior-hero role is also taken by anthropologist David Scheffel in *The Gypsies of Svinia*.



Figure 12. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Slovakia, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Roma families often live in slums, with no access to running water or electricity.”



Figure 13. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Poland, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Future homeowners Adam and Joanna Robak are pictured with their twin daughters on the build site of their Habitat housing unit.”



Figure 14. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Kyrgyzstan, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Future Habitat homeowner Tokon Aitbaeva currently lives in a half-built homes together with nine other family members.”



Photo by Kim MacDonald

Figure 15. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Bulgaria, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Behind the gray walls of ubiquitous soc-style blocks, families are trapped in deteriorated homes.”



Photo by: HFH Netherlands

Figure 16. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Netherlands, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Two men work side by side building a house.”



Figure 17. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Germany, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Habitat volunteer Rudy Voth of Germany.”



Figure 18. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Hungary, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Habitat homeowner, Ica Katona, mixes cement on the site of her future home.”



Courtesy of MCIC

Figure 19. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Macedonia (former Yugoslavia), c. 2007. Original caption read: “Substandard housing is a reality for many families in Macedonia.”



Figure 20. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Northern Ireland, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Families from divided communities celebrate house dedication together.”



Photo By: Doral Chenoweth III

Figure 21. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Portugal, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Rosa Coelho praises God that she no longer has to live in the shack visible through the window behind her in Cunha, Portugal.”



Figure 22. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Romania, c. 2007. Original caption read: “Heredea family are among 6.5 million Romanians living in poverty.”



Figure 23. Image from Habitat for Humanity International’s country webpage for Tajikistan, c. 2007. Original caption read: “More than 80 percent of Tajikistan’s population lives below poverty line.”

The above images, when viewed in their collective, highlight succinctly the problematic ways narratives were constructed about Roma in the early postsocialist period in the global marketplace of rhetorical narratives from INGOS attempting to solicit sympathy, funding, and social change from Western observers. Whereas being impoverished and coming from another community left room to be defined in other ways, in narratives about Roma like the image and

caption in the photo from Slovakia above, poverty was collapsed into a problem attached to the Roma/Gypsy population, and the image and meaning of ethnic identity as Roma or Gypsy was inextricably bound up with impoverishment and misery. In the process, the misery of poverty seemed to become exclusive of other members of groups (who became resentful that their suffering was not being witnessed), and the stigma of being Roma/Gypsy was only intensified through the images of misery being circulated as well as the growing sense among members of the majority that Roma were receiving an undue share of resources.

Many of those working within organizations grounded in the local communities in Hungary, those I refer to as indigenous Hungarian institutions, were conscious of this problem and approached the problem formulation and the branding and advertisement of their projects differently. Given the presence of these debates in the local society since the 1970s, it is no surprise that those who wished to undertake projects in support of Roma and to make inroads in overcoming intractable poverty in ethnically divided communities were sensitive to the question of representation both of the project itself with respect to members of the non-Roma community, but also with respect to the representation of Roma who would be potential beneficiaries of anti-poverty measures. These concerns were reflected in approaches to defining the target population of a given program, the intervention strategies, and the naming and public depictions of the program. These were most notable in whether the program was explicitly labeled as a Roma program. A major consideration appeared to be the audience and stakeholder group associated with the program. For indigenous Hungarian institutions operating within Hungary, in Hungarian language, and answering to the Hungarian people, the approach was different from when many of the stakeholders were located outside of the country and audience was perceived to be a global one populated by liberals and humanitarians.

In Slovakia, too, the distinction was visible in the instance of the work of HFHI versus the local organization ETP Slovakia, with whom they acted as a partner on some projects, for example, in Svinia. In the early 2000s, ETP Slovakia did much of its community development work with Romani persons and residential communities, but they explicitly avoided labeling their programs as “Roma programs.” Staff at the organization stated that the popular and state support of the programs within Slovakia was perceived to be tentative and to depend on the framing of the programs as poverty relief as opposed to initiatives specifically targeting the ethnic Romani minority. It was striking that in spite of the consciousness of this political tension among the local staff in developing and administering programs in the country, their work was presented on a global stage with the above photograph (see figure 12 above).

Like the political controversy surrounding affirmative action programs in the United States, programs that addressed Romani persons’ poverty explicitly as a consequence of structural inequalities and racial or ethnic discrimination acquired a stigma, and their validity and value were more easily countered with an argument based on the common perception that Roma put an unequal drain on state resources in the social welfare system.⁷⁸ The handful of token ethnic Slovak beneficiaries were an icon of the organization ETP Slovakia’s approach: Impoverished Roma deserved to receive aid not because they were Roma, but because they were poor. Depending on local municipal cooperation and Slovak state funding, ETP Slovakia geared

⁷⁸ This animosity is not newly emergent in the period of the ‘transition’ but apparently the sentiment was widely held under state socialism as well. Zoltan Barany writes, “The fact that thousands of Gypsy families acquired apartments on favorable terms quickly (18,600 families in 1965-81 in Hungary alone) while non-Roma ordinarily had to wait for years generated much interethnic acrimony” (Barany 2002:130).

its strategy toward the Slovak public, for whom an inclusive strategy of poverty reduction was far more palatable than one targeting Roma.⁷⁹

Approaches similar to that of ETP Slovakia were common in Hungary among institutions similarly situated in relation to the state. For instance, the Józsefváros Magdolna Quarter Social Urban Rehabilitation Model Experimental Program, a pilot urban rehabilitation program undertaken with the cooperation of the Budapest municipality, the local government of the VIII district (Józsefváros), and the Rév8 corporation, de-emphasized the fact that the majority of the beneficiary families in this high-profile and very well-funded program are Romani. The majority Romani ethnic make-up of the target neighborhood was acknowledged in the program materials (and was common knowledge among Hungarians, for whom the eighth district had its own mythology), but reference to Roma/Gypsies was notably absent from the title. By focusing the public attention on the space of the neighborhood as opposed to its residents, the program planners could deflect criticism from Magyar nationalists that the program benefits were just for Roma, not ethnic Magyars. This approach was prescribed at the time through media publications from some key international institutions in the early 2000s, like the United Nations. A news article that appeared in the UN Chronicle in 2007, stated,

⁷⁹ Interestingly, an Individual Development Account (IDA) program ETP Slovakia initiated in the middle of the first decade of the 2000s, in collaboration with OSI, took a different tack, mentioning Roma several times in the English-language press release that appeared on their website after it came out in July 2007 (ETP Slovakia 2007). As of time of writing of this manuscript, the current website of ETP Slovakia no longer contained the press release, but stated in a dynamic, large graphic, “We are able to integrate Roma and help refugees,” and summarized a housing program, called “ETP Housing Program,” with a different press release on June 18, 2013. The press release stated, “Based on its long-term experience with housing projects in Roma communities, ETP Slovakia is setting up a micro-loan fund. Loans from this fund will enable families to build their own low-cost brick homes, on land they own. We have long-standing relationships with selected families in Rankovce, Šimonovce and Moldava nad Bodvou. These families are committed to radically improve their living conditions. Such a house will provide running water, a toilet, a bed for each family member and a study desk for children’s homework.” The remainder of the press release describes the structure of the project, but does not specifically indicate any ethnic characteristics of the beneficiaries (ETP Slovakia 2013).

In UNDP [United Nations Development Programme]'s view, initiatives have to move away from the more traditional approach to social inclusion where the focus is on addressing violations of human and civil rights or on increasing welfare spending for marginalized groups. Instead, anti-discrimination and inclusion measures should be approached through sustainable development programmes, resulting in affordable and achievable solutions that do not require constant subsidization and can win support from majority populations. It is, furthermore, emphasized that in order to build broad social support for governmental policies and to effectively address ethnic tension, both Roma and non-Roma communities should jointly participate in the development process as partners. Thus, development should not pursue a narrow group-focused approach, but a broad area-based approach targeting all vulnerable sectors of society. These recommendations have been confirmed by a recent survey on the Decade commissioned by OSI and the World Bank to gauge the drivers of discrimination faced by the Roma. According to its results, both Roma and non-Roma respondents insisted that the Decade address the needs and concerns of other citizens in the region suffering from similar social and economic disadvantage. Programmes perceived as preferential of the Roma were seen by both Roma and non-Roma as counterproductive, with the potential to increase discrimination and hostility towards the Roma in the long term (Kirova 2007, citing UNDP 2002 and Open Society Institute 2005).

The approach of the Hungarian nonprofit organization *Autonómia* in the mid-00s was consistent with this dogma, targeting the “socially disadvantaged,” (*hátrányos helyzetű*) rather than Roma as an explicit group. Leader Anna Csongor was well aware that Roma represented the majority of the population with whom they worked. As a sociologist undoubtedly familiar with the work of Kemény, Havas, and other Hungarian sociologists whose highlighting of Roma/Gypsy poverty stimulated controversy in the 1970s, she had worked with members of the organization to craft a strategy most effective for the terrain in Hungary (accounting for the geographic, socioeconomic, social, cultural, and political conditions).

Within a given organization, there was not necessarily consensus on which approach to use, and there were sometimes internal pressures regarding the labeling, as I saw in the Roma Poverty Housing project in 2006. I asked Anikó, a Hungarian employee of Habitat for Humanity International — Hungary, in an interview that summer, “Could we use these funds for socially disadvantaged people rather than just for Roma?” She told me, “I think we need something to put

on the flag with Roma — that’s what ECA wants. It’s popular to talk now here about Roma empowerment. ECA wants to see something that’s entirely Roma. Now I’m looking at who’s in poverty housing — and it’s mostly Roma.” Anikó noted in the same interview, however, the sense the ethnic Hungarian majority had that Roma placed an undue financial burden on them for social support.

The “Roma Flag” and the HFHI Poster Child

Many within the organization of Habitat for Humanity International stress the notion that housing intervention represents a *key to the elimination of poverty*, through the improvement of health, the creation of a secure and comfortable space for economic and educational activities, and presumably, in the case of homeownership, the creation of financial equity. However, rather than simply being a means out of poverty and a space to facilitate different activities, houses have also become fetishized within the organization. Material housing forms themselves have become highly symbolic within the organization, “decent” housing being indexical of a “decent life” with “dignity,” “hope,” and possibility. The inverse, forms of housing that are not “decent” are implicitly, then, symbolic of squalor and hopelessness.

Many Roma, then, could present the ideal “poster-children” for Habitat if the organization could overcome the problem of how to reorganize its funding structure in order to support programs for the unemployed, and if the Romani beneficiaries, in turn, could make the obligatory performances of middle-class virtues. From squalor, decency could be achieved. As many studies have shown, throughout the Eastern European region, although there are undoubtedly Roma who are *not* poor, those who live in extreme poverty are disproportionately Roma (See Ladányi and Szelényi 2006:158; UNDP 2003). The “before” and “after” images and

the narratives of transformation for very poor Roma in the region, therefore, had the potential to be far more dramatic than those representing the working poor families who had previously been served by Habitat.⁸⁰ These narratives of transformation in glossy brochures and international newsletters were key in perpetuating the work of HFHI and maintaining the involvement of the global population of would-be humanitarian heroes from the West who await the next opportunity to send money or participate in a Global Village volunteer opportunity in an intriguing location to which they would like to travel.

The majority of the families previously served by HFHI have been non-Roma, but as noted above, there are a few examples of Roma among the working poor who have been served by Habitat in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. When I visited these three families during the course of my field visits there, in July of 2006, two were eagerly awaiting the opportunity to move, and one had just recently occupied the space of their new row-house in an ethnically mixed neighborhood near a segregated Romani settlement. As noted above, these families were not served under the auspices of the emerging “Roma program,” but simply in the course of everyday operations of the Cluj affiliate, whose criteria for “family selection,” as in the other outlets of HFH, do not take into account race or ethnicity.

The emerging Roma Housing Program in the early 2000s was not about serving *Roma*, per se, but was targeting *Romani persons living in extreme poverty*. While Roma indeed comprised a disproportionate number of persons living in this socioeconomic category, they

⁸⁰ Interestingly, this is not the first time the Roma have become the subject of this type of attention by actors who stand to gain recognition in the process of assimilating the (apparently unassimilable) “Gypsies.” Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II, pursued assimilationist policies during the 18th century that aimed to recreate the Austro-Hungarian Romanies as *új magyar* (“New Hungarians), and the Communist Party also took on the project. Stewart writes: “What better proof could there be of the power of the Communist method of social transformation than the disappearance of the Gypsies?” (Stewart 1997:5).

neither occupied it exclusively, nor did all Roma occupy it.⁸¹ Given these important facts, there were serious issues with developing a program addressing the needs of persons living in extreme poverty and labeling it a “Roma program.” On the one hand, it had the potential to anger the non-Roma who live in equally desperate circumstances. On the other, it promoted an undifferentiated image of Roma as extraordinarily poor persons, one that further reinforced stereotypes that poor and desperate circumstances are indexical of an ‘authentic’ “Gypsy lifestyle.” The disregard on the part of HFHI’s higher-level management of these concerns was characteristic of the approach taken by many INGOs involved in advocacy or social programs for Roma/Gypsies in the early postsocialist period, in which the “optics” to a Western audience were paramount, even when they came at the expense of relationships and conditions on the ground that determined the outcomes for the apparent beneficiaries of the INGOs’ actions.

Dignity and the Gold Chain Crucifix in the “Slum”

Sitting at the kitchen table in the hut of the Romani man in a “slum” on the outskirts of Pécs in 2012, I could see the man was clearly surprised, moved, and honored by the presence of an American visitor to his home. He insisted that I take the chair; as much as I protested, he insisted that he was glad to stand. Together with some students from the Romology Department, I was there among the team of people who had come to interview him as part of a needs assessment undertaken by the Maltese Cross organization and Amalipe, on a program on which they were planning to partner to serve impoverished Roma of this area. He invited me to see the

⁸¹ Ladányi and Szelényi’s findings indicate that in 2000, those Roma who were “very poor” (determined by whether the respondent reported recent experiences with hunger) comprised 66.7% of Roma in Bulgaria, 21.4% of Roma in Hungary, and 51.7% of Roma in Romania (Ladányi and Szelényi 2006:147, 158). The United Nations Development Programme survey in the early 2000s found that one out of five Roma in Eastern Europe (including Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania) were starving (UNDP 2003).

rest of his house, which amounted to one more room besides the kitchen in which we had gathered. In the second room, he offered me a gift of a crucifix, which I tried more than once to decline. I could see he had so little, it pained me to accept anything from this extraordinarily impoverished man. Yet in the golden metal figure of Christ on a sturdy wooden cross, on a thick, flat, gold-toned chain, was a token of his appreciation of being visited and witnessed by someone beyond his world, and it was a point of pride to offer it and for me to accept it to remember him by.

I thought of this later in relation to the way HFHI described impoverished Roma beneficiaries of their programs in Slovakia: “*Perhaps most important of all some dignity has appeared in the lives of Roma families,*” as if dignity was to be distributed like bread with the bestowal of housing renovations and the attention of people from the West. The gift of gratitude and a treasured object from a man living without running water affirmed my faith that dignity could absolutely be present and survive in the context of destitution.

Conclusion

Habitat for Humanity International’s work in the area of Roma poverty housing in Central Europe in the early 2000s represented one example of how one international organization approached and represented Roma people, their poverty, and their social issues, and how different factors internal and external to the organization influenced these practices. As seen in contrast with other programs and organizations described elsewhere in the dissertation, international organizations based in Budapest often approached the so-called Roma Question very differently from indigenous organizations within Hungary. Treated as a case-study, the Roma Poverty Housing project and HFHI’s related practices with Roma also offer insights into

the potentially deleterious consequences of the choices international actors make due to their different situation in relation to the target group and other stakeholders in planned interventions. Further, when viewed in contrast with the ways Roma/Gypsy identity and stigma were engaged by persons identifying as Roma/Gypsies, as can be seen in the institutions depicted elsewhere in the dissertation, the aggressive ethnic labelling and the construction of a stigmatizing, homogenizing narrative with limited input from Roma/Gypsies themselves or even other local actors, provides context for the ways both Roma activists and right-wing nationalists came to respond to the activities of the NGO sector in Budapest.

CONCLUSION

Operationalizing Roma Integration: A Typology of Roma Programs in Postsocialist Hungary

This text presents a series of snapshots depicting a handful of the different racial ideological regimes operating within Hungary in the first three decades of the postsocialist period, including the Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2005-2015. What can be seen in Hungary during this period is in some ways illustrative of the broader schema of Roma integration problematics in Europe at the time, but also has its particularities that relate to the unique sociocultural context of Hungary.

In examining the field of programs and institutions that related to Roma/Gypsies that were operating in Hungary in the early postsocialist period, particularly through my field research between 2011 and 2012 in Pécs and Budapest, I observed a series of dichotomies in approach or understanding. While none of these is fully satisfactory in defining the differences in the ideologies at work, each of them is revealing in certain ways as an orienting frame for understanding the divergences in these racial ideological regimes and the ways that the racial ideologies were operationalized through programs and other institutional practices in this period.

As I noted in the introduction, some of the key divergences in the organizations I depict in these chapters I observed could be summarized according to the following dichotomies:

“International” vs. “indigenous Hungarian”

Budapest vs. Pécs (and center vs. periphery)

Sociology vs. *néprajz* (national ethnography) (and culture vs. class)

Community-wide initiative vs. Roma organization (mainstream- vs. minority-centered)

To explain these differences in another way, “indigenous Hungarian” institutions were those whose lineage represented an older history in the country of Hungary and which had grown out of this specific cultural and political context. The distinction between the Pécs and Budapest institutions is obviously the location of the programs, but I also saw differences in relative approach that appeared to be related to the specific sociocultural and historical features of each place. In my analysis, the key examples of the indigenous Hungarian institutions included the Romology Department, Amalipe, and the European Capital of Culture program in Pécs. Additionally, I make reference to many others for the purposes of comparison and for providing context, including the Baranya County institutions Kis Tigris, Fa Ág, Kollégium Martineum, and the Gandhi high school. In Budapest, I also refer to other Hungarian indigenous institutions including Romaversitas, the Roma Parliament, the Kalyi Jag school, the Roma Press Center, and Romani Design. Finally, in the introduction, I also discuss the “cohabitation” program in the Mátras.

“International” organizations did not necessarily have the same level of rootedness in Hungary, although they were operating in the country. The level of connection to Hungary that the institution and its agents demonstrated could vary significantly. Habitat for Humanity International is the single example of an international organization that I discuss at length, but I also talk about the European Roma Rights Centre, the Open Society Institute, and the Roma Access Program at the Central European University, among others. The presence of these liberal

international institutions in Budapest was significant both in the ways there was interplay and cross-pollination between them and the Budapest-based “indigenous Hungarian” institutions but also in the ways that they came into conflict with the mainstream Hungarian ideologies and discourses related to Roma/Gypsies and stimulated friction within the Hungarian political environment. These institutions tended to press more firmly for an advancement of Roma/Gypsies from the position of *subjects* to that of *citizens*, and rather than cultivating *culture brokers*, which was an orientation visible in Pécs in the Romology Department in particular. There was an incubator in the network of international organizations operating in Budapest for the creation of a Roma elite to play the part of *disruptors*. And indeed, Roma nationalism and advocacy for greater autonomy in self-definition and management of pro-Roma organizations became significantly more prominent during the period of study.

There was not a straightforward distinction between the international and indigenous Hungarian institutions with regard to the potential of an institution to cultivate *disruptors*, however. As different individuals took leadership roles within indigenous Hungarian institutions, and as the surrounding political environment shifted, the approaches in the organizations also evolved and the degree of willingness to take a more confrontational role vis à vis the mainstream Hungarian society ebbed and flowed. The organization Romaversitas is a good example of this phenomenon: In 2012, the aging poet, scholar, and activist Choli József Daróczy (known as “Choli”) lamented the ways it had become more conservative in its orientation over the years. It had become an institution that strove to create an elite of Hungarian Roma in the form of highly educated professionals in a broad range of fields.⁸² In this regard, it explicitly

⁸² Although some mean to refer to the Romungro subgroup when they speak of Hungarian Roma or Hungarian Gypsies, I mean this in the general sense of Roma who are from/of Hungary.

moved away from the model of creating *culture brokers*; Gábor Daróczi noted that in the past, many students in Romaversitas had studied in the Romology Department at the University of Pécs, but his vision was different. He wanted to diversify the professional qualifications the students developed, to see Roma/Gypsy people as doctors, lawyers, and in other white-collar professional roles.

The organization emphasized promoting a strong sense of Roma/Gypsy identity and building ethnic-based community and support network among Roma (of different subgroups) in/from Hungary through monthly meetings of the students in Budapest. However, any commitment to cultivating active political engagement had been dampened: the emphasis was on creating *citizens*, not *disruptors*, and it seemed that Choli perceived this orientation as a retreat from a more militant approach when the organization was founded. In the new model, disruption to the cultural and social norms in Hungary was to come through the effect of enhancing the social capital of Roma/Gypsies as a whole in Hungary through having members of their ethnic group in more powerful positions in industries, and by challenging the stereotypes held by members of the Magyar majority through embodying a different set of characteristics than what they imagined Roma/Gypsies to possess.

Within the Romology Department, building up *culture brokers* meant training and cultivating leaders who could move on beyond the University of Pécs to teach about Roma/Gypsies. The *culture broker* had the potential to teach Beash or Romani language, and/or to disseminate more knowledge about Roma/Gypsies and dispel ignorance about the population, regardless of where the graduate of the program would end up working. In this regard, the approach was aligned with that of Romaversitas in the intention (in part) to challenge mainstream prejudice toward Roma, but the emphasis in the Romology Department was on

promoting and expanding the profile of distinctive Roma/Gypsy culture in Hungary rather than building the social capital of Roma people. In this way, the Romology department exhibited its grounding in the multiculturalist context of the city of Pécs and its orientation toward *néprajz*, with an understanding of a bounded Gypsy culture with characteristics that could be named and enumerated. It also showed a concern for the project of building *cultural competence* of ethnic Magyar professionals who work with Roma. The *culture brokers* could help dispel ignorance and prejudice of those engaged in work with Roma in fields like law enforcement, education, and social services, through providing them with more knowledge about these defined characteristics of that bounded (but diverse, distinguished by subgroup boundaries) Roma/Gypsy culture and society.

In indigenous Hungarian institutions in both Pécs and Budapest, one key area of activity I observed was efforts to inscribe Roma into contemporary Hungarian society as well as its history. The work of Romaversitas and other educational initiatives like Collegium Martineum, was one example of these efforts, in terms of providing the support to Roma/Gypsy children and youths for them to be able to be successful in Hungarian schools and universities amidst their ethnic Magyar peers. The international institution of the Roma Access Program at the Central European University provided similar supports to Roma coming from various countries, not only Hungary, but their education amidst other Roma from other countries prepared them for graduate education in English at institutions beyond their home countries and promoted a sense of transnational, diasporic identity as Roma that was different from ways Roma/Gypsy youths were being socialized in the indigenous Hungarian educational initiatives.

However, the efforts to inscribe Roma into contemporary Hungarian society and history were also undertaken in other ways. Romani Design, in bringing Romani folk motifs into the

world of high fashion and into the designs of clothing worn by ethnic Magyars as well as Roma, represented one example. More overtly political work was also an example that could be seen in Budapest in both the indigenous Hungarian institutions as well as the international ones, in the form of protests and other forms of active engagement in controversy.

In Budapest, an assertion of Romani pride could be seen that was more forceful in demanding attention in a public space and challenging racism directly than what I observed in Pécs. One example of this pattern could be seen in 2012, when Ágnes Daróczi stood up in an auditorium at Eotvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest and led a chant of “Apologize!” in the audience at a discussion regarding the political controversy surrounding a number of individuals. Daróczi’s chant was aimed at Professor Géza Jeszenszky, a professor at Corvinus University who also had an ambassadorial career, who had written a book in 2009 that contained offensive and stereotyped comments about Roma/Gypsies. The book had recently become the subject of public outcry over its racist content. Entitled “Post-communist Europe and its National/Ethnic Problems: a course-pack,” it was reportedly required reading at the time for students in many classes at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Corvinus University at the time. Jeszenszky, a historian, had written the following about Roma/Gypsies:

"Their low status on the job market and higher unemployment rates perpetuate poverty, widespread social problems and crime. The reason why many Roma are mentally ill is because in Roma culture it is permitted for sisters and brothers or cousins to marry each other or just to have sexual intercourse with each other" (Jeszenszky 2009:273).

The ELTE event itself had emerged as part of a widespread organized protest reflecting outrage over the blatant racism the professor was displaying and propagating.



Figure 24. Ágnes Daróczi leading the audience in a chant of “Apologize!” to Corvinus University Professor Géza Jeszenszky during a roundtable discussion at ELTE University in Budapest c. 2012. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

Ágnes Daróczi was one of the figures among Roma/Gypsy intellectuals in Hungary who regularly stepped forward into controversial territory as a proud Romani leader, and had done so since during the state socialist period. She was a key organizer in the attempt to expand knowledge and recognition of the persecution of the Roma/Gypsies in Hungary by the Nazis. She had coauthored a two-volume book on the subject with János Bársony that included extensive archival documents from the period, provided narratives of survivors, and gave detailed information on individual communities in which Roma/Gypsies had lived in the period leading up to the genocide and from which they were taken (Bársony and Daróczi 2004). She also was one of the leaders of the annual commemoration on August 2, marking the night in 1944 on which the “Gypsy family camp” was liquidated at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The ceremony took place each year at the bank of the Danube river at the Holocaust memorial monument that had been established in Budapest in 2006 at Nehru part (“Nehru bank,” an area of river shore named for the first prime minister of India). The act of commemorating the Romani Holocaust on an annual basis at a public monument dedicated to the genocide victims was politicized in a

way that the concerts and cultural events that comprised the public events in Pécs were not. The controversial nature of this work was reflected in the regular defacing of the monument and the fact that the Romani genocide was still not included in the study of history in Hungarian public schools.



Figure 25. Wreaths laid by participants at annual Romani Holocaust memorial at the commemorative monument at Nehru part in Budapest, August 2, 2012. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

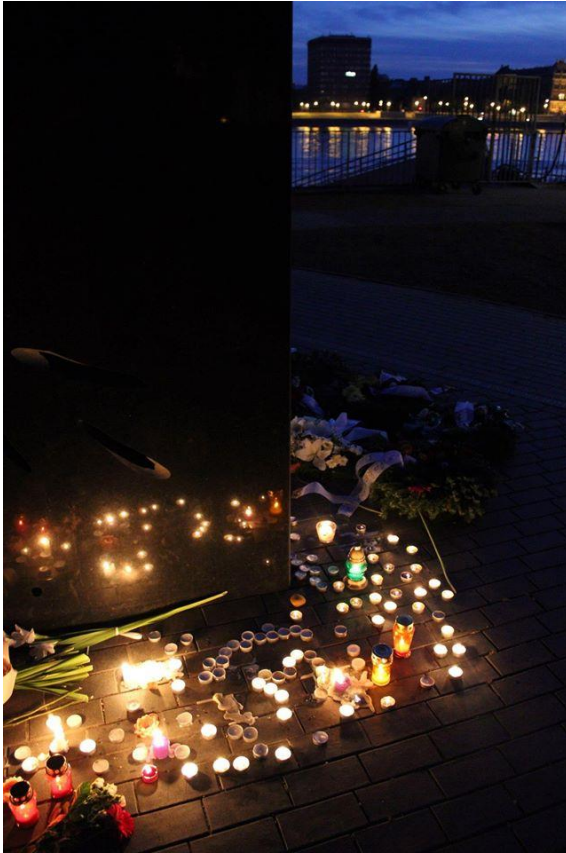


Figure 26. Candles laid by participants at annual Romani Holocaust memorial in Budapest, August 2, 2012.
Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

For ethnic Magyars to acknowledge the Romani Holocaust would mean to engage with a history of violence and social exclusion in which people of their own national group had acted as perpetrators. The celebratory multiculturalism that dominated as a racial ideology in the institutions of Pécs, as in the European Capital of Culture program, could be practiced without political engagement or reckoning with any form of structural exclusion.

This more overtly political engagement in the capital, relative to Pécs, also included more widespread efforts to effect change in public opinion of Roma, for example through publications targeting a mainstream audience outside academia. Besides the books on the Holocaust written by Daróczi and Bársony as well as the one by Gábor Bernáth published by the Roma Press

Center, there was another noteworthy text that presented biographical profiles, paired with lush photographic portraits, of twenty-four accomplished Roma from the arts and other professions — consciously identified as “Twenty-four Hungarians of Today.” (*Egy Sor Cigány: Huszonnégy Mai Magyar*) (Korniss 2011). Typically, *Magyarok* was a term used to designate exclusively ethnic Magyars; in identifying Roma/Gypsy people as such, the text was making an assertion of inclusion, incorporating members of a stigmatized minority into a category that excluded them in mainstream discourses vis à vis the Hungarian nation. From what I observed, the institutions in and around Pécs did not engage in political issues and public discourse as explicitly. They showed a relative prioritization of coexistence and shared multicultural experience.

As for the other divergences I observed in programs and institutional practices related to Roma/Gypsies in Hungary during this period, there were those engaged with *néprajz*, whose focus tended to be culture, and those who worked from a *sociological approach*, who tended to focus on class and poverty. In *community-wide initiatives* in Hungary, Roma/Gypsies or their integration might be invoked as priorities, as they were in the program in the Mátras or the European Capital of Culture program. At times, as could be seen in a number of other communities across Hungary at the time, the rhetoric of integration or inclusion was sometimes a cynical ploy to gain access to resources for the community that might ultimately be withheld completely from the Roma/Gypsies there. *Roma organizations*, on the other hand, had a vested interest in their own community (though were not above corruption), but they were vulnerable to a perpetual scarcity and instability of access to resources, and instability in their overall operations, given their dependence on the cooperation of the broader community in allowing them to maintain their existence.

Overall, during my fieldwork, I noted the total absence of programmatic initiatives that challenged discrimination in a targeted fashion through active engagement with members of the majority in direct practice settings — i.e. interventions including non-Gypsies as a target group, with the intention of promoting changes in attitudes or perceptions toward Roma. For example, there were none along the lines of facilitated Jewish-Muslim group conversations and Youth Dialogues on race and ethnicity as employed at the University of Michigan in the United States, in which groups of divergent backgrounds were gathered together to have facilitated dialogues that helped promote mutual understanding and overcome conflict and mistrust. Direct-services interventions that I observed did not depart from the model of Roma/Gypsies as the identified target group. Challenges to discriminatory attitudes that were aimed at non-Roma came instead either indirectly (as discussed later below) or in the form of isolated political protests, like that of Ágnes Daróczi described above.

The approaches visible in the institutional programs, from the perspective of interventions, generally fell into one (or more) of a handful of categories: (1) direct services for remedying social disadvantage of Gypsies, (2) building shared experiences between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, (3) celebratory multiculturalism, (4) promoting popular awareness and recognition of Roma/Gypsy history, culture, (5) creating cultural brokers or cultural mediators, (6) political advocacy and building media exposure around social issues facing Roma/Gypsies, and/or (7) promoting a new Roma elite. All of the first four could be seen in both Budapest and Pécs, as well as in both international and indigenous Hungarian institutions. The fifth was a more prominent feature of the activities in Pécs. The sixth and seventh were more heavily emphasized in Budapest, present in both indigenous and international institutions.

Most so-called Roma programs fell in the domain of social services to address their Roma/Gypsy people's impoverishment, social isolation, health inequalities, educational disparities, high levels of unemployment, housing inequalities, or any of the many other areas in which they were demonstrated to fall far behind the majority ethnic Magyars (and all other groups in Hungary at the time). Sometimes they were social services programs that included both ethnic Roma/Gypsies and others who shared the same social issue designated as the focus of the program (i.e. poverty). And sometimes they were cultural programs targeting either Roma/Gypsies specifically or a broader public more generally through events like concerts or art exhibitions. The ECoC in Pécs followed this model, but there were many other examples. At times they had a legible motivation once again to inscribe Roma/Gypsies into the cultural landscape of Hungary. At times it was also apparent that there was an intention to challenge stereotypes through alternative representations of Roma that contradict mainstream narratives about them. This was one of the handful of ways activities of the observed institutions indirectly presented challenges to discriminatory attitudes toward Roma on the part of members of the majority, in the absence of a more direct approach.

Most so-called Roma programs in Hungary were notably depoliticized, as Ábel Bereményi also observed in his field research in Spain (Bereményi 2014). When discrimination seemed to be conceptualized at all in the planning of social programs, it generally appeared to be conceived as something that would fall away as the result of one of a handful of factors: (1) the improved social conditions of Roma/Gypsies (thanks to the intervention that would raise their standard with regard to the identified social indicator that was the basis of the program), (2) the positive image presented through public exhibitions or artistic presentations, (3) the positive and stereotype-defying real-life examples of members of a Roma/Gypsy elite being cultivated

through educational programs, (4) shared space and experience through organized activities including both Roma/Gypsies and non-Gypsies, or (5) educational presentations about Roma/Gypsies that provided factual information about them to counter overall ignorance about their cultural characteristics (including language and other factors), demographics, and other social features of the Roma/Gypsy population in Hungary.

Any anti-discriminatory project within such programs was thus largely buried under their other identified purposes. This fact was significant in terms of questions of Roma integration, because it meant that there was not general acknowledgment of the barrier that anti-Gypsyism presented to a project of Roma integration. Approaches such as the fourth above, emphasizing the building of relationships of mutual understanding and trust through shared experience, had real potential to challenge prejudices if successfully implemented; it is known that having positive contact with a person of a minority group lessens the likelihood of having prejudices against members of that group. However, as could be seen in the program in the Mátras, the discriminatory attitudes of the white parents, refusing to allow their children to attend the summer camp with the Roma/Gypsy children, presented a barrier to even allowing the program to be realized.

There were issues with the other approaches, as well. For example, the photographs of Roma/Gypsies in everyday “normal” situations that were presented in Szabadság tér (Freedom Square) in Budapest, which followed the model of the second point above, might have helped reshape perceptions of Roma/Gypsies of the viewers of the photographs. However, the small group of people I observed in attendance included the same familiar faces of Roma intellectuals, liberals, and leftists whom I saw at most of the other Roma-themed events there.

In short, the programs I saw operating in Hungary during this period had little potential to effect any kind of structural change or significant change in mainstream perceptions of Roma/Gypsies or reversing their prejudices. The prejudices were only becoming more entrenched given the dominant discourses and government propaganda that were exploiting their anxieties over cultural and demographic obsolescence. At the same time, however, the fact that the actions of those working within this field were undertaken in the given political climate, a more direct approach would have entailed significant personal risk.

EPILOGUE

The End of an Era: Pro-Roma Civil Engagement in Hungary, 1989-2019

I never envisioned this project as a salvage ethnography. When I began the work, arguably at the point that I copyedited the country reports on Poland and Greece for the European Roma Rights Centre in 2002, Hungary was viewed as an example in which liberal institutions were thriving and the human rights situation of Roma/Gypsies was better in many areas of concern than in surrounding countries. The political climate has changed so dramatically since that time that liberal institutions in Hungary have found themselves in a battleground, and hardly any organization has remained untouched. The international institutional hub that Budapest had been for Roma organizations is no more. The European Roma Rights Centre has moved their operations to Brussels, the Central European University to Vienna, Open Society Institute to Berlin. The Open Society Foundation's website states that "In 2018, in response to the increasingly oppressive political environment in Hungary, the Open Society Foundations transferred operations and roughly 100 staff from Budapest to a new regional headquarters in Berlin, Germany" (Open Society Foundation 2019). In the end of December 2018, the ERRC voted to relocate their operations to Brussels. In the press release, the chair of their board, Ethel Brooks, stated,

"Given the developments in Hungary related to civil society organisations and the limitations of the Hungarian legal framework, this is the right move. Belgium offers us the right legal framework in which to operate as an international NGO, with activities, colleagues, and commitments across Europe" (ERRC 2018).

Although the role of NGOs in the region is rightfully the subject of critique, and their activities are interwoven with the atmosphere of illiberalism that has emerged in Hungary (see chapter four), it is still very alarming that the political environment has become so hostile. The departure of these international organizations means the end of an era, one in which Budapest had a unique position *vis à vis* Roma/Gypsies and the Romani movement. For a time, in the absence of a capital city in a Romani nation-state, Budapest performed some of the functions of such for an international Roma/Gypsy collective or diaspora — if not a nonterritorial nation *per se* (although some Roma certainly saw it as such), a transnational group at least. The city attracted and supported with its international institutional infrastructure a cadre of young Roma/Gypsy intellectuals committed to and deeply engaged in a project of empowerment, mobilization, and organization of diverse Roma from different countries of origin.⁸³

In some ways, this project of international Roma in Budapest in the first couple of decades of the postsocialist period was aligned with and overlapped with that taking place in some indigenous Hungarian institutions that existed in Budapest as well as in and around Pécs in Baranya County, in Miskolc, and elsewhere in the country. There were collaborations and

⁸³ In an interesting fashion, Hungary's capital city was fulfilling a role *vis à vis* the Roma nation that it had done around the turn of the previous century with respect to the Hungarian one, when, as historian Péter Hanák argued, it served as a “workshop” for Hungarian intellectuals actively engaged in cultivating a Hungarian national culture through arts, architecture, literature, language, and other areas (Hanák 2014), during which there was unusual “intellectual ferment” and “cross-fertilization” (Fenyo 1987), with a distinctly political engagement on the part of those involved in artistic and cultural production, and conversations with those across disciplinary boundaries (Hanák 2014; Fenyo 1987; see also Frigyesi 1998). As Hanák wrote of those in fin-de-siècle Budapest: “The Hungarian reform generation solved its identity problems not by withdrawing from the national community but by revising the concept and idea of a nation. It evolved an anti-feudal national awareness based on the people and on critical self-knowledge, which chimed in with the program of transforming the whole society in a radical, democratic way” (Hanák 2014: xvi-xvii). In this movement, too, there was a strong impulse toward self-definition and autonomy in opposition to the political imperialisms of the time, as reflected in Hungarian poet Endre Ády's passionate call to action: “We have to be finished with feudal ranks, privileges, aristocracy, and the sweating capital at the same time. If we want to live, let us begin our lives. Let us solve our problems in a Hungarian way, because there is little hope that the successors of Prussian Babels or Slavic Bakunins will accomplish it for us” (Endre Ády, from *Ady Endre prózai művei* (Endre Ády's Collected Prose), (Budapest, 1964), volume 4, pages 26-27, as quoted in Hanák 2014:167-168, 235n70).

crossovers, as when a Romani-language performance of the classic play “Blood Wedding” by Federico García Lorca was staged at the Roma Parliament after it was translated by a Rom from the Balkans. There were also individuals who traversed the boundaries between these institutional environments and were products of and contributors to both of them — with Angela Kóczé (Assistant Professor, academic director of Roma Graduate Preparation Program, and the Romani Studies Program) as a prime example. However, the mobility and cosmopolitanism of the English-speaking Roma whose skills, knowledge, and ethnic consciousness were being nurtured in trainings, workshops, and programs of the Open Society Institute, Central European University, and European Roma Rights Centre, exceeded those of most of the Roma/Gypsies who emerged from or worked within the framework of the indigenous Hungarian institutions.

In the international institutions, many of the activities for young Roma largely – or sometimes completely – excluded non-Roma from the venue. (The monthly retreat of the indigenous Hungarian institution Romaversitas was similar in this regard; this aspect of the program also was intended to bring together the Roma students in order to build a sense of collective group identity.) In its most exclusive form, the Barvalipe Summer Camp in summer 2012 conducted its activities in a remote and undisclosed location in greater Budapest and restricted participation only to Roma, with the single exception of one woman from the former Yugoslavia who conducted a one-day debate training. The organizer of the program explained that in the feedback from the previous year, participants expressed their desire for a monoethnic environment in which to develop and foster their shared identity as Roma. Separatism was a part of the process of cultivating these leaders, in contrast with the approach of indigenous institutions in Hungary. Even outside the context of Pécs and its emphatically multiculturalist discourses around Roma/Gypsy inclusion, the practices in indigenous Hungarian institutions

working with/for Roma placed a greater emphasis on shared experience of Gypsy and non-Gypsy persons in Hungary.

Those indigenous Hungarian pro-Roma institutions, however, also posed their own ideological challenges to the mainstream in Hungary, and they were very much under threat. The poignant article Timea Junghaus wrote about the Roma Parliament in November 2016 was written as an obituary to the institution. Since 1991, at the very beginning of the postsocialist period, it had hosted cultural events, political discussions, and other activities in its space filled with paintings by Roma painters. It was situated in that same building in Budapest's VIII district (in the neighborhood described in the preface) until it was evicted by police action on October 24, 2016 (Junghaus 2016; Czenkli 2016). In 2013, it had been reported in the media that the Roma Parliament had been raided by the state due to technical issues with the building and an apparent need for renovation, and its art collection placed in storage in an unknown location. At the time, I recalled that the last time I had visited the organization in 2012, the leaders were talking to me about a new Marxist-inspired civil rights political framework they had been developing and discussing. Although Aladár Horváth had never been a leader to shy away from political controversy, the new framework struck me as a shift of focus back into more explicitly liberation-driven political advocacy from the other longstanding role of the organization as a Roma/Gypsy cultural repository. With the major left-leaning daily newspaper *Népszabadság* suddenly liquidated on October 8, 2016, and in the context of so many other political assaults on other liberal institutions in Hungary, the eviction of Roma civil rights leader Aladár Horváth's organization was only one of many forcible closures of the activities of institutions that challenged the "Hungary as Hungary" model of exclusionary cultural ownership of the Hungarian nation.

The current moment as of the writing of this dissertation, as we begin the third decade of the 21st century, represents a transitional one in which an emergent situation is forming. The remaining indigenous Hungarian institutions working with/around Roma/Gypsy issues are continuing to operate in a political battlefield after the international organizations (that have the mobility and luxury of relocating) settle into their new geographic homes. A history over the past decade of incidents of intimidation, harassment, and bureaucratic impediments that organizations working on issues related to Roma and in other areas that are liberal-leaning, has been punctuated with some with a more violent character. On October 23, 2019, the day commemorating the 1956 revolution in Hungary, the organization Auróra House in Budapest's eighth district, was the target of an attack. As the incident was described by Bernard Rorke of the website Hope Not Hate,

“A 50-strong mob of uniformed neo-Nazis, members of the so-called Legio Hungaria, gathered outside the community centre, tore down the rainbow flag over the entrance, set fire to it, and plastered the building with fascist stickers” (Rorke 2019).

These actions on the part of neo-Nazis, although they represent a more violent expression of such, are reflective of and emergent from the general politics of the time, one in which the Hungarian nation was perceived to be under threat from outside forces with evolving faces. George Soros had taken on the notoriety of the Devil by 2018, but the immigration crisis in 2015 represented the first major shift incorporating other Others into the framework of fear and loathing that Roma/Gypsies had occupied in the imagination of most Hungarians until then.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Although the expressions of them have evolved over time, and the intensity of them varies according to geography, personal experience with Roma/Gypsy people, and other factors (see, e.g., Orosz 2018), negative attitudes toward Roma/Gypsies have been persistent and widespread for centuries. A survey on discrimination in the European Union from 2008 found that 28% of Hungarians indicated that they would be uncomfortable to have a Roma/Gypsy neighbor. Approximately the same percentage of respondents indicated that they would be comfortable (Eurobarometer 2008:43-45).

Amidst highly criticized actions related to the flood of refugees into Hungary in the fall of 2015, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán stated in an interview in October 2015,

“We should not look at economic immigration as if it had any use, because it only brings trouble and threats to European people. Therefore, immigration must be stopped. ... We do not want to see a significant minority among ourselves that has different cultural characteristics and background,” he said. “We would like to keep Hungary as Hungary.”

A cross-national survey in 2005 by Open Society Institute (OSI), which included Hungary as well as several other countries from the Central and East European region, offered insight into attitudes toward Roma/Gypsies at the time in Hungary and the surrounding countries. It noted that “Virtually all respondents reported negative associations toward the Roma as a whole, along with a consistent litany of negative characteristics to describe them. Respondents were adamant that their attitudes toward the Roma are based on the characteristics and behavior of the Roma themselves – and not a product of racism and ethnic bias. The most commonly repeated negative features associated with the Roma included:

- Lack of adaptability and flexibility in relation to the expectations and standards dominant culture;
- Lack of hygiene “They let their children run around in rags....”
- Lack of work ethic;
- Tendency toward criminality – “All Roma steal.” (Czech Republic)
- Unemployment and poverty;
- Dishonesty and tendency to cheat;
- Illiteracy;
- Aggressiveness” (OSI 2005:10).

The OSI study notes further that “Respondents from Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia and Romania expressed divergent views (depending on age, direct experience with the Roma and related factors) regarding the Roma and their situation in society. It is interesting to note that the meaning of key predictors, such as age and direct experience with the Roma, sometimes shifted completely from one nation to another. For example, older Hungarian respondents were more likely to express positive attitudes toward (and report positive experiences with) the Roma than were younger respondents, while the opposite tendency was observed among respondents in Serbia and Slovakia. Similarly, direct encounters with the Roma improved attitudes and increased sympathy in Croatia and Hungary, while day-to-day interactions with the Roma tended to increase traditional stereotypes toward the Roma among respondents in Macedonia and Slovakia” (OSI 2005:11).

These differences have implications for the kinds of interventions that would have the potential to work in these different settings in addressing prejudice and lack of understanding between Roma and non-Roma. They also speak to both similarities and differences in the dynamics of anti-Gypsy sentiment, and the consistencies with regard to the specific stereotypes, across the broader region. They suggest that among the younger Hungarians, the intentions/approaches of many indigenous organizations in Hungary to make efforts to further inscribe Roma/Gypsies into Hungarian society and expand on the amount of contact between Roma/Gypsies and non-Roma may indeed have the potential to shift interpersonal and interracial dynamics between members of the different ethnic groups.

On the other hand, the intervention model may be based on a now-defunct social system that previously existed in Hungary (which older Hungarians experienced, but younger ones did not), which oriented around a patron-client relationship between ethnic Magyars and assimilated Roma/Gypsies, and in which the stability of social relationships was predicated on a particular hierarchical order that many Roma/Gypsies are no longer willing to accept. Alternately, the success of the model may depend on an economic system in which a certain social equality existed for fellow workers of differing ethnic heritage in industrial workplaces, a system that was disassembled with the privatization of the state industries and closure of state-run factories in Hungary (as in much of Central/Eastern Europe).

The “threat” posed by immigrants, in Orbán’s view, is not only the potential for violent acts of terrorism (which he also, elsewhere, attributes to immigrants), but also that the cultural difference embodied by immigrants holds the potential to transform Hungary into something other than what it is, potentially something unrecognizable to Hungarians. In articulating the apparent problem posed by immigration, however, he also gives insight into any other “Other” problem in Hungary. Immigration introduces new “Others” from beyond the borders of Hungary, who would hold increasing potential to be a “significant minority” if their numbers grow. However, Hungary already contains more than one “significant minority” with “different cultural characteristics and background,” as a country with 13 traditionally recognized national and ethnic minorities (which “have lived on the territory of Hungary since the foundation of the state one thousand years ago,” according to Hungary’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2000), in addition to sizeable African and Asian immigrant populations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2000; TÁRKI 2012; Nyiri 1999; Népszabadság 2010; Shah 2015).

The concerns articulated about the new influx of immigrants, therefore, relate to older Hungarian anxieties about the threat of Hungarian disappearance – the disappearance of Hungarian culture, values, and all that makes Hungary recognizable as Hungary. These anxieties were gaining prominence in public discourse in Hungary in the period 2006-2010, as the right-wing political party Jobbik was gaining notable popularity (Zolnay 2012:25-31), and are stated with clarity by the mayor who began the controversial workfare (*közmunka*) program in the northeastern Hungarian village Monok in 2008:

“The Hungarian population is decreasing while the number of Roma is increasing. I inherited my homeland from my grandfather and I’m obliged to leave it to my grandchildren, but due to demographic trends this seems to be difficult. At last we have to speak our mind: that Roma families have one child after the other just because they regard children as a source of social income, that is to say, as a means of subsistence. In

twenty years the Roma population may become dominant in Hungary and perhaps they will oust us from our ancestral homeland as the Albanians did with the Serbs in Kosovo” (Zolnay 2012:30).

Evolutions of Roma/Gypsy Politics During Hungary’s Illiberal Turn

What I saw in the field between July 2011 to December 2012 provided much to contextualize the current situation, and I hope that what I have presented in these chapters helps to elucidate it. What I observed most of all was a deep, fundamental sense of insecurity on the part of almost everyone. The leading Romology students feared their discipline was in jeopardy in the context of Orbán’s educational reform. Some of the leftist academics quietly voiced their fears that their jobs were in jeopardy. Leaders in civic organizations wondered if they would be able to keep their doors open given the lack of funding for their initiatives. And then there was the right wing, feeling increasingly threatened by forces beyond their control, for which Roma/Gypsies, Jews, homosexuals, and Western liberals made effective scapegoats.

In this context, there were performances and practices to be seen everywhere that seemed to be rooted in the hope of affirming and reclaiming value and belonging. Pécs youths were affirming the value of their provincial city in drinking the local beer in funky establishments that celebrated eclectic vintage styles of Hungary. Some Roma were affirming the value of Romani aesthetics through wearing distinctively Romani clothing, others through the performance of Roma/Gypsy music — sometimes representing the styles of more than one ethnic subgroup. Some were affirming their belonging by occupying the spaces of their own organizations and looking for funding and collaborations with other organizations to keep their work alive. Out of the corner of your eye, you could see constant performances of those trying to achieve visibility, recognition, and empowerment from their respective positions of marginalization, whether perceived or real: Roma/Gypsies in relation to non-Roma, Beash in relation to Vlax Roma,

Hungarians in relation to Western Europeans, Pécsi people in relation to those in Budapest (and beyond). And, as well, a similar pattern could be seen among some non-Roma/non-Gypsy academic scholars and pro-Roma organizations and humanitarians who were constructing their own narratives in an attempt to achieve that recognition and empowerment for Roma/Gypsies by proxy. Through written, verbal, and visual narratives and performances in a wide range of different contexts and practices, including clothing and consumption, academic conference presentations, artistic performances, museum exhibitions, publications for many different audiences, social initiatives, public protests, other public events, and more, there was a seemingly constant series of performances that were geared toward overcoming marginalization and disempowerment through (re)claiming, projecting, and achieving recognition of *worthiness*.

Hungarian ethnologist Péter Szuhay believed that a museum exhibition about Roma/Gypsies would “contribute to emancipation, and it [was] itself an act that - in the very minute it is arranged – evaluate[d] certain cultural performances as worthy” (Szuhay 1994; see chapter 3 of this manuscript). Canadian anthropologist David Scheffel believed in “the symbolic value” of “[the] undertaking” of a humanitarian intervention on behalf of destitute Roma in Svinia, through “having outsiders coming in here and telling Slovak society that these people count, and what we are doing here is making them visible” (MacDonald 1999: 10:00-13:00; see chapter 4 of this manuscript). Many of the performances were, too, acts of resistance and attempts to regain agency in asserting that worthiness, as in the mobilization of Roma/Gypsy scholars, activists, and other leaders, achieving a new threshold in the mid- to late-2010s, in reclaiming the means of production of their own public representation, as could be seen in the formation of new institutions like ERIAC (see chapter two of this manuscript) and RomArchive.

Through public cultural performances by Roma/Gypsy persons, of musical concerts, painters' exhibitions; poetry and literary publications in Romani and Beash; and their scholarly publications; as well as historical commemorations of the Roma Holocaust (and publications about it); and political protests, agency had been engaged by Roma/Gypsies in Hungary long before these changes, but they represented a shift in terms of the international scale of them, the degree of their institutional power and access to resources, their language of operations, the extent of the international diversity of the Roma/Gypsy players involved, and the theoretical framework with which their work was framed (e.g. postcolonialism and intersectionality – see, for example, Kóczé; Daróczy *et al* 2018; Mirga).

This evolution was happening in the midst of, and in concert with, the growth of “illiberal democracy” as an ideology in Hungary, and I argue that this is not a coincidence. In their own perverse way, even the white supremacists' murders of Roma/Gypsies around Hungary in 2008-2009 (see chapter one of this manuscript) and the rise of the paramilitary right-wing organization the Magyar Garda and more recently, with its fall, the new Légio Hungária in May 2019 (Adam 2019), also have represented attempts to regain control and agency in situations of perceived powerlessness. And, indeed, perhaps Viktor Orbán's crackdown and attempted takeover of such a broad range of societal institutions beyond government, in higher education, the academy, and the cultural and economic spheres, can also be viewed in this light. There are real manifestations of powerlessness — reflected in the stagnant economic opportunities in Hungary and a dwindling middle strata (see Fehérváry) among other indicators, as well as cumbersome restraints on the management of their previously autonomous affairs in local industries and other areas of great pride historically with unfortunate consequences (e.g. former state-owned factories that have been shut down due to privatization, paprika contamination, and fights over retaining

GMO-free agriculture). These changes came largely as a result of the rapid and aggressive privatization of the Hungarian economy in the early postsocialist period, the staggering global power of multinational corporations, and political reconfigurations entailed in European Union integration. On the latter point, Michael Stewart asserts that European integration has had “unintended impacts;” “The institutional reconfiguration of economies and politics around the continent, which has proceeded without democratic legitimacy and without an adequate debate over the nature of our transnational project, has provoked a rise in cultural politics — populisms that focus less on economic issues than cultural differences between people. The Roma, like the Muslims, are above all victims of a growing difficulty over difference” (Stewart 2012:xx).

Co-occurring with a macro-level reorganization of political economy has been the visible shift in the dynamics of assumptions and displays of Gypsiness in public space (see Stewart 2012:xxv) as well as the ongoing deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of Roma/Gypsies in much of Central and Eastern Europe and the mainstream perception that “the Roma have been the apparent beneficiaries of large scale European Union funded programmes for economic and social inclusion — all to little or no avail” (xvi). At a time when Hungary was experiencing a devastating economic crisis, and contractions of social services were happening all over Europe, Hungarians were understandably perturbed by the what they saw as failure of Roma to integrate even as significant financial resources continue to be allotted toward that cause. After all, there had never been a clear consensus on what Roma integration was meant to achieve and what success would look like, and the average Hungarian was still expecting to see assimilation, the elimination of Roma/Gypsy distinction, as the outcome.

There was a growing and pervasive sense of “Roma fatigue” that was increasing over the course of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), a sense that Roma initiatives and projects

are everywhere, accomplishing nothing of significance except making even more visible a group that many as one of them would prefer would disappear. As one prominent Roma activist and scholar from Poland, Anna Mirga, aptly explained the problem,

We feel that the European Union and all the other actors have been throwing the money at the problem, that it was more about self-declaring that ‘Yes, we recognize this as a problem, we invest funds,’ and that’s that. ... The national government will declare that we have devoted millions and millions of Euros in the Roma integration, but the Roma didn’t integrate, leading to conclude that the Roma simply don’t want to integrate” (Open Society Foundations 2014: 2:01-2:13; 2:52-3:04).

Thus, the large-scale, expensive efforts toward Roma integration have ultimately contributed not to the improvement, but in fact, to the further deterioration of social relationships between Roma and non-Roma. In the context of this general frustration, when a violent crime was committed by a Roma/Gypsy perpetrator in Olaszliszka in 2006, it was easy to use propaganda engaging old tropes about “Gypsy criminality” to manipulate public opinion further in the direction of anti-Gypsyism. And, indeed, there was a re-emergence of virulently racist anti-Gypsy propaganda circulating in the far-right press and in online forums such as YouTube, and there has been a dramatic shift in the frequency and openness with which people express anti-Gypsy and anti-Semitic sentiments in everyday speech in Hungary. The instances of vigilantism and anti-Gypsy murders in 2008-2009 were slow to be investigated and prosecuted by Hungarian authorities, and they were generally downplayed by members of the majority, many of whom thought about this violence through the lens of putative Gypsy deviance and crime. While this dramatic deterioration obviously cannot be attributed to the failure of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the program did not help the political climate.

Roma/Gypsy Politics After the Republic of Hungary

The new Hungarian Constitution that came into effect in January 2012 crystalized one of the foundations of the ideological divide in drawing a fundamental opposition between “the members of the Hungarian Nation” and “the nationalities living with us” (Alaptörvény 2011; Venice Commission 2012: 9). As the Venice Commission wrote in 2012, the Preamble of Hungary’s “Fundamental Law” “has been written in the name of ‘we the members of the Hungarian nation,’ intimating that members of the ‘nationalities living with us’ are not part of the people behind the enactment of the Constitution. The Constitution should be seen as the result of the democratic will-formation of the country’s citizens as a whole, and not only of the dominant ethnic group” (Venice Commission 2012:9).



Figure 27. Protest outside Budapest Opera House during Fidész party’s gala event celebrating signing of new Hungarian Constitution, January 2, 2012. Estimates of the numbers of participants range between 50,000 and 100,000 people. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.



Figure 28. Police stand guard beside Hungarian state opera house during political protest against new Hungarian Constitution during Fidesz party gala event on January 2, 2012. Photograph by Heather Tidrick.

The street protest was massive outside the Budapest Opera House on the night of January 2, 2012, as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his cabinet celebrated the ratification of this new constitution in the country formerly known as the Republic of Hungary. Tens of thousands of people stood in the chilly air on Andrassy Boulevard to voice their opposition to the new dominant ideological regime in which the exclusion of Roma/Gypsies and all other Others was formalized. Some 50,000–100,000 people participated in the protests.

The snapshots of pro-Roma organizations and their actions that are captured in these pages reflect other forms of resistance, radical and less so. These actions transpired in the context of institutions in which those embodying racial and cultural difference and deviation from societal norms, in a highly normative society, could find spaces of tolerance and even celebration of their differences. Even in their most depoliticized form, the context of illiberalism renders these actions countercultural and profoundly brave.

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