The volume provides critical reflections on contemporary practices of civil society monitoring of policy formation and implementation in the field of Roma equality across Europe. The chapters presenting critical insights in the Roma Civil Monitor 2017-2020 were written by activists, experts, and scholars who contributed to the initiative in various forms and ventured to craft ideas in collaborative authorship. Contributors discuss the co-production of policy monitoring knowledge to a variety of audiences by working across different platforms, alliances, and modes of articulating critical reflections.

From the Shadow to the Limelight

The value of civil society policy monitoring knowledge in Roma equality struggles

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION: PARTICIPATION, VOICE, AND CO-PRODUCTION OF KNOWLEDGE

by Violetta Zentai
with contribution of Marek Hojsik and Georgeta Munteanu

This volume offers critical reflections on recent practices of civil society monitoring of policy formations and implementations in the field of Roma rights and equality across Europe. The idea was prompted by the completion of a pilot initiative entitled the 'Roma Civil Monitor' (short title) with the participation of more than 90 civil society actors and three dozen experts who connected different parts of (pre-Brexit) Europe in 2017-2020. The book ventures to embrace the inspirations, hopes, and challenges that this network nurtured and encountered in producing a series of public-policy monitoring reports. As all the authors of this volume contributed to the monitoring collaboration in some fashion, they feel that they have added another layer to this collective work with their reflections, instead of appropriating from the *commons* of the initiative. It is assumed that these reflections will help increase the recognition of those civil society groups that took the time, made the effort, and had the courage to write critical accounts of policy-making processes in the hope of promoting social justice and equality.

Our volume claims a modest space in a series of recent publications that present knowledge arising from the collaboration of activists, experts, and academics in discussions and struggles for Roma equality. Within the field of Roma equality politics and ethnic/racial equality in Europe, this

has become a favoured approach to address the public and demonstrate the opportunities for the co-construction of political positions and thinking practices. Among the recent publications, we have been inspired by volumes entitled *Romani Communities and Transformative Change: A New Social Europe* (2020) edited by Andrew Ryder, Marius Taba, and Nidhi Trehan; *Dimensions of Antigypsyism in Europe* (2019), edited by Ismael Cortés Gómez and Markus End; *A Reflexive History of the Romani Women's Movement: Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe* (2018), edited by Angéla Kóczé et al.; and *Roma Activism. Reimagining Power and Knowledge* (2018), edited by Sam Beck and Anna Ivasiuc. In the framework of the Roma Civil Monitor initiative, academics, experts, and policy analysts backed a specific form of knowledge generation whereby civil society actors took the lead in shaping the spirit and the norms of the common undertaking.

The broader political environment and the act of critical policy monitoring

The Roma Civil Monitor initiative unfolded in the context of three parallel political processes that are occurring in the European public space. One of these is the backsliding in support for various human rights and equality agendas seemingly kicked off by the 2008 crisis and its aftermath, but in fact due to longer and deeper processes of transformation. The general trend is embedded in the populist and authoritarian encroachment into the democratic space, in which populist ideas and neoliberal governance regimes often support each other. The second trend is the shrinking of the space for civil society that several European polities are witnessing due to the systematic or more subtle pushback of civil society actors over the last two decades. This phenomenon is particularly pertinent in relation to civil society groups with human rights and equality agendas and a vocal public presence. The third process is the burgeoning of political and policy activity aimed at promoting Roma equality in Europe – most notably on the transnational level since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but even more intensively associated with the EU enlargement of the 2000s. This

political space is robust, despite the fact that the situation of the Roma is being discussed by a wider European public not only in terms of benign frameworks of equality, and despite slow progress with creating tangible policy outcomes. Our monitoring cooperation became a collective act at the nexus of the aforementioned three wider political processes: it pursued cross-national civil society mobilisation for Roma equality against a background of democratic backsliding and the shrinking configurations of civil society.

Democratic backsliding in Europe

The literature on democratic backsliding – and on its strongest form, de-democratisation – is rich and rapidly proliferating in societies that have made significant progress or already embraced solid democratic institutions and practices. Therefore, in this introduction we only briefly refer to discussions about right-wing populism and authoritarianism and the intricate connections of these ideologies and mobilisation schemes with neoliberal social and economic governance. After the promising years of the 1990s involving democratic transformation that embraced not only Europe but other continents as well, at first only fragmented incidences but later more systematic backlash was instigated against democratic principles and institutions. Practices that erode democracy are enacted by the very institutions that the democracy-promoters have built. De-democratising governments often use constitutional revisions, referenda, courts, and legislative procedures to weaken democratic politics. They also degrade citizens' rights, government accountability, and citizens' power to influence policy (Waldner and Lust, 2018). Several scholars claim that the more recent practices are more vexing than previous forms of backsliding (Bermeo, 2016; Waldner and Lust, 2018). Others highlight that backsliding tends to have a gradual, incremental character, in contrast to the phenomenon of radical breakdown (Greskovits, 2015).

Despite their diverse ideologies, different forms of right-wing and authoritarian populism in Europe and beyond share core values. They usually promulgate a vision of a vertical split between 'the people' and 'the elites', in which the former are being betrayed by the (corrupt) latter.

Their political ideals embrace the values of nativism and nationalism as sources of inspiration for public affairs. Their political imaginaries are characterised by various forms of enemy-seeking in defence of the virtuous part of the population: they use ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities as scapegoats, and appeal to anti-intellectual 'common sense' to craft exclusionary agendas (Wodak, 2018). These political forces are often portrayed as Eurosceptic, but in fact they often advocate for the replacement of the current EU institutions with an alternative union of nations (Pytlas, 2021). They define 'the people' as a homogeneous entity, but they often promulgate hierarchical relations. In general, they wish to keep the framework of electoral democracy, but with a minimum degree of pluralism under majoritarian rule (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). In most of Europe, these forces do not represent the majority in the legislature, with the exceptions of Hungary and Poland.

Until recently, all EU Member States have respected constitutional safeguards on democracy such as the existence of an independent judiciary, media freedom, and the autonomy of civil society. If these are threatened, democratic backsliding is occurring. The literature makes a distinction between hard and soft backsliding in the public policy arenas of the EU. In the former case, governments breach primary or secondary EU law; in the latter, they breach EU norms. Whereas this distinction is important, there is a substantial scope for soft backsliding through retreating on commitments to EU norms without directly breaching EU law (Sitter, 2017). Critical inquiries into de-democratisation argue that the political feasibility of strengthening the EU's tools against democratic backsliding is limited. The strongest tool, Article 7 of the Treaty on EU (TEU) is wielded as a threat against those countries that are backsliding hard, but has had little impact thus far. Further, even the credible threat of severe material sanctions is unlikely to cause non-democratic governments to renounce the very practices on which they rely to maintain office (Sedelmayer, 2017). Thus, EU institutions have so far primarily relied on dialogue, persuasion, and the shaming of culprits when attempting to politically safeguard democracy.

Democratic backsliding inherently leads to policy backsliding in the wider field of social equality and human-rights affairs. The patterns of recent policy changes at the EU level show a mixed picture in these critical fields. Gender equality policies have – according to most critical observers (Jacquot, 2017; Weiner, 2017; Verloo, 2018; Krizsán and Roggeband, 2019) – suffered tangible setbacks, especially concerning women's agendas. However, ethnic, disability, and LGBTQI equality policies have seen some important progress in the last decade and a half. The EU became party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) in 2009, which is the first international legally binding instrument to endorse a rights-based approach to disability. In the field of ethnic and racial equality, the first EU-wide Roma strategic framework was established in 2011, stipulating Member State commitments and policy interventions accordingly. The first ever EU LGBTQI equality strategy for 2020-2025 also demonstrates a commitment to mechanisms that acknowledge diversity and fight against discrimination and exclusion. These high-level legislative and strategic acts that support disability-, LGBTQI- and ethnic equality do not guarantee steady and unambiguous policy development, but do reveal a certain degree of resilience against backsliding.

To assess the Roma equality policy trajectories across Europe in the last decade more closely, we need to cast an eye over both the substantive and procedural components of policy formations. First, it is required to examine how ambitiously and widely these policies promote the rights and equal opportunities of the protected groups; second, an assessment is needed of the standing and power of the responsible policy bodies in the executive and the involvement of the target groups in policy making. The popularity of right-wing extremist groups and political parties, the intensification of hate speech in public discourse and violent acts against Roma and other racialised minorities across Europe are important signals of political backsliding in racial and ethnic equality. Despite these disconcerting experiences, hard policy backsliding did not take place in this equality policy arena in the 2010s (Krizsán and Zentai, 2017). One cannot identify an overall retrenchment of legislation aimed at combatting

racism and racial discrimination, or major cutbacks in the budgets and authority of specialised bodies assigned to safeguard state duties and diminishing resources for ethnic, Roma, and migrant integration policies, although some exceptions exist. Neoliberal securitisation powerfully transforms inclusive, democratic, and equality-minded thinking to the narrower merit- or deservingness-based allocation of rights, but the battle has not been concluded. Superficial political commitments to equality promotion and policy making and securitisation rationales have littered the field of Roma equality policymaking since the beginning. Further, whereas EU-level policy norm-setting is becoming ever refined in the substantive direction of equality, actual Member State policy formations involve messy and often disappointing performances. All these processes are embedded in transnationally linked and polarising political spaces. This makes the civil society monitoring of equality policy making and outcomes highly challenging, yet essential.

Shrinking space for civil society

At the time of the EU enlargement in the mid-2000s, the pushback of civil society activities was a concern for European democratic politics, but one mostly connected with regions outside Europe and the 'Global North'. This situation has now fundamentally changed due to various transformations that occurred in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, but also due to deeper shifts in the political systems of reasonably developed democratic settings. By the end of the 2010s, the trend to softer or more pronounced limitations on civil society had become widely acknowledged. Several governments introduced restrictive registration laws and financial regulations and disseminated derogatory claims about civil society organisations, especially those working to promote human rights and social justice. Due to this global trend, the latter actors experience different types and intensities of shrinking space (Buyse, 2018). This discouraging civic environment is part of a general authoritarian pushback against democracy (Youngs and Echagüe, 2017). Populist and authoritarian regimes present themselves as the embodiment of the nation and the true voice of society, in which

there is no need for further autonomous actors. Contestation from civil society is seen to undermine authorities' claims to be the exclusive form of moral representative of the nation. This makes the work of civil society organisations, especially those that are critical and voice the concerns of disadvantaged social groups, more difficult, if not impossible.

States possess a wide range of tools that may limit the operational freedom of civil society organisations. Most of these tools are to be found in the implementation of legal provisions, and are designed such that it is difficult to uncover deliberate restrictions on civil society (Ploszka, 2020). For example, states may administratively interfere with the creation or the independent operation of organisations and limit civil society capacity to receive financial support using the pretext of transparency. Authorities often fail to protect civic activists against hate-related crime and violence. In more serious cases, state authorities encourage discursive attacks on civil society organisations by distorting their objectives, values, and influence through insinuation and fake news. Social struggles and human-rights promotion are labelled subversive dissident activity and forms of extremism (Buyse, 2018). Other significant voices in the literature stress that the space for civil society may be changing or shifting rather than simply closing (Anheier et al., 2019; Toepler et al., 2020). Governments limit the space for politically active parts of civil society but expand it for others. Both authoritarian and democratic governments strive to build relationships with less political nongovernmental actors so as to neutralise contestation debates and smoothly deliver social services (Toepler et al., 2020).

For the Roma Civil Monitor initiative, those political settings in the European arena were deemed worthy of specific attention which are portrayed in the literature as authoritarian or hybrid regimes. These regimes maintain some democratic institutions, but restrict pluralism, weaken or deconstruct the rule of law, and hinder civic participation. In these states, the gap between the constitutional acknowledgment of civil rights and the rights-limiting implementation of the law exerts systematic pressure on civil society (Buyse, 2018). Authoritarian governments often establish their own non-governmental actors by generously supporting them with

public resources. Another tactic is co-opting the most vocal organisations or their fractions using selective funding. Enforced adjustment becomes the precondition and the route to continued civil society activity. Some scholars argue that governments eagerly learn from each other; anti-civil-society laws are almost literally copy-pasted to pre-empt political and civic resistance and critique (Buyse, 2018; Youngs and Echahüge, 2017).

European democratic publics have also acknowledged the shrinking space for civil society, after some initial reluctance. A major research report by the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU published in 2017 acknowledged that space for civil society is increasingly shrinking in established democracies, including EU Member States, especially in relation to organisations working on human rights. The research that investigated leading trends in 2011 to 2017 revealed that these civil society organisations faced challenges such as disadvantageous changes in legislation or the inadequate implementation of laws, hurdles to accessing financial resources and ensuring their sustainability, difficulty accessing decision-makers, and negative discourse aimed at delegitimising and stigmatising them. This list is partly similar to others included in the literature about the shrinking civic space in autocratic regimes (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2017). Yet the shrinking path takes diverse and manifold forms in the different countries and political regimes of Europe. In most places, it is more complex than simple animosity and crusading against human-rights advocates and defenders. In the implementation of the Roma Civil Monitor initiative, we indeed experienced that civil society space is diminishing to some degree in several European countries, including those that are the home of larger Roma communities. Civil-society-based critical monitoring of public policy making and performance regarding social inequality was not always welcome. Although the policy field of Roma equality itself is not associated with robust backsliding, subtle forms of limiting and controlling of civil society space are being cultivated by governmental actors. Promoting forms of participation that ensure only superficial consultation, co-optation of civil voices and aspirations, and avoidance of critique by human rights advocacy groups are inherent to the operation of numerous domestic and local public authorities.

Despite these experiences, the Roma Civil Monitor initiative also demonstrated that civil society continues to operate as a multi-layered and diverse space. This underscores that the diagnosis of shrinking civic space tends to underestimate the potential of civil society to relentlessly enlarge and enrich public arenas and resist the forces that would reverse this process. Beyond the classical civil society organisations, various social movements also represent a distinctive cluster of forms of collective organising. A significant proportion of these advocate for the resolution of social-justice-related problems and contest the ways in which political power is distributed in society (della Porta, 2020). Citizenship act is another, more recently theorised and discussed form of organising. It enacts temporary or enduring forms of engagement in public affairs when formal paths of participation are not established yet bottom-up collective actions are ready to shape up (Isin, 2009). These mobilisation practices, independently or in alliance with institutionalised civil society actors, often help keeping the spirit alive for autonomous practices. In parallel with the discouraging propensity for backsliding, in some policy domains such as the relatively new equality policy field of Roma inclusion policy dialogue was still supported by wider European norms and bottom-up claims in the 2010s. These norms and claims exploit forms of deliberation in public affairs, but not as an alternative to political contention (Polletta, 2016; Bherer, Dufour and Montambeault, 2018). It is acknowledged that increased participation does not necessarily bring about more democratic decision making by default, and may not sharpen equality agendas in the way that is envisioned. Notwithstanding this, several forms of civil society and citizen participation do represent countervailing forces in a shrinking democratic constellation.

The Roma Civil Monitor coalition could not but accommodate to the dual nature of participation. As Rorke discusses in a chapter in this volume, the perils of co-optation emerge when well-intended civil society actors become 'unwitting accomplices in a wider drama that constrains dissent and neuters dialogue', and 'reduce participation to a set of anodyne routines' that reinforce a neo-liberal status quo. By the same token, as Ryder describes in his contribution to the volume, members of our

monitoring coalition have been engaged in the co-production of research aimed at understanding communities that public policies serve. This does not involve close participation in public policy decision making, yet represents serious engagement with such affairs. This activity embodies certain modalities of resistance as well as cooperation with official policy reasoning and actors. The co-production of evaluation research with the participation of fairly autonomous civic, academic, and professional actors leads to an interpretation of the experience of those who are usually the objects of research by actively involving them in the design and completion of the research. By doing this, the Roma Civil Monitor helped building a broader and more robust Roma civil society presence. All this clearly helped keeping hope in democratic politics alive and empowered dedicated actors that strive to challenge the backsliding in political practices and reverse the trend to a shrinking civil society.

Roma politics and equality policy making

To unpack the third outstanding component of the wider European political arena, we argue that despite the disconcerting experiences of democratic backsliding and civil society pushback, one can witness a burgeoning scene of Roma politics and policy making in Europe. There is a longer history of Roma politics and Roma equality policy thinking in Europe that the relevant literature covers extensively (Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Bhabha, Mirga and Matache, 2017; Ryder, Taba and Trehan, 2021). Although politics and policy making are always entangled, the distinction between Roma equality policy making and the political participation of the Roma is important. The latter notion involves a broad realm of collective claims and discussions, identity formations, and community practices of the Roma in European societies (and beyond). As widely discussed, this political space embraces diverse groups under the term Roma who do not have the support (or authority) of one single nation state (Guy, 2001; McGarry, 2014; Kóczé and Rövid, 2017; van Baar and Kóczé, 2020). This realm is saturated with experiences of injustice but also embraces a collective sense of pride, internal diversity, and the relations that tie various Roma groups to other social and cultural formations in Europe and beyond.

Equality policy making is composed of problem statements, strategic frameworks, and instruments through which those who hold political and executive power and control public resources are obliged to address injustices and actively work to eliminate them. Roma inequality problems are not a matter of *ownership* but of *responsibility* – most importantly, the responsibility of the power holders (or the mainstream) in relation to public affairs and broader societal settings. This entails that the EU, the wider political entity that embraced the Roma Civil Monitor initiative, has thick policy responsibility in inequality matters. It does have a role in making Roma equality and empowerment a political agenda as well, yet its Roma policy strategic framework most importantly targets equal access of the Roma to material and non-material resources that enables them to lead dignified lives and experience wellbeing. At the same time, we acknowledge that the distinctions and encounters of politics and policy making in any equality matter are saturated with tension. The perspectives of disadvantage and collective worth can and do collide in political and policy discussions. In view of all these complexities, the Roma Civil Monitor spoke most importantly to the EU's Roma equality policy framework and the corresponding national policy machineries. This did not erase an alertness to the problem of how equality policy frameworks and machinery may become constraining and limiting in relation to the wider political claims of the Roma.

There is hardly any aspect of the lives of the Roma which does not have a connection with inequalities in society. The concept of structural inequalities does not predetermine working with the narratives of victimhood and disempowerment, although talking about those who suffer from injustices necessarily drives the respective actors to use sharp language. Not without contestation, the notions of marginalisation and exclusion seemed to offer a sharp diagnostic vision regarding equality policy directions in the 2010s. The Roma Civil Monitor initiative acknowledged that speaking of the common experiences of marginalisation of the Roma connects heterogeneous groups and historical trajectories in the core and the peripheries of Europe. We share a conviction that inequalities are experienced by group affiliations which are based on common histories of

perpetuated disadvantages and common concerns that address those in the present. As articulated by Iris Marion Young, group affiliation does not assume and stipulate coherent and homogenous collective identities, yet it generates collective claims for the right to have rights. In her famous essay on the five faces of oppression, Young (1990) identified practices that are all applicable to the historically shaped social inequalities that most Roma face in Europe, which include racial hierarchisation, exploitation, domination, and the threat of violence. This general theory of group-claim-based politics does not guarantee the avoidance of ambiguities, tensions, and contradictions in the articulated experiences of the Roma. But it helps address shared concerns that inequality policies, including Roma equality ones, should acknowledge and tackle, even if the expressions of these experiences are never obvious or self-explanatory.

For the wider European political public, the Romani movement and the policy debates about Roma equality have become visible since the establishment of the 'EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020' in 2011. The strategic framework stemmed from an acknowledgment of pressing structural inequalities – that is, historically accumulated disparities of power, resources, and recognition between mainstream societies and the Roma. Many have criticised the framework as fundamentally socioeconomic and neoliberal in nature. The framework has been seen, at best, as a developmentalist manifesto and a roadmap of weak anti-discriminatory and anti-racist determination. Several critics have stressed that the heightened attention to the Roma was due to perceived migration and security problems associated with Roma on the move from the new to the old Member States following EU enlargement (McGarry, 2012; van Baar, 2018).

The authors of this introduction argue that the establishing and rolling out of the strategy indeed overlapped with the post-2008 crisis management and austerity policies that enacted variations of neoliberal regimes in European polities. The adoption of the strategy was also embedded in growing securitisation regarding cross-border mobility. Notwithstanding this, the 2011 strategic framework signalled an interim stage in the gradual

construction of a Roma equality policy infrastructure and multilevel governance mechanisms in a period when some other areas of inequality policies started to face backsliding, such as the gender equality agenda in the EU. The strategic framework was also an imprint of constructive debates about duty-based anti-discrimination and more daring outcome-based equality thinking in various fields of inequality that unfolded across Europe in the 2000s. We acknowledge, however, that the strategic framework generated strong expectations about the EU's capacity to enforce dedicated Roma equality policies, yet left many human-rights activists and equality advocates deeply disappointed with the implementation, and retroactively, even with the relevance of the strategy.

We concur with the voices in the literature which argue that the Roma have developed their own heterogeneous social movements over the last three decades. Romani activists have become active agents of representation and critical voices in debates about their status as European, national, or ethnic minorities or groups without or against minority positioning. In so doing, they have become more than the subject of policy discourses and programmes of inclusion, development, and empowerment. In fact, they have claimed the voice and authority to sharpen the wider public discussions and the frames of these discussions. This suggests that, despite enduring power disparities, the Roma have become part of political and policy debates in various European-level and domestic arenas (van Baar and Kóczé, 2020). The Roma Civil Monitor network shared the belief that empowerment is both a tool and outcome of inequality struggles and policy interventions. Therefore, Romani activists and organisations should be awarded a major or leading role in promoting policy monitoring and advocacy work by claiming both formal and substantive representation. We believe that our monitoring network has achieved more than 'operational representation' that Vermeersch and van Baar define as the frame that contributes to making the Roma 'visible', 'legible', and 'governable' within the context of their general 'avisuality' (van Baar and Vermeersch, 2017).

In the Roma Civil Monitor initiative, the concern for the injustices that a particular group of people experience have created common

ground for acting for the Roma. As a consequence, the larger coalition has embraced Romani and non-Roma organisations and activists of mixed social backgrounds. For empowerment and recognition purposes, in external communications the collective identity of the organisations was often pronounced. But, in substantive deliberations within the monitoring network about framing, assessments, and the tactical language pertinent to critical policy monitoring, the ethnic identity of the participating actors was rarely marked. Other conditions and experiences of positioning voices – such as the sources and specificities of knowledge that one has, the epistemic traditions of civic, academic, and professional reasoning, and gender and generational inspirations – played occasionally a more important role in shaping positions and voices than ethnic background. The coalition as a whole undertook collective action by speaking *on behalf of Roma equality causes,* whereas the participants in the coalition took their own paths within or outside of the monitoring cooperation in order to speak *on behalf of the Roma* based on their institutional identity, political standing, and movement legitimation.

Civil society participation through policy monitoring

Citizen groups, grassroots, and advocacy organisations that promote equality and social justice have fundamental roles to play in policy development and inclusive governance. In addition to contributing direct experiences of various forms of inequality mechanisms, they act as advocacy-mobilisers and norm entrepreneurs (Fung, 2006, 2015). Many critical observers propose that equality-promoting civil society organisations, including Roma rights and equality ones, are becoming ever more professionalised through transnational networking, advocacy, and participatory engagement (Ivasiuc, 2018). They act as initiators of policy visions with regard to horizontal and targeted equality policy making (Zentai et al., 2020). Larger, experienced organisations frequently serve as domestic brokers of EU and international human-rights norms in variegated domestic contexts (Jacquot and Vitale, 2014). According to a textbook rationale for inclusive governance,

public participation may enhance not only the democratic content but the ultimate quality of policy making and governance. Policy problems are often contradictory; their definitions are contested; and finding apt solutions requires access to different kinds of knowledge. Increased public participation in governance processes at local and national levels provides decision-makers with direct knowledge of citizens' needs and may create more satisfaction with their services. Through inclusive policy making, state institutions can better use their public resources and deliver their services more productively. In short, deliberative solutions augment democratic-legitimacy-related outputs and the problem-solving capacities associated with decisions (Torfing and Triantafillou, 2011). By the same token, the caveat is rightly articulated that participatory initiatives may and often do turn into grand spectacles that facilitate backroom decision-making and enable "carry[ing] on as usual, unscrutinized and unchallenged" (Polletta, 2016). In the following, we address the potential of participatory mechanisms in relation to our Roma Civil Monitor experiences, albeit not losing sight of some embarrassing limitations.

The Roma Civil Monitor initiative: key facts and figures

The potential of civil society participatory acts in Roma equality policy making have been explored by noteworthy experiments such as the civil society monitoring and reporting associated with the 'Decade of the Roma' transnational policy coordination mechanism (2005-2015) and the joint 'Shadow Reporting Initiative' of the Decade Secretariat and the Open Society Foundations in 2012-13 (Rövid and Zentai, 2015; Brüggemann and Friedman, 2017). This entailed that inspiration, critical knowledge-building know-how and public appeal had already been accrued in distinctive civil society circles before the announcement of the high-level EU initiative in 2016 that led to the generation of the Roma Civil Monitor coalition.

The guiding policy provisions of the EU ('EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020', 2011 and 'Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States', 2013) introduced new EU-level participatory components linked to

the annual reporting duties of the Member States from 2016. In addition to governmental reporting on policy implementation, accountability goals became tied to independent civil society monitoring. To this end, the European Parliament assigned the task of piloting the Roma Civil Monitor initiative in all Member States (except for Malta)[1] to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers. With this motion, the European Parliament intended to strengthen the monitoring mechanisms of the implementation of the national Roma integration strategies through systematic civil society reviews of the performances of governments. The wider goal was seen as both enhancing the accountability of Member State governments and empowering civil society actors.

In winning a competitive bid, a civil society coalition seized the opportunity to implement the three-year-long pilot monitoring scheme. The core team responsible for the design and implementation of the overall collaboration was composed of the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO), the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), and the Roma Education Fund (REF), coordinated by Central European University (Budapest). A total of 101 civil society organisations, umbrella organisations (in Italy, Germany, Spain, and the UK), and individual activists (in countries with smaller Romani communities and an evolving Romani civil society) from 27 EU Member States participated in monitoring the implementation of their respective national Roma inclusion strategies and other relevant policies.[2] Two-thirds of the participants were Roma-led organisations or individuals of Romani identity. In countries with larger Romani communities and significant Romani and pro-Roma civil society scenes – namely, in the 'big five' CEE countries (Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia) – and in Spain, Italy, Greece,

1   The full title of the project was as follows: Capacity building for Roma civil society and strengthening its involvement in the monitoring of National Roma Integration Strategies. In project documents and the actual monitoring reports we use the short form of the title: Roma Civil Monitor.

2   At the time of project implementation, the UK was still part of the EU and Malta was not involved.

the UK, and Germany, larger coalitions of organisations participated in the monitoring initiative through open-competition based selection. These coalitions were created for the purpose of the project, or formalised previous practices of cooperation. In each country with a smaller Romani community, one single organisation was recruited which collaborated with grassroots actors and scholars, or an expert was engaged working with relevant informants without a formalised coalition.

The backbone of the Roma Civil Monitor initiative was composed of regular civil society monitoring observations and written assessments of governmental policy performances in relation to Roma inclusion policies on different scales in three consecutive rounds. In the first cycle, civil society monitors reviewed the structural preconditions for the successful implementation of domestic Roma inclusion strategies (the overall policy frameworks and governance capacities, including executive coordination structures, the use of European Structural and Investment Funds, and the mechanisms of Roma participation) and of selected cross-cutting issues (the situation of Romani women, youth and children, and fighting discrimination and antigypsyism). In five countries with the largest Romani populations (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia), the impact of mainstream education policies on Roma was also examined. The findings of civil society were presented in country reports first published in English, and later in local languages. Two synthesis reports were also prepared: one focused on the five countries with the largest Romani communities, while the other one produced a review of the findings in 27 Member States.[3]

The country reports produced in the second cycle centred on the four main policy fields defined in the first EU Roma strategic framework: education, employment, healthcare, and housing and access to basic infrastructure. The report writers paid specific attention to crosscutting problems of discrimination and racism experienced by the Roma in each of these sectoral fields. A transnational synthesis report was again crafted. In

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3 All reports can be found on the webpage of the initiative: https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports

the third cycle, the local civil society coalitions were encouraged to identify and discuss issues they considered crucial for successful Roma inclusion by stepping outside, if necessary, the dominant diagnostic and interventionist framing of official EU-wide and domestic strategic policy documents. This exercise resulted in thematic analyses of persistent and often undetected problems the Roma face that mainstream society is often blind to.

All parties ventured to work on reconciling the goals of enhancing policy-monitoring skills and knowledge and writing sharp and informative reports. At the beginning of each report-production cycle, the core coordination group proposed a common guideline for all the 27 country monitors. Then, the country coalitions (in smaller countries, single actors) worked fairly independently on their research and report drafts. The drafts went through several rounds of review involving permanent thematic experts (e.g., governance, antidiscrimination, gender, youth and children, antiracism, traditional sectoral policy fields) who provided the authors with detailed comments and recommendations. Bilateral coaching support for country report authors in relation to fine-tuning report drafts was one of the most important and effective instruments in the process of learning by doing. In some cases, the civil monitors worked with local experts to translate their grassroots experiences into the type of knowledge that caters for civil society policy-monitoring reasoning. More experienced local NGOs were provided with assistance about methods for combining different types of data, analysing specific thematic issues, or sharpening reports in the case of abundant information. It is noteworthy that the intensity of the mentoring support did not always correspond to the monitors' initial capacity and experience. Some country coalitions considered very experienced needed rather intense support to deliver the monitoring reports of the agreed scope and length, while some less experienced ones were able to develop crisp reports with a relatively high degree of autonomy.

The monitoring reports were used for a variety of advocacy purposes in domestic and transnational arenas. Beyond the perhaps most visible and documented form of circulation of the reports – in official European

Commission policy documents[4] –, a number of local coalitions and country monitors used their reports for further fact finding, evaluation, advocacy, critical agenda-setting, and civil society coalition purposes. The direct impacts of reporting activities on policy formations by state authorities are discussed in Zahariev's chapter in this volume.

The scope and the hope of monitoring policy making

Inclusive policy making and governance are part of the wider democratic norms of the EU (see Article 11 of the Treaty on EU). Public administration and public service delivery is not governed by hard EU provisions in Member States. Instead, through multi-level EU governance mechanisms various expectations are articulated about the norms of inclusive participation. The concept of inclusive policy making often embraces two principles and governance practices: *citizen* participation in general terms, and the involvement of target groups in policy making – in equality affairs, these are the *disempowered* groups. These two components have their own logics, theories, and technologies, and they may relate to each other through tensions and contradictions (Zentai, Munteanu and Torotcoi, 2020). Typically, different forms of participation established for the wider public can crowd out the voices of less resourceful and disempowered groups. Further, formally inclusive and democratic participation schemes may end up representing the voice of the majority of citizens who are more informed and have the confidence to articulate positions and agendas. Recent investigations show that public affairs, especially on municipal and neighbourhood levels, can mobilise the least powerful in both tracks of participation. In favourable constellations, citizen participation and the targeted inclusion of the least represented are mutually reinforcing (Fung, 2006, 2015).

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4   For example, European Commission Staff Document. Evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. SWD(2018) 480. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52018SC0480&from=EN (accessed on 10 November 2021).

The pioneering Roma equality monitoring initiatives ('Decade of the Roma'; Open Society Foundations) that preceded the Roma Civil Monitor helped with acknowledging that a Europe-wide civil society-monitoring collaboration could fulfil two different goals. On the one hand, the monitoring schemes were capable of providing European policy circles with structured and comparable critical insight into governmental policy performances in each Member State (i.e., an equality knowledge outcome). On the other hand, these cooperative schemes were able to catalyse wider discussions within Roma civil society by embracing its diversity and thus making civil society participation more robust and plural (an empowerment and a participatory outcome). The Roma Civil Monitor was launched to pursue both goals by inviting the implementing actors to face and tackle the expected tensions between these two goals.

For most civil monitors in our network, policy reform facilitation was not a derogatory concept and development was not viewed as a naughty word. We were and are still aware of that not all equality-targeting transformations are empowering and productive, and policy reforms are often controversial and can, perversely, enhance inequalities. Therefore, we shared an initial belief in the value of empirical and critical contributions of civic, citizen, and grassroots observations for exploring *what policy does* (or does not do), in addition to what policy achieves in its defined frames. Further, our monitoring coalition was cognisant of the fact that there is hardly any neutral data about social inequality matters, or critical observations by those who are the subjects of policy interventions. *Engaged observations and research* can still enhance evidence-based policy making: the inquiry into what policy does is a mix of reflections on unintended directions and twists in complex interventions and into often multidirectional and disconnected outcomes, as Greku's chapter reveals. In other cases, policies yield to quickly solidifying social outcomes which may depart from the hoped-for policy results. Further, even the savviest professional performance indicators offer amalgamated insights and thus may veil the ambiguity and complexity of policy impacts. In comparison, bottom-up, engaged, and socially validated knowledge can articulate genuine diagnostic accounts of equality policy formations and practices of public actors with assigned responsibilities.

Several civil society groups have emerged and become socialised among Roma equality advocacy actors in the area of monitoring violations of human rights by zooming in on wrongdoing and neglect by powerholders. In policy mechanisms, it is often difficult to identify 'perpetrators', to define clear causal relations between inputs and outcomes, and to unambiguously reckon with long durée impacts. Yet, in a democratic regime, public office-holders should be made accountable. Even if governments are obliged to self-examine and self-report their own performance – as institutionalised in the EU's Roma equality policy framework – the critical vigilance of civil society actors enacts a second circle of policy impact assessment opportunities and an accountability safeguard. In the search for knowledge about the relations between policy interventions and their effects, civil society monitoring can rely on manifold information and data sources. These sources range from testimonials, anecdotal evidence, qualitative case studies and expert reports to illuminating hard data that governmental actors may find too critical or disconcerting to use. To get access to this data, monitoring actors are required to engage with grassroots groups, expert and media circles, academics, and governmental actors. Regarding the latter, policy implementation machinery is never homogenous, thus both un-reflexive and reflexive civil servants and governmental experts can say a lot about how policies are made (or not made). Participating in structured and organised monitoring research may require unlearning oppositional resistance and developing some sort of cooperation with state authorities. In our monitoring initiative, civil society actors took advantage of the skills and experiences both of *resistance and cooperation* and combined these capacities in different versions depending on the domestic contexts and their collective ambitions.

As an overall conclusion, the Roma Civil Monitor initiative facilitated reflexive learning and creative bottom-up agenda-setting in the Roma equality policy infrastructure of the wider European policy scene. The collective space that emerged through this form of cooperation facilitated reflexive learning and creative bottom-up agenda-setting in the Roma equality policy infrastructure of the wider European policy scene. The initiative enacted forms of activism which were embedded in firm political

commitments to transformative equality policies and experimented with modalities of knowledge-making in a cooperative form which represented more than a project, but less than an institutionalised network.

Participation mechanisms and the co-production of knowledge

The Roma Civil Monitor initiative joined the relentless quest to reinvigorate civil society participation despite the permanent danger of complacency, co-optation, and silencing that these activities can face. It was hoped that civil society monitoring could become part of the wider structure of policy formations through the critical review of decision-making processes and outcomes related to the multitude of social exclusion problems. It was also believed that civil society review of policy making facilitates the type of practice by which the Roma may move away from being subjected to forms of therapy, and progress to empowerment, partnership, and greater self-organisation. As Ryder argues in this volume, the term *empowerment* is often used in a paternalistic sense to signal that an external body grants increased authority and voice to those who are vulnerable. Social justice campaigners, however, adopt a different interpretation of the notion of empowerment by placing emphasis on self-organisation, pro-active alliance building, and genuine sense-making in and about social affairs. In the Roma Civil Monitor circle, this interpretation was extended to the capability of producing critical knowledge about inequality mechanisms and policy impacts.

Diversity of civic actors

Our monitoring coalition embodied the interactions of activists, scholars, and experts who are committed to particular values which bind them in spite of the different frames that they employ in their equality thinking and struggles. As these interactions unfolded across national borders, the concept of *transnational advocacy networks* aptly characterises this particular form of mobilisation for social equality (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; McGarry, 2011; Vermeersch, 2014). These networks blur the conventional distinction among

academic studies, protest politics, and formal politics, enacting open and largely reciprocal communications among participants. The production of knowledge in the Roma Civil Monitor was often open-ended in terms of whose opinion emerged as a leading one concerning distinctive issues and debates. This also entailed that the relations of authority became more fluid than the formal institutional relations and division of labour in the project would have suggested. Greku discusses in this volume that formulations of issues, the selection of details, and an emphasis on aspects of Roma inclusion policy outcomes often went in different directions than the original expectations of the coalition coordinators. Further, distinctive conceptual discussions turned into strategic compromises or reconciliation in the network over years of collaboration, as Mack explains in the current volume. It is noteworthy that, in some cases, the advocacy coalition became extended to the circle of conscientious and dedicated public officials in national governments. Some of these used the encounters with the report writers to engage in critical conversations about the respective governmental policy performances and were inspired to promote more robust Roma inclusion agenda-setting within their space of action, as Zahariev describes in his chapter.

The participating organisations of the Roma Civil Monitor network were associated with different types of civil society activities. Some, as discussed earlier, operate through respect for rules of the game, a degree of politeness, and prioritising collective action for consensus. Others are engaged in social movement practices which tend to be contentious, confrontational, or transgressive and thus attract the attention of the public and put pressure on decision makers (della Porta and Steinhilper, 2021). In our collaboration, the research steps, joint discussions, and the report-writing process embodied skills, inspirations, and knowledge-building that erased the distinction between civil society and the social-movement types of activism. Moreover, in Roma equality struggles, civic actors often combine cooperative and confrontational operations, or move back and forth between the two. The Roma Civil Monitor work benefited substantially from the legacy of civil society actors that had developed skills through pursuing contentious advocacy campaigns as well. Contrastingly,

several social movement and grassroots action groups tested themselves in policy advocacy and experimental service provision. These cross-cutting experiences obtained prior to or in parallel with the monitoring activities facilitated the creative utilisation of skills needed to articulate and communicate critical knowledge about policy making.

The Roma Civil Monitor coalition also embraced the duality of the post-socialist Central and East European countries with larger Romani communities (and also Greece) that face extreme poverty and social exclusion, and the Western European countries with smaller Romani populations and comparatively more robust social welfare systems. The Southern European countries were seen as being positioned somewhere in-between – having significant Romani communities, generating mostly urban or sub-urban forms of exclusion, and relying on regional and urban policy formations to a significant degree. According to these differences, civil society actors stressed different manifestations of Roma inequalities in their monitoring accounts. This diversity was cut across but not dissolved by discussions about the underlying experience of antigypsyism.

The dual objective of the Roma Civil Monitor initiative, stipulated by the top-down contractual terms of reference, also created a major challenge for both the consortium as a whole and the country coalitions/monitors. It was aimed, on the one hand, at building the capacities of civil society organisations through a strict quota-like share of a maximum of one-third experienced actors and two-thirds actors non-experienced in policy monitoring and reporting. On the other hand, the initiative also had to deliver quality monitoring reports on each EU country that met the criteria of evidence-based reasoning and contained a balanced presentation of findings. The dual objectives of building monitoring research capacity and meeting quality standards in relation to knowledge production assume different logics of action and warrant relying on distinctive coalitions of actors. However, the opportunity for enhancing the voice of civil society actors in Roma rights and equality policy debates in both transnational and national settings was too precious to waste, despite the challenge. The initiative laced up the two objectives in one single strategic course of operation resulting in imperfections and trade-offs.

Unsettling hierarchies in knowledge production

The full title of the monitoring initiative 'Capacity building for Roma civil society and strengthening its involvement in the monitoring of national Roma integration strategies' is telling. The notion of capacity building entails that there are shortcomings in the qualities and skills of actors with regard to performing particular tasks. The language of capacity building was accepted by the Roma Civil Monitor coordinators with reservation, but in the hope that it would not inflect the implementation of a quintessential civil society undertaking. We agreed to employ the distinction between experienced and inexperienced actors exclusively to refer to policy monitoring involvement and thus soften the paternalistic tone of the project title. We embarked, however, on the implementation of the Roma Civil Monitor in cognisance of the asymmetrical knowledge infrastructure among civil society actors and uneven conditions of participation in monitoring activities in relation to the creation of 'quality reports'. Although it was held that there were no codified standards for defining report quality, the previous civil society monitoring exercises on Roma inclusion policies had created some benchmarks. Moreover, one of the important audiences of the report, the European Commission, also maintained the right to shape the standards during the course of the implementation of the initiative. Nonetheless, hidden paternalism and an unwanted reinstitution of hierarchies were seen as risks to tackle in this collaboration rather than a source of fear that could paralyse action.

In a path-breaking and much cited volume entitled *Romani Politics in Contemporary Europe,* the editors (Sigona and Trehan, 2009) stressed the importance of the tensions and even contradictions embodied in wider Romani movement formations – most importantly, those of the differentiation of elite and grassroots, top-down and bottom-up organisational principles, and the missions of technocratic professionalism and social justice advocacy. Many of these divides were reassessed in the *Roma Activism* volume a decade later (Beck and Ivasiuc, 2018). Regarding the diversity of the participating civil society actors, the coordinating institutions of our monitoring initiative sensed that the distinction between

grassroots and nationwide organisations was relevant, especially if mirrored by such self-identification. But in those country teams in which participants managed to establish an inclusive spirit of knowledge generation, mingling the viewpoints of local and national actions became a source of strength. It was gradually acknowledged that policy monitoring is a genre of thinking and reasoning which can not only be learnt, but influenced and thus *transformed* by the interaction of actors.

Several domestic coalitions created innovative methods for providing those with less experience in policy monitoring with opportunities to meaningfully participate in the co-production of knowledge. For example, these partners collected data at the grassroots level, developed case studies, and injected genuine every day and field knowledge into early report drafts otherwise infused with an expert tone. In less innovative cases, which remained less pertinent, more experienced participants reedited written knowledge pieces originally developed by the less experienced partners in the respective country reports. Where grassroots actors had to become the lead authors of the monitoring reports, larger pro-Roma advocacy organisations, like-minded individual experts, or a combination of these stepped in to ensure the genuine co-production of multiply layered knowledge. Theoretically, a multi-year initiative would have facilitated the intensive spread of knowhow within the overall network on how to shift from traditional capacity building to shared learning practices among the country coalitions. But this only partially happened: less pressure on delivering standardised reports and significantly more time for horizontal exchange would have been needed to do it differently.

It is noteworthy that disagreement did occur between civil society organisations serving as country coordinators and their local partners in framing the understanding of inequality mechanisms and endorsing or questioning diagnostic accounts. These debates often seemed to be more serious than other distinctions within civil society operations, as discussed above (e.g., grassroots versus advocacy experience). Respecting the autonomy of the local coalitions, the coordinators of the consortium tried to allow enough time and space for deliberation instead of intervening in these debates. The centralised review mechanism of the country report

drafts largely shaped the essence of the relations between the consortium's thematic experts and the country partners. This review mechanism was strictly meant to ensure that strong judgments and opinions were always supported by information and data, yet the approach still permitted top-down interactions which worked against the anti-hierarchical spirit of the initiative. Through an exit survey among the coalition participants, we learnt that the ultimate experience of the civil society partners encompassed a sense of collegiality and mutual respect but fused with top-down relations between the coordinating core group and the country teams.

Editors and authors of the highly inspirational volume entitled *Roma Activism* address the dichotomy between 'neutral' and 'objective' knowledge on the one hand and knowledge 'tainted' by activism on the other (Ivasiuc, 2018). Civil society monitoring undertakings usually do not feel embarrassed by this dichotomy. These activities always generate socially embedded and experience-based knowledge that is neither neutral nor tainted. Our own monitoring practices revealed that the encounters between different epistemic traditions mostly resulted in multiplying and diversifying evidence and a sharpening of the style of reasoning. This was felt to endorse rather than compromise the relevance of civil society standpoints. We did experience tension and disagreement which did not suppress the spirit of horizontal and even bottom-up learning in the network, and between civil society actors and the policy makers at the top level of power – e.g., within the European Commission. The debates on antigypsyism served as a prime example for the co-production of knowledge in a space of action where the original position of the participants diverged within the Roma Civil Monitor coalition. Ultimately, as Mack uncovers in his chapter, with antigypsyism a new framework for a politics of social justice for the Roma was experimented with and built (interlinked with the simultaneous action of the wider Roma rights and equality circles). Debates among the participants of the monitoring initiative continued in relation to the diagnostic, analytical, and political potentialities and consequences of an antigypsyism framing, but co-producing knowledge for a wider public and policy appeal was a genuine experience in the respective debates.

Considering all the institutional, mission-related, and inspirational diversities in the Roma Civil Monitor network together, we acknowledge that these inadvertently created hierarchies among the participating actors: accumulated experience and human resources together shaped the breadth and depth of knowledge civil society actors were able to offer. However, this hierarchy was debased on more than one occasion: confident and highly valuable contributions arrived from grassroots sources with only minor critical report-writing experience, and larger and experienced actors struggled with finding the most appropriate voice and reasoning in their reports. Further, the value of monitoring knowledge cannot be specified using exact measures. Endorsing particular diagnostic accounts and undermining others' compelling arguments is a worthy contribution even when lacking professional reasoning and vocabulary. Highlighting the social consequences of policy actions and inactions that remain poorly discussed, invisible, or neglected is a type of knowledge that all local coalition participants offered in some fashion. We argue that spaces and practices of a genuine co-production of knowledge did take shape in the Roma Civil Monitor initiative which did not erase all hierarchical relations. This backed the belief in the possibility of collectively producing critical knowledge without creating the naïve and blind conviction that such diverse partners could be fully equal throughout the monitoring cooperation.

Civil monitors gather, discuss, and reinterpret common sense knowledge in the Gramscian sense of the term, and they transform it into 'good sense'. In other words, they bring into coherence various opinions, reflections, and pieces of knowledge about the social experiences of those concerned by inequalities who have deep and intimate relations with everyday matters of life (Gramsci, 2007). They also unearth data that is hard to reach, not standardised by official statistics, or hidden in the files and narratives of professionals, bureaucrats, and civil servants, regardless of their emphatic and rejecting attitudes to the Roma. When variegated and processed common-sense opinions are transformed by Romani and non-Romani activists into critical policy assessment knowledge, they make a commentary not only on Roma equality matters but also on the framework

within which the monitoring reports were conceived and supported – that is, the Roma Civil Monitor initiative. The very process of shared knowledge-building destabilised some official in/equality interpretations, as Balogh argues in her chapter, but also questioned some of the already deliberated foundational framework of the critical evaluation of policy outcomes. In other words, both the national coalitions and the coordinating civil-expert groups were encouraged to be open to unexpected needs and opportunities for *departing from initial convictions and viewpoints*. This is how – beyond policy monitoring exercises – civil society activity in organised settings sustains emancipatory dialogue and destabilises the epistemological standing of all participants in a process of mutual education, or 'con-participation' (Gramsci, 2007).

Shaping contexts and audiences

The Roma Civil Monitor generated several encouraging experiences about how power holders can relinquish their hierarchical authority associated with supporting modalities of civic participation without losing their sense of responsibility. The European Commission was formally authorised to accept the civil society monitoring reports in the name of quality control, and thus had to behave as a customer of a service contract. More closely, the Roma Team of DG Justice served as our immediate partner in EU bureaucracy and policy circles. This particular team acts as a coordinator of various policy implementation tasks and responsibilities of the European Commission regarding the EU Roma strategic framework and also as the prime interface between the EU bureaucracy and civil society formations regarding Roma rights and equality. Thus, it became one of the key audiences, although not the final destination, of our monitoring reports. The standardised civil society report structure and pre-negotiated topical foci of the annual reporting cycles remained the most tangible aspect of the top-down character of our initiative. Nonetheless, the European Commission Roma Team officials were ready to go beyond a narrow bureaucratic logic when disagreements occurred concerning the judgment of governmental performances, or when the tone of particular reports was too sharp for

Commission ears. They mediated between different office holders in the Commission and the civil report writers in a collegial spirit and even undertook informal internal advocacy missions on occasion.

The monitors also faced a challenge that various other human rights and equality struggles in Europe also do. The cooperation of transnational civil society mobilisation with a dedicated and competent body of the European Commission creates advocacy circles which may or may not help civil society actors be listened to by their other important target audience, national governments. The mildest example is when civil society actors are not informed and consulted during policy formulation as a baseline condition. Quite a few of our partners in the Roma Civil Monitor coalition acknowledged that their relatively high visibility at the EU level was accompanied by small or no presence and impact in domestic arenas. What is more, being valued and recognised by EU decision makers was a reason for *not* being taken seriously in some domestic contexts. This situation was pertinent to the authoritarian populist regimes in Europe, but some subtle mechanisms of the distancing of internationally respected civil society actors were experienced elsewhere as well. In contrast, in some places monitoring reports with European Commission endorsement helped monitors effectively reach out to national governments and be taken seriously (e.g., in Czechia, Bulgaria, Germany and several EU countries with smaller Romani populations). Relations with governmental authorities matter not only in the search for influence over policy content. Civil society organisations often depend on state funding that may become endangered in the case of hostile relations with power holders. In differently structured domestic conditions, participating in the civil monitoring of Roma equality policies entailed saliently different risks and political costs for participants. Although potential retaliation did not represent an immediate danger to any of the participants, some of them were exposed to the suspicious, unwelcome, and even hostile attitudes of state actors.

Regarding the links and tension between participatory democracy and contemporary policy making regimes in relation to Roma equality matters, our monitoring cooperation revealed that participation by no means entails full endorsement of the wider dominant frames of Roma

equality interventions by civil society actors. There is some consensus in the scholarly and activist literature that the 2011 'EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020' is a neoliberal roadmap. The community of authors of this volume is divided by this question. Some of us are convinced that in many respects this strategy was much more than a neoliberal manifesto, and was different to one in many ways. It showed the significant influence of the equality paradigms of the 'Decade for the Roma Inclusion' (2005-2015) which was ingrained in the principle of active governmental responsibility and the objectives of empowerment and political inclusion. However, several members of our monitoring coalition and authors of this volume remain vehemently critical of the first EU Roma strategic framework 2011-2020. This in itself demonstrates and ensures that our civil society participation in broader policy processes has not turned into co-optation, easy compromise, and a lapse of critical capacities.

Transformative impacts of the Roma Civil Monitor

We wrap up this introduction by sharing the encouraging news that a new EU Roma strategic framework for 2021-2030 was adopted in November 2020.[5] The title of the new strategy includes the master concepts of *equality, inclusion, and participation*. In our view, the shift from the notion of integration to inclusion, and, more importantly, the pronounced notion of equality, must be a response to various debates and advocacy activities. We cannot trace the direct impact of the civil society monitoring reports on the new long-term agenda-setting, but we know, for example, how forcefully our reports worked to expand participation as a key policy objective. Unveiling the subtleties of the impacts of civil society's discursive acts on understanding inequality mechanisms deserves serious scholarly attention beyond this volume. The most important of these will be found in knowledge on direct and indirect discrimination, antigypsyism, misplaced policy interventions, non-mitigated effects of public service reforms, and economic crisis management.

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5   The new EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation (full package) (accessed on 10 November 2021).

The debate on empowerment is robust and necessarily inconclusive among civil society actors, academics of social movements, and inclusive governance and political democracy thinkers. This introduction does not seek to make an authoritative statement about the ultimate value of the civil society reports and their mechanisms of production on Roma empowerment. We passionately believe, however, that a profound *capacity to aspire* – a notion popularised by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai – has been demonstrated by all Roma Civil Monitor actors throughout their multi-year cooperation. This capacity generates an ethical horizon in relation to which concrete human capabilities can be given meaning, substance, and sustainability. The exercise and nurturing of this capacity to aspire through collective deliberation, knowledge making, and critical reflections shifts the frame from 'from wishful thinking to thoughtful wishing' (Appadurai, 2004). Despite any imperfections and unwanted paternalism that the Roma Civil Monitor may have enacted or left unchallenged, it has encouraged and intensified lasting inspiration among relentless civil society actors to articulate a collective, dense, and supple horizon of *hopes and wants for equality.*

About this volume

All the authors in this volume reflect upon the potential outcomes and limitations of the Roma Civil Monitor initiative within the wider context of a European politics of Roma equality; a space of multifaceted and intersecting social justice struggles. They articulate experiences and expectations in different combinations of the dismal, hesitant, and confident about the role of civil society actors to shape policy agendas through committed and embedded diagnostic knowledge and strategic framing proposals. These authors have their own and plural readings of recent discursive formations that lead to sharper political and policy languages, such as the civil society equality-expert-supported concept of antigypsyism. They address how our monitoring cooperation entered some uncharted territories of problems, reasoning, and evidence, and nudged not yet committed or reluctant

actors, sometimes with successes. They also discuss how the foundational aspirations of the civil monitors became extended to new civil society cooperation schemes, to inequality problems not yet highlighted in the EU and domestic policy frameworks, and to connected and disconnected equality agendas, such as social rights, gender equality, and the urban and rural practices of segregation that affect the lives of many Roma.

Several chapters have been co-authored and use the formal naming scheme for contributions to a piece of writing. In other cases, manuscript co-production is recognised using the expression 'with the contribution of'. Some chapters include marked sections that were crafted through intensive consultation with the civil society participants in the Roma Civil Monitor. All mirror the collective agreement about the need to work on and present cross-cutting reflections and insights in this volume prior to starting to work on the individual chapters. In other words, unconventional forms of authorship should not be read as signs of failure or incomplete writing practices, but instead as a demonstration of the continued co-production of knowledge.

Andrew Ryder investigates the context of European politics, which faces unprecedented challenges in terms of the rise of illiberalism and nationalist populism, and now the social and economic ravages associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. He reads the outstanding forms of joint activism, research, and monitoring which have become part of the Romani movement as responses to these challenges (more specifically, to populism, xenophobia, and racism). He examines two main puzzles. First, how can monitoring and evaluation support the advocacy efforts of civil society organisations so that Roma issues are on the agendas of national and European policy makers at a time of crisis? Second, how can participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation empower the Roma, and those of subaltern status? In his conclusions, he contemplates post-development paradigms as new roads for equality intervention inspired from the realm of the subaltern, such as the Roma. This development emerges from the understandings and aspirations of social groups who are socially, politically, and geographically excluded from hegemonic power, and

empowers them through self-organising, thus avoids narrow donor-driven control and manipulation. The vision that this chapter fleshes out links empowerment and partnership: an inclusive community-development-centred approach for Romani communities that should stimulate further participatory research.

Bernard Rorke's chapter dwells on the standing and the impact of civil society policy-monitoring undertakings in view of the well-known experiences of co-optation and disempowering outcomes of such participation. The author argues that activists for social change cannot be co-opted with consummate ease, as outcomes are not pre-determined. In many EU Member States, politics has not been reduced to a zero-sum game, thus driving meaningful social change necessarily involves dialogue and deliberation with a whole host of elite formations. The Roma Civil Monitor sustained public inquiry by broad coalitions of Roma NGOs that highlighted the abject failures of many actors, and the episodic successes of some governments to promote Roma inclusion. Rorke views the monitoring cooperation as partially exploiting the huge potential of broad civic participation, especially as regards working with the concept of antigypsyism. The monitoring initiative is a cautionary tale in which activists can be repackaged as 'stakeholders' and are urged to avoid being overly negative or confrontational, while their recommendations are expected to be 'reasonable' and evidence-based. This conveys the danger of agents mutating from watchdogs into pragmatic cheer-leaders for incremental reforms that deliver nothing for communities. Rorke believes, however, that strategies of struggle and resistance must always adapt to circumstance, and that those who wish to effect social change and challenge racism must seize every opportunity to advance their cause.

Jonathan Mack explains the emergence of the concept of antigypsyism within the broader Roma equality struggles from the mid-2010s as a master policy frame. This is viewed by many as stressing the accountability of majority society and its democratic institutions to actively address the inequalities that the Roma are exposed to. It also requires power holders to acknowledge persistent institutional racism against Roma, and state

obligations to achieve substantive equality for all. Mack unpacks how the Roma Civil Monitor coalition worked with this concept and expanded the scope of civil monitoring way beyond the scope of the actual EU Roma Framework to generate knowledge about the political, societal, economic, and cultural context of Roma equality. He argues that our monitoring exercise has contributed to challenging the dominant institutional diagnosis of and rationalisation for governmental interventions. Finally, the way in which the framing of antigypsyism developed in the monitoring discussions exemplifies the potential of allied civil monitoring and academic research. Mack warns, however, that this potential was only partially exploited: there is much more to making academia more inclusive and self-critical with regard to democratic knowledge-production, as well as producing knowledge relevant for public policies that can deliver impact and change for racialised communities.

Lídia Balogh offers reflections on how the joint endeavours of mainstream and Romani actors concerning women's rights among the civil monitors helped generate agendas that again went beyond the mainstream European Roma policy framework. At the theoretical level, the author builds on the concept of intersectionality to refine the understanding of multiple forms of inequalities. The civil society reporting undertaken by mainstream and minority women's organisations (the latter of which there are too few in the Roma Civil Monitor initiative!) helps generate a sharper understanding of cross-cutting social issues. The author takes a closer look at three areas that concern Romani women, as addressed in a few of the completed monitoring reports, to demonstrate the value of an intersectional lens: reproductive rights in a broader-than-usual sense (including issues related to maternity care); connections between housing and domestic violence; and the value of women's work. This forward-looking account that gently expands the agenda that the civil monitors defined calls for the exploitation of the potential of civil society monitoring to save equality thinking from lapsing into individual-level diagnoses and strategic agenda-setting.

Nađa Greku's chapter dwells on civil society monitoring initiatives by applying the conceptual framework of governmentality and micropolitical analysis. She examines monitoring initiatives in two socio-political contexts: the EU Member States and the enlargement countries. In addition to the Roma Civil Monitor collaboration, the author portrays a network of monitoring initiatives in the enlargement countries under the 'Roma Integration 2020' project. The latter undertaking embraces the 'Western Balkans Six' countries and Turkey, led by Roma Active Albania and European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network. Greku explains the hierarchical dynamics in the encounters of the civil and governmental entities in producing civil society knowledge and explores the counter-hierarchical practices that civil society operations can generate. Similarly to the other authors of the volume, she examines the nuances of partnership building between the civic actors and civil society and governmental actors. These practices operate through technologies of professionalism, yet everyday micro-interactions generate mutual respect and cooperation that enable civil society actors to influence agenda setting in Roma inclusion policies. Greku also opens a window that permits critical observation of how gender hierarchies saturate knowledge production among the civil monitors.

Boyan Zahariev investigates the ways in which the civil monitoring reports and other pioneering activist-based policy thinking influence discursive and substantive policy formations. He unearths several examples that reveal the varieties of non-linear and often ambiguous changes through which the vocabulary and policy interventions shift at a different pace, and via a variety of causal links. The prime examples he finds include how the Roma Civil Monitor managed to influence domestic policy makers in some fashion related to issues of discrimination, segregation, and antigypsyism. Accordingly, conceptual change may be captured in simple and radical shifts in vocabulary, while it may involve more subtle unfolding through tweaking meanings over long periods of time. It is particularly intriguing to follow the use of the concept of antigypsyism in the reports of the Roma Civil Monitor initiative and to conduct the same inquiry into the

notion of non-segregation. The opposite process – the erasure of expressions incompatible with shifting values and policy agendas – is equally relevant, such as the language related to the securitisation of the Roma. All this is not simply a product of the norm alliance and expertise of state actors: monitoring and other broad advocacy coalitions may shepherd, although never guarantee, the political careers of distinctive concepts and terms.

By facilitating conversations about elevating and limiting experiences associated with the monitoring cooperation, the authors of this volume aspire to contribute to sustained engagement in the present Roma equality struggles and to explore future possibilities. They want to share the outcomes of the privilege to be able to work and think together with such a large, diverse, and relentlessly vigilant network of civil society actors who are carrying forward the Roma equality struggles against all contemporary challenges in the European and domestic policy arenas.

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ROMANI CHALLENGES
TO ILLIBERALISM AND MARGINALITY:
THE CASE FOR LIBERATING EMPOWERMENT
AND PARTICIPATORY MONITORING

by Andrew Ryder

This chapter seeks to answer a wide-ranging set of questions that are highly relevant to Roma inclusion and developing policy frameworks that seek to address Roma marginality. The discussion takes place in the context of a Europe that is facing unprecedented challenges in the form of the rise of illiberalism and nationalist populism, and now the social and economic ravages of the Covid-19 pandemic. New forms of activism, research, and monitoring could form part of the Romani response to these challenges. The questions addressed in the chapter are: How can monitoring challenge populism, xenophobia, and racism? How can monitoring and evaluation support the advocacy efforts of civil society organisations and ensure Romani issues are on the agendas of national and European policy makers in a time of crisis? and How can participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation empower the Roma/those with a subaltern status?
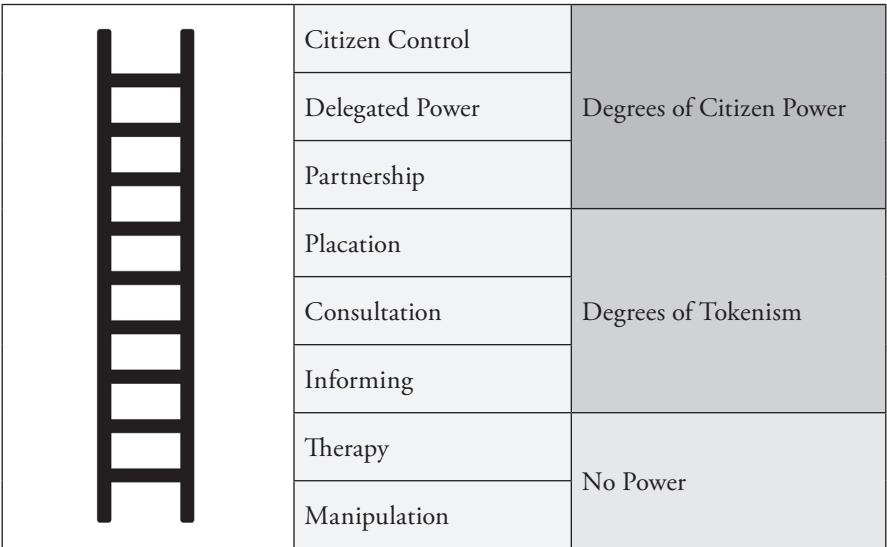
Context

Before answering these questions, it is important to consider in more depth the context and historical background of Roma exclusion. Aside from the material consequences of exclusion, we should not forget the multi-

dimensional nature of marginality for groups like the Roma that includes a lack of 'agency'. Agency can be articulated through self-identity, decision-making, and the ability to affect change (Hennink et al., 2012) – attributes that are absent for many Roma at the margins.

One means of viewing and understanding Roma exclusion, in particular their lack of voice, is through Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation that defines a vertical scale of levels of empowerment, with forms of 'non-participation', including manipulation and 'rubber stamping', at the bottom. This level is associated with the danger of 'outsider' agendas promoting 'therapy', whereby communities are seen to need to be reformed. In the middle of the ladder is 'tokenistic participation', which includes informing communities, but also conducting forms of consultation which are hierarchical and placatory, offering limited room for negotiation and empowerment. At the pinnacle of the scale are forms of 'citizen power', where through partnership, delegation, and citizen control, communities can be accorded real say and power in the management and direction of a programme or institution.

Figure 1. Arnstein's Ladder of Participation

	Citizen Control	
	Delegated Power	Degrees of Citizen Power
	Partnership	
	Placation	
	Consultation	Degrees of Tokenism
	Informing	
	Therapy	
	Manipulation	No Power

Note: Adapted from 'A Ladder of Citizen Participation', by R.S. Arnstein, 1969, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35 (4), p. 4.

Roma have since their arrival in Europe over five hundred years ago been subject to hostile and at times genocidal policies from the state, including efforts to assimilate and apply therapy and manipulate. For example, the Hapsburgs in the eighteenth century had a policy of sedentarisation and assimilation premised on contemporary enlightenment principles that equated the non-European heritage of the Roma with forms of primitiveness at odds with the notion of white European hegemony. The Roma were thus viewed as a group that must be assimilated and 'civilised' (Fraser, 1995). In more recent times, Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe sought to 'proletarianise' the Roma through narrow integrationist policy agendas (Stewart, 1997), while in the west of Europe equally assimilative social policy sought to sedentarise nomadic communities by locating them on 'official' Traveller sites or encouraging them to take up conventional housing (Ryder and Richardson, 2012). In both cases, agency was restrained and discounted and the Roma/Travellers were infantilised through paternalistic and assimilatory policy regimes.

Roma's disempowerment in present times has been compounded by this group being perceived as a 'hard to reach' category. Whilst it is true that forms of bonding social capital might in some cases accentuate marginality, even leading to forms of self-exclusion, it should be noted that the existence of static services that lack flexibility or targeted outreach that are premised on narrow integrative principles have meant that service providers and decision makers have generally failed to seriously challenge Roma's disempowerment. Forms of co-production that offer genuine opportunities for partnership between services and decision makers and Romani communities are a rarity. Some services are 'colour blind' and impervious to the problems Romani communities face. Austerity cuts that limit welfare spending and the resources communities can utilise have occurred since the financial crisis of 2008, and have profoundly impacted the Roma, including their level of engagement in decision-making (Ryder et al., 2020).

In tandem with this is the ever more apparent application of governmentality to community and support services – an approach that

envisages pathways to inclusion being secured through employment integration and the individualising of strategies aimed at inclusion through training and socialisation rather than structural change. Such has been the ascendancy of neoliberalism that forms of audit culture and governmentality can be found even within community support structures like civil society, which in some cases have been shaped by neoliberal and assimilative policy agendas and notions of 'responsibilisation', thus individualising victims rather than addressing structural fault lines 'on the ground'. These traits have been evident in relation to programmes focused on the Roma (van Baar, 2011). Critics assert that Romani civil society has too often been disconnected from the communities it seeks to represent and/or tied to, as well as restricted by donor-led agendas, which in some cases have made civil society organisations service providers and adjuncts of institutional power (Trehan, 2001). This is a point of concern that will be returned to later in the discussion.

Marginality has been accentuated through the securitisation of the Roma. Securitisation describes how power elites are able to use speech acts to play upon or construct perceptions of insecurity and fear and thus mobilise and frame thought and action to the level of priority – an 'emergency politics' which sets aside the normal process of decision-making (Waever, 1995). The framing of a political problem in terms of extraordinary measures takes the politics of security beyond the boundaries of normal politics. Securitisation is thus a unique phenomenon where through speech acts we construct an issue as a matter of security, survival, and emergency. In part, such a process is centred on the rise of narrow and insular forms of national identity that draw rigid boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' (Taba, 2020). Thus, illiberalism divides society into an in-group and an out-group; populist groups in particular claim the right to define who belongs to 'the people' and who does not; nationalists do the same with regard to the nation. Cultural and economic fears associated with globalisation and a need to deflect dissension and challenge have contributed to the growth of illiberalism. Radical forms of nationalism, most apparent in the phenomenon of authoritarian populism, have targeted Romani populations

by viewing them through a 'moral underclass discourse' that depicts the Roma as a dysfunctional minority to be dealt with through assimilation, punishment, or even spatial exclusion through segregation. Such polemic has been amplified through the populists' propensity to sensationalist and emotive rhetoric that seeks to surf popular prejudices against groups like the Roma through forms of invective designed to attract the more tabloidised sections of the media, and reach and mobilise their support base (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017).

Romani civil society has sought to capture and document the nature and scale of the securitisation of the Roma by authoritarian populists in recent times through its monitoring and advocacy work. A recent synthesis monitoring report by the Central European University (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020) found numerous examples of populist/radical-right politicians espousing anti-Roma rhetoric to mobilise public support. The report also referred to the growing incidence of anti-Roma sentiment on social media, part of a process of normalisation and the mainstreaming of racism. Such a phenomenon is also evident in state policies that covertly or evenly openly bolster forms of segregation in schools and other aspects of life.

Hostility towards the Roma is sustained and bolstered by the deeply ingrained anti-Roma sentiments that can be found in cultural and institutional practices, increasingly referred to as antigypsyism. Such sentiments, alongside other tropes and prejudiced viewpoints that target a range of outsider groups that include migrants and LGBTQ groups, among others, are part of the system of hegemony. Hegemony constitutes a collection of ideas, customs, practices and viewpoints that permeate society and its institutions and which support and uphold the norms and values of a society geared to the interests of a hegemonic elite. In other words, hegemony normalises ruling class power, creates scapegoats for the ills of society, and makes resistance seem absurd and futile. Gramsci (1971) was one of the first to identify the need for counter-hegemonic action that can challenge and deconstruct the stranglehold of hegemony – this needs to be done by those at the margins forming what can be described

as intersectional alliances and a broad-based social movement in which the voices of 'organic intellectuals' (community leaders who lack the cultural capital of mainstream leaders) can be heard. What are the implications of such an argument for the Roma?

The Roma are ill placed to challenge the racist frames directed towards them, as outlined in this chapter. Disempowerment and marginality mean that there are few elected Romani representatives, media platforms, and civil society organisations to question racist tropes or present alternative narratives. A lack of agency also means that some Roma lack the confidence to challenge racist assertions, while some even internalise these hostile perceptions, leading to low self-esteem and the fragmentation of identity and assimilation. This is related to the idea of Gramscian 'hegemony', wherein the subject population actually accepts and normalises its own disempowerment. This chapter argues though that new participatory approaches to monitoring and evaluation and interlinked community organising could help bolster Romani agency and challenge illiberalism. At the core of these demands is the concept of empowerment.

Defining Empowerment

In the last decade, Romani civil society has become more vocal in its pleas for empowerment, with activists propounding what can be described as a 'nothing about us without us' agenda (Bodgan et al., 2015). Decision makers have sought to pay at least lip-service to such demands by stressing the value of empowerment measures in Roma inclusion policies. A focus on empowerment is evident in the '*10 Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*' that were adopted by the European Commission, Member States, and civil society in 2009 (European Commission, 2010). In addition, in 2011 the '*EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*' was adopted: as part of an open method coordination framework, EU Member States were expected to draft national action plans to address Roma exclusion. Within this Roma framework, the value and importance of empowerment is emphasised as a principal goal (European Commission, 2011).

It is important to define what is meant by empowerment and, in the process of doing so, differentiate between 'liberal' and 'liberating' empowerment. Liberal empowerment is often a feature of mainstream development agencies and organisations, and focuses on individual growth, but from an atomistic perspective, through the notion of the rational action of social actors based on individual interests. In contrast, liberating empowerment is a process whereby those denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such ability in terms of resources, agency and achievements/outcomes, and a process of conscientisation/critical awareness, and relies on collective action and structural change (*Ryder et al., 2020*). Critics argue that the term empowerment can be paternalistic as it implies an external body will grant empowerment. However, it is a term widely used by social justice campaigners, many of whom adopt a more radical interpretation. Participatory research, monitoring, and decision-making can be a means by which the Roma move away from being subjected to forms of therapy and instead progress to the optimum levels on Arnstein's ladder through empowerment, partnership, and greater self-organisation – a point that will be developed more fully later in the discussion.

Critics of the 2011 Roma Framework argued that it lapsed into liberal notions of empowerment with narrow conceptions of integration premised on labour market integration *(Ferkovics et al., 2020)*. Another criticism of the 2011 Roma Framework was that the tokenistic forms of empowerment it nurtured enabled only a small number of Romani elite actors to be involved in policy consultation. Amartya Sen distinguishes between 'Realised Agency Success' (RAS) and 'Instrumental Agency Success' (IAS). RAS can be said to occur whenever a person's objectives are realised whether or not they play any role in their achievement. In contrast, IAS is obtained only when an individual plays some role in the realisation of their objectives (cited in Keleher, 2014). The ability to achieve objectives by making influential decisions and directly controlling the levers of change is the most robust form of opportunity freedom and expression of agency, and is described as 'citizen control' in Arnstein's ladder.

To return to Sen (1999), his capability approach recognises the multi-dimensional nature of exclusion and argues that the more forms of functioning one can acquire (be this literacy or access to ICT) the more empowered one becomes. Hence, empowerment can have economic, social, and cultural dimensions that can extend our capability and opportunities to achieve valued objectives. For Sen, development is about expanding the capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value. An increase in capabilities amplifies agency and power and the ability to operate in society through the acquisition of new functionalities that can secure inclusion (Crocker, 1992). Here, a note of caution needs to be added, for if empowerment is merely individualised even when agency is enhanced, it will obviously limit the nature of and scope for collective empowerment. It should be ensured that empowerment measures do not become tokenised by placing on a pedestal a select and privileged few who became empowered, and trying to depict this success as a collective triumph for a particular minority. Empowerment measures need to ensure that even the most marginalised can feel that their agency and say is enhanced, and that collectively a minority can derive some gain. However, in addition to collective progress, there should be scope to map out individual pathways from exclusion.

Tritter and McCallum (2006) contend that, rather than a ladder, a scaffold may represent a better typology of empowerment, as for achieving the latter goal, high levels of external support may sometimes be needed. Communities may benefit from a range of strategies and hybrid approaches. Sometimes, excluded communities cannot be expected at the onset of a development project to grapple with the unavoidable bureaucratic tasks linked with major community development initiatives. Furthermore, oppressed people sometimes do not have contextual tools and need external help (Popple, 1995). Community development has to navigate a tough terrain of limited resources, but also the colonialising agendas of more paternalist forms of community development. Tritter and McCallum refer to an Indian board game of 'snakes and ladders' (*Vaikuntapaali*) that reflects how good and bad deeds in life form a matrix that determines one's salvation.

Each step of the ladder, including the lower rungs, is a positive and valuable progression and part of a process that leads to the achievement of a central goal. It could be argued that the game is something of a metaphor for the path of inclusive community development, as there are many roadblocks (snakes) that impede progress. However, limited first steps – even when reliant on external support and with limited forms of empowerment – are a valuable part of holistic progression, if such external support can be balanced and measured against growing community confidence, critical consciousness, and a desire for ownership and control (Ryder, 2013).

In 2020, a new '*EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation'* for the coming decade was introduced by the European Commission that refers to the value of infringement action in challenging racism, and the centrality of the Race Equality Directive. An important objective is the drive to cut Roma poverty by half, as quantified by relevant indicators. The new framework again contains a commitment to promoting participation through empowerment and by building cooperation and trust (European Commission, 2020). In the coming decade, what lessons can be learnt from the previous decade to deliver liberating forms of empowerment? What implications does this have for monitoring, research, and civil society?

The Move towards Monitoring and Research with and for the Roma

According to Blaikie, research can be 'on', 'for', or 'with' the researched (Blaikie, 2007). A common accusation is that there has been a long tradition of research 'on' Romani communities. It has been argued that from the eighteenth century, with the start of academic interest in Romani communities, academia adopted hierarchical research approaches, but also forms of scientific, racial, and cultural racism that gave credence and support to policies of genocide and assimilation. From the later part of the twentieth century onwards, more radical scholarship appeared, such as the work of researchers such as Acton (1974), Kenrick (1995), and Gheorghe and Mirga (2001), which identified more closely with Romani emancipation struggles.

However, in the opinion of some, such writers tended to align with more nationalist sections of a narrow Romani elite, thus affording limited scope for co-production, while research outputs – it is claimed – have become tainted by partisanship (Barany, 2001). Such disputes highlight ongoing tensions between positivism and embodied forms of research.

Within the field of Romani studies, radical researchers have had to compete with and contest scholars more wedded to traditions based on scientism (positivism), a research approach that glorifies objectivity and correspondingly advocates detachment to minimise bias (Sorrell, 2002). In contrast, embodied knowledge strives to be grounded in the reality of everyday life. For example, feminist and critical researchers believe that research should be situated (standpoint theory) in the concerns of marginalised people (Harding, 1991), and this can best be achieved through egalitarian research practices such as participatory action research (Maguire, 1987). Scholars in the field of Romani studies imbued with scientism have been labelled by some as 'Gypsylorists' (Mayall, 2004), and have frequently clashed with more critically orientated researchers over issues related to the validity, objectivity, and authenticity of their respective research approaches. These tensions continue to resonate and have played out in divisions within the European Academic Network on Romani Studies (EANRS), a network of 250 academics working in this research area (Ryder, 2015). Critics asserted that the network was dominated by an academic elite imbued with scientism, and some of these critics coalesced around the formation of a European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC). Opponents of ERIAC have claimed that this body reflects the ideals and aspirations of a small avant-garde Romani elite, and is not sufficiently grounded within the identities and aspirations of Romani communities (Taba, 2020).

A clear consequence of these tensions and disputes in recent years has been the emergence of a growing number of critically minded researchers who aspire to greater forms of co-production in knowledge production. This has not happened without criticism. Stewart (2017, p. 126) indicates that there has been a move by critical thinkers to privilege knowledge production by the Roma: "…advocates of this approach have suggested that

those who speak may be more important than what they have to say". This is a misinterpretation of efforts to understand and gain insight into real and lived experience, but might be correct in identifying an over reliance on the voices of Romani elite actors whilst failing to bring those who can be described as the subaltern and the organic intellectuals of the Romani social movement more to the fore. Criticism has also been directed at more collaborative-orientated research with the Roma in terms of objectivity. Proponents of such approaches argue that the integrity of participatory and collaborative research is informed by theory and disciplined by empirical data and ethical codes, and by virtue of the trust it can instil in the researched; also, that the latter's involvement in fact provides a more accurate depiction of communities at the margins than can be achieved through a positivist research stance (Ryder, 2019).

Despite this, the movement towards participatory research has been restrained by limited opportunities for such research, reflecting the difficulty of securing research funding during a decade of austerity. Such problems have been compounded by the complexity of EU research funding streams that favour research consortia dominated by established universities, with civil society at best being afforded a more tokenistic role at the periphery of such research consortia. Participatory research can take longer than traditional research, in part on account of the need to liaise and negotiate across large teams, members of the latter which in some cases need extra training to understand the processes and methods of research that will enable community members to be engaged not only in data collection but also in research design and data analysis – factors that might make a busy academic and competitive university that is under pressure to complete contracts and meet deadlines avoid more inclusive and participatory research approaches.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Roma have received impetus in recent years. 'The Decade of Roma Inclusion' (2005 to 2011) was an initiative adopted by twelve European governments, and also supported by the European Commission, Open Society Institute (OSI), the World Bank, Council of Europe, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and European

Romani organisations. The Decade provided a framework for governments in Central and Eastern Europe to work towards Roma integration, and monitored progress in ending the severe discrimination and crippling poverty of Romani communities. This promoted interest and involvement in monitoring and evaluation by organisations like the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat. These early monitoring and evaluation reports were heavily dependent on experts and were typical of traditional forms of monitoring, with the research design and analysis of data being left in the hands of a small group of NGOs and academic actors. However, the later cycle of reports by the Decade for Roma Inclusion Secretariat displayed a growing propensity to reflect greater forms of partnership and co-production with national coalitions of NGOs (see for example Ryder and Cemlyn, 2014).

The value and importance of monitoring and evaluation was strengthened with the introduction of the '*EU Framework for National Integration Strategies up to 2020*' in 2011, modelled upon the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which obliged Member States to develop national action plans that needed to be assessed and monitored. To facilitate such assessment, the EU-funded the Central European University 'Roma Civil Monitor' initiative (RCM) to coordinate the formation of civil society national coalitions to undertake evaluation (2017-2020); this has included extensive training and capacity building and the involvement of Romani activists in survey template design and data analysis. In total, 101 different local NGOs participated in the project as its direct beneficiaries. Of these, 66 were Roma-led local NGOs (or individual experts who declared their Romani ethnicity). Although guided from a central coordination point, national coalitions and participants in the RCM have steadily been handed more responsibility and have been afforded freedom to shape the direction of the evaluations. For example, the RCM 2020 synthesis report on "blind sports in Roma inclusion" identifies and discusses issues that local NGOs consider crucial for successful Roma inclusion. Hence, through this more 'bottom-up' approach a series of case studies were presented that were based on research plans devised by national coalitions with guidance

from the RCM that – whilst not offering the more uniform overviews of previous reports – presented valuable insights into persistent or undetected problems facing too many Roma. Some NGO coalitions involved in RCM developed meaningful and effective methods of involving grassroots NGOs with limited skills and experience in monitoring. In some cases, partnerships between established NGOs and small/informal grassroots organisations in several countries led to the effective division of tasks: grassroots NGOs collected and provided local data to a national-level coordinating organisation skilled in analysis and reporting. Thus, national-level and local-level NGOs learnt from each other. The RCM constitutes a diverse civil society network and demonstrates that such networks can work together in a European-Commission-funded project across 27 Member States to produce monitoring reports, engage in capacity building and transnational dialogue, and promote understanding among Romani activists across Europe.

The success of monitoring and evaluation during this cycle can be measured by some of the goals in the *'EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation'* (European Commission, 2020). Commitments to tackling antigypsyism, a drive to cut poverty associated with clear indicators, and appeals for empowerment contained within the Roma Strategic Framework reflect prominent calls from Romani civil society that are evident in the monitoring and evaluation process (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020).

The new EU *Roma strategic framework 2020-2030* may offer an opportunity to devise and develop more participatory forms of research and development; this is especially pertinent given the emphasis the new Roma Framework places on empowerment (European Commission, 2020). The final part of the chapter makes the case for the latter claim, as it has the potential to increase agency and improve policy formation, but also foster new forms of activism. A central point is that participatory monitoring can form an important component of responses to illiberalism and populism.

The Case for Participation in Monitoring and Knowledge Production

Conventionally, monitoring and evaluation have involved outside experts coming in to measure performance against pre-set indicators, using standardised procedures and tools. In contrast, participatory monitoring and evaluation involves primary stakeholders as active participants and offers new ways of assessing and learning from change that are more inclusive, and reflects the perspectives and aspirations of those most directly affected (Greenfields and Ryder, 2013).

There has therefore been a growing trend for civil society to engage in the coproduction of research (Goodson and Phillimore, 2012) either as partners helping advise and even collect data with academic researchers, or in more exceptional cases initiating and leading research projects. In a participatory research project, the researcher works as a facilitator of change, consulting with participants not only about the process of action, but also about how it will be evaluated (Meyer, 2004). Civil society is increasingly aware of the value of research in community mapping, understanding the communities they serve, and being aware of where strengths, needs, and weaknesses may lie. It is argued that such research should be the foundation of development work, shaped and formed by the needs and aspirations of communities themselves.

Sections of civil society and critical researchers have realised that research can have an 'empowering' function. Forms of participatory action research have the power to develop the critical consciousness of those who are more usually the object of research by actively involving them in the research process – from design to analysis and completion (Recknagel and Holland, 2013). Hence, inclusive and participatory research can have transformative potential (Mayo et al., 2013). Inclusive and participatory forms of monitoring can play a valuable role in shaping a critical cadre of Romani organic intellectuals who can play a pivotal role not only in policy development but in broader partnerships and collaborations, and facilitate the emergence of a more grounded Romani social movement that can more effectively offer serious challenges to illiberalism.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation allow communities to challenge stereotypes by providing a platform (via a published report and dissemination and advocacy strategy) to put forward their side of the story, which in the case of the Roma is likely to challenge anti-Roma tropes, as reflected in the distorted claims of the media and political class. Here, monitoring should explain the real causes of poverty and exclusion, but also identify success stories and counter-narratives that reveal the scope of Romani agency when barriers are removed and overcome. Consequently, there is a need to show how some Roma have become teachers, policemen, or have devised projects that empower and offer economic and social inclusion. Policy makers and communities need to identify the ingredients for successful inclusion and scale up such interventions. By giving Romani communities at the margins a voice and platform through participatory monitoring, they can counter the assertions embedded in a 'moral underclass discourse' and reveal that the reality of Roma poverty and exclusion lies not in a supposed cultural dysfunctionality, but is rather due to the structural and institutional flaws of a highly racist and unequal society.

Existing monitoring of Romani communities indicates support and a desire for increased participation in education and formal employment, and hopes and aspirations which match many of those in mainstream society. By framing and articulating the hopes and aspirations of Romani communities, participatory monitoring rejects the cynicism and nationalist nostalgia of populism by presenting transformative visions of the future based on practical policy interventions that offer what Freire (1994) described as a "pedagogy of hope" – the belief that transformative change can come about. For the Roma, such hope is integral to counteracting the fatalism that can be spawned by grinding poverty and racist tropes that pathologise Roma marginality. Thus, participatory monitoring and evaluation might offer strong challenges to the narratives of populists. Populism has been described as a 'thin' ideology in terms of the depth of its thinking, being more reliant on emotion than fact (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2013). Well-researched and nuanced monitoring reports that probe Roma exclusion might play an effective role in dispelling racist and emotive assertions made

about the Roma through populist invective, and instead present a strong case for interventions premised on deep and detailed research outputs informed by community voices.

Participatory monitoring can give communities at the margins a sense of ownership with reference to outcomes, and has the potential to create trust and partnership between the 'researched' and the researcher, but also among other stakeholders involved in the research process, and avoids the paternalism of scientism. Dialogue in the research process should involve deliberation not only with ministries and politicians, but the service providers responsible for education, health, housing, and employment – and with the police, media, and other stakeholders with whom there has in the past been a high level of conflict. In these cases, dialogue between those researched and service providers/decision makers can enhance mutual understanding and forge policy interventions based on consensus and negotiation. Such a dialogic research approach gives meaning to the deliberative processes that should ideally be embedded in open-method coordination policy frameworks, as coordinated by the EU (Meyer, 2010).

An example of such an outcome is illustrated in the application of the '*UK Gypsy and Traveller Needs Accommodation Needs Assessments*' (GTANA). In 2006, the UK government introduced a policy framework for increasing Traveller site provision, and as part of this process obliged local authorities to commission GTANA. Some of these GTANA were highly participatory, partnering established researchers with Gypsies, Roma, and Travellers in the assessment (Greenfields and Ryder, 2012). Some of these assessments – as a consequence of the quality and nature of the findings, as well as the dialogue that was prompted between a range of stakeholders and Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities – brought about real and meaningful change in relationships and understanding in some areas. Such research approaches could be vital in healing community divisions stoked by authoritarian populists and demagogues, and chime very much with the new Roma strategic framework 2020-2030 that seeks to promote participation through empowerment and by building cooperation and trust. Another participatory research project was coordinated by the Traveller

Movement, a UK-based NGO, in an exploration of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller economic inclusion. Community members were at the centre of research design, data collection, and analysis and were guided by academic experts (Greenfields and Ryder, 2012).

A World Bank (2001) project in Sofia, Bulgaria, that involved a baseline study and needs assessment gives some indication of the desire by the Roma to be involved in evaluation and monitoring. The study evaluated housing conditions in Romani neighbourhoods, using indicators that addressed floor area and the availability of basic utilities such as heating, water supply, and sewer systems. These indicators were then applied in a quantitative survey of 1,142 people and through a qualitative assessment (45 structured in-depth interviews). A key finding was the desire for greater transparency and accountability in future projects by means of consultations with the Roma themselves, and through enhanced monitoring and evaluation strategies that ensure that funding achieves the intended outcomes. The project noted the value of involving project beneficiaries in identifying benchmarks for measuring the impact of the respective interventions. The report noted, however, that efforts to engage communities in community development was rare on the part of many municipalities, who lacked confidence in the capabilities of marginalised groups in projects (World Bank, 2001; Kropiwnicki and Deans, 2006).

The research and evaluation outlined above is very much in accordance with advice from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) that states' projects and integration actions implemented at the community level should accommodate processes of participation, trust building, the training and capacity building of participants, and monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, it is advised that participatory projects should blend quantitative reporting of results with a more holistic understanding of engagement and participation. FRA sought to apply these principles to a project conducted in 21 localities across 11 EU Member States that explored Roma social inclusion projects. Participatory action research (PAR) was the core methodology for this research project, engaging participants in social action to achieve change and for recording and analysing the process and

its outcomes, which in turn led to project adjustments. FRA concluded that using participatory approaches with the Romani communities, including evaluation, could lead to better integration and social inclusion outcomes, meaning better project design, smoother implementation, and more successful outcomes; i.e., change on the ground (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2018). Unfortunately, the incidence of participatory approaches in research and monitoring for Romani communities remains low.

Previous monitoring and evaluation have been funded with limited resources, while more generous financial support could enable more ambitious participatory research – this could involve youth evaluations and studies focused on the experiences of other Romani subgroups. The aforementioned report by the RCM's *Synthesis of civil society's reports on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies in the European Union: Identifying blind spots in Roma inclusion policy* (2020), found that the experiences of Romani children in care, the elderly/pensioners, and women and LGBTQ groups were particularly neglected by policy makers. Focused research on such groups could nurture in-group dialogue that minimises internal group oppression fuelled by traditional and narrow interpretations of Romani identity and leads to changes in external policy frameworks. In this sense, research could have an intercultural and intersectional dimension, forging understanding and dialogue between the Roma and other oppressed groups through which coping strategies and good practice in policy can be shared, and the Roma can be involved in broad non-ethnic based campaigns to further the cause of groups like LGBTQ and the elderly. New intersectional alliances could offer powerful counter-narratives to the illiberal frames of authoritarian populism that seek to polarise rather than unify, and nurture cohesion and solidarity. Interculturalism acknowledges and enables cultures to have currency, to be exchanged, to circulate, to modify and evolve (Powell and Sze, 2004). It has, as its essence, an openness to being exposed to the culture of the 'other' and is the antithesis of illiberal and populist monoculturalism, thus is a valuable approach for Romani activists and researchers to embrace.

More generous funding for participatory monitoring could allow for more extensive training and involving large teams of Romani organic intellectuals at each stage of research and advocacy. Improved funding could also include more detailed case studies that generate a micro picture of Roma exclusion to accompany large-scale surveys. Such localised case studies would enable more qualitative approaches and allow more subtle and sophisticated insights into exclusion to be obtained, which are sometimes obscured by macro quantitative surveys. The collection of qualitative information would contextualise quantitative indicators, identifying the specific factors that contribute to the success or failure of Roma inclusion measures and actions. Such 'thick' and detailed descriptions of communities can create powerful narratives that bring into focus the challenges of life at the margins, and could be especially powerful in local areas where authoritarian populism is in the ascendancy or is even a leading driver of municipality-level activity. Marginalised communities, it has been argued, should have the right to be understood, and this should be a human right (Husband, 2009). Participatory monitoring and evaluation could thus deconstruct populist frames centred on 'insider/outsider' narratives that fuel division and rancour, and frame and transmit honest depictions of those at the margins, letting them give their side of the story. This could signal moving away from an overreliance on legal tools and language and enabling Romani advocacy to utilise communicative tools to re-engage the public in relation to values and emotions in order to contest populist narratives and the politics of fear and anger.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation, we should also acknowledge the value of what is known as participatory action research – namely, research that explores the scope for new interventions or the success of pilot initiatives. Such an approach is action orientated and may overcome the frustrations the cynical may have about the merits of engaging in research efforts. Such an approach also displays agency and resourcefulness – qualities which counter the tropes of populism that portray the Roma as lacking ambition and aspirations related to their communities. Localised and participatory micro studies should ideally be the foundation for

inclusive forms of community development (ICD). ICD can be asset-based, by building on existing skills and cultural practices, and is community-driven but also involves upskilling (Gilchrist and Taylor, 2011; Craig et al., 2011). It is a form of mobilisation which aspires to utilise grassroots support and involvement, and is organic and centred upon community concerns and uses these as building blocks for organisation. Thus, co-production and participatory monitoring research approaches are highly conducive to ICD, and could make the EU objective of 'Community Led Local Development' a reality.

Participatory monitoring and research should be closely linked to advocacy that presents the stories of communities under observation, when possible in their own words, thereby giving voice and a platform to marginalised communities. In the process of such advocacy work, those at the margins who are involved or profiled in participatory research should be guided and supported in their involvement in lobbying and policy change, a liberating and empowering experience that can create more dynamic and grounded community activism. The Roma Civil Monitor has, for example, helped form a number of NGO coalitions to carry out monitoring, and these have been encouraged to work together to lobby decision makers for change using the monitoring reports in these campaigns. If campaigns and organisations are not rooted in the experiences of communities, there is a danger of the 'political' becoming sterile and moribund (Chambers, 2003). Transnational and strategic Romani advocacy has been extremely successful in ensuring Roma issues have received a prominent place on EU and Council of Europe agendas, but a weakness of this work has been the disconnection between these strategic actors and those at the margins. Some castigate strategic transnational Roma civil society as a 'Gypsy industry' in which leaders and managers are accused of having engaged in what Freire (1971) calls 'horizontal violence'. In other words, fellow campaigners, by being hierarchical and disconnected from the communities they seek to serve, become sub-oppressors.

Managerialism, an over-reliance on international funding and the prioritisation of strategic agenda-setting priorities, has allowed populists

leaders to exploit such weaknesses to be found in international NGOs and portray them as out of touch with those they seek to represent. Moreover, the former may curb the influence of civil society through forms of coercion and intimidation propelled by claims that such civil society entities work against the national interest (Rodriguez-Gavarito et al., 2014). Participatory research and activism could strengthen communication channels between communities and transnational civil society leadership, and act as a catalyst in a process of critical pedagogy and conscientisation, thereby becoming part of a process that enables transnational Romani NGOs to reconnect with those at the margins, strengthening the authority and legitimacy of such organisations.

Conclusion

Monitoring and evaluation are an important part of the development process, but there are differing interpretations of development, and it is a highly contested and politicised concept (Pieterse, 2009). The chequered history of policy intervention for Roma and Traveller communities mirrors wider trends and debates in the sphere of economic and social development. In the post-war period, development theory was accepted and unquestioned, and built upon the premise that, through planning and intervention, deprived groups located at the margins of Western society and or in developing nations could be assisted to enter into and benefit from forms of mainstream existence premised on Western capitalist notions of what an effectively functioning society or community is (i.e. modernisation and Westernisation).

Post-development theory has questioned the benefits of development when it is hierarchical and paternalistic (Kothari, 1988). Foucault (1998) argued that development theory constituted a form of control, through the concept of governmentality, which normalises neoliberal and assimilative policy agendas and 'responsibilisation', which individualises and pathologises victims rather than the structural agents of exclusion. Such criticism of development theory has had implications for views about knowledge

production: critics have argued that, in character with its exclusionary nature, it exalts scientism above local knowledge (Escobar, 1995).

A danger of post-development, which has critiqued the narrow notions of development outlined above, is that the concept of progress may be lost, and an unquestioning exaltation of ethnic cultures can promote static and narrow versions of identity. More nuanced post-development theory contends that a new way of development should be inspired from within the subaltern (social groups who are socially, politically, and geographically excluded from hegemonic power), hence there is a need for empowerment and for the marginalised to look inwards and self-organise and mobilise, avoiding the pitfalls of narrow donor-driven control and manipulation (Udombana, 2000). It could be argued that the rhetoric of empowerment and partnership, as outlined in this chapter, endorses an inclusive community-development-centred approach for Romani communities that should stimulate community-based and participatory research.

Brydon Miller et al. (2003) note that participation has increasingly become a required component of evaluation assessment, appraisals, and research, but there is a danger that this approach is being subverted, tokenised, and co-opted to reinforce existing power relations (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001). Care will be needed to ensure that appeals for the Roma to become empowered through active participation in decision-making, research, and monitoring are not diluted and tokenised. As noted in this chapter, co-production offers practical benefits, including giving researchers access to other worlds, and generates the capacity to build trust quickly, putting stories, experiences, and insights into practice (Orr and Bennett, 2012). It can also help with offering more insightful reflections about the impact of social policy and highlight areas where change is needed.

This chapter has argued that the most effective means of challenging populism is through the very democratic system that populists strive to undermine. Dialogue, deliberation, intercultural understanding, and giving the marginalised voice and agency are part of this process. Of equal importance is the need for national and European policies to be more responsive to the aspirations of the Roma. The Roma need to be involved

in identifying, designing, and delivering these policies. New forms of co-production in monitoring, evaluation, and research with Romani communities could play an integral role in these processes.

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ROMA INCLUSION:
ANOTHER DECADE, ANOTHER DEBACLE?
DILEMMAS OF PARTICIPATION

by Bernard Rorke

> *"Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter.*
> *Try again. Fail again. Fail better."*
> (Samuel Beckett)

With the expiry of the 2011 '*EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*', the European Commission (EC) proved to be as good as its word, and in 2020 promptly launched its new and improved 10-year plan to support Roma up to 2030. Keeping Roma inclusion on the European agenda beyond 2020 was never a given, and the renewed framework reflected the EC's commitment to dig in for the long haul. Reflecting on the shortcomings of the decade past, Commission Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová, said:

> *"Simply put, over the last ten years we have not done enough to support the Roma population in the EU. This is inexcusable. Many continue to face discrimination and racism. We cannot accept it. Today we are relaunching our efforts to correct this situation, with clear targets and a renewed commitment to achieve real change over the next decade."*

Taking stock of its failure, the European Commission noted that despite the fact that progress has been 'limited' over the past ten years, the conclusion of the 2011 EU Roma Framework provided "an opportunity to step up action to address this persistent failing". Without being overly mordant or Beckettian, behind the rhetoric of "making good on Europe's promise, for all Europeans" and fulfilling its duty "to protect its minorities from racism and discrimination", many suspect that the technocratic imperative is actually to manage diminishing expectations about progress with Roma inclusion; and many fear that the limit of the EU's ambitions for 2030 is simply to 'fail better'.

It was abundantly clear from the outset of the first framework back in 2011 that undoing centuries of racism and exclusion would take far more than ten years. There could have been no illusions in Brussels about the difficulty of mobilising the political will needed to implement substantive social inclusion and anti-discrimination policies across 27 Member States plus the barely consolidated democracies of the accession countries in the Western Balkans.

It is hard to sustain any kind of international political momentum over a long period at the best of times, let alone over such a crisis-ridden decade, which has witnessed a steady and unremitting erosion of the credibility and standing of the EC. It was easy for cynical and nativist political elites, in those key Member States with significant Romani populations, to just pay lip-service, or simply ignore such a soft instrument – a flaccid, non-binding commitment to an issue they deemed insoluble, marginal to their concerns, and devoid of electoral traction. From the side of civil society, after the initial rush of enthusiasm, it quickly became difficult to maintain hope in such a flawed process, overseen in key Member States by political leaders, whose track record and commitment to Roma inclusion was at best perfunctory, and at worst wholly insincere.

Disenchantment and disappointment soon kicked in with civil society activists. Intergovernmental and international processes are at the best of times cumbersome and unwieldy and seem to operate at a sluggish pace completely at odds with the urgency and gravity of the situation. As the

number of meetings and conferences continued to grow, many activists working in situations of acute deprivation became vexed by the lack of tangible outcomes, and the absence of political will at Member State level to honour the Commission's ambition to "make a tangible difference to Romani people's lives by bringing about a change in the approach to their inclusion".

The entirely reasonable activist mindset is that talking is fine as long as it is a prelude to action and not a cover for inaction, but what unfolded since 2011 in key Member States was worse than governmental sluggishness and incompetence. Despite Commission communications, Council conclusions, parliamentary resolutions, and the relentless gathering of data, things actually worsened for Roma. With the rise of far-right movements pushing explicit anti-Roma agendas, the extreme became mainstream, and anti-Roma hate speech became a regular feature of public discourse. Segregation and multiple forms of anti-Roma discrimination remained as ubiquitous and deeply embedded as ever in the structures and practices of many Member States. All the while, across Europe's worst-off 'multiply-disadvantaged' regions, urban ghettoes and rural hinterlands, entire communities of Roma, barely subsisting and living from hand-to-mouth in deep poverty, found themselves at the 2020 end-point of the Framework just as excluded as they ever were.

A very brief history of Roma participation up to 2020

In addition to the welcome foregrounding of structural racism, and the emphasis on the need to combat anti-Roma discrimination, one clear distinction between the first and second Frameworks is the emphasis on Roma participation. The problematic notion of 'Roma integration' (Rorke, 2014) has given way to the promotion of "effective equality, socio-economic inclusion and meaningful participation of Roma". The new, improved EU Roma strategic framework up to 2030, according to the Commission, draws on its own evaluation, extensive consultations, annual assessments of the implementation of the national strategies, and a 'meta-analysis' of

the reasons for the limited effectiveness of past measures. The input of civil society is clearly evident in the emphasis given by the European Commission to combating anti-Roma racism, recognition of the structural dimensions of discrimination, and a welcome stress on the need for meaningful Roma participation.

In 2011, there was little room for participation in the first Framework document, beyond mention that the 'European Platform for Roma Inclusion' offered the 'possibility' for "concerned stakeholders, especially representatives of the Roma communities […] to play a role"; and that the platform would also provide the Commission with feedback on the results of national efforts on the ground "through the voice of Roma civil society".

This oversight was odd considering that Principle No. 10 of the EU's own '*10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion*',[1] first presented back in 2009, was an explicit and fulsome endorsement of 'Active Participation of the Roma'.[2] However, the Commission subsequently invested effort and resources into what were initially cautious and somewhat tentative forms of 'civil society consultation'. By the time of its mid-term evaluation of the 2011 Framework, the Commission was able to report that, in addition to monitoring visits to Member States, discussions with civil society, and visits to Romani communities, the Commission had reformed the European Platform for Roma Inclusion in 2015 to ensure a more participatory process. It also funded joint 'ROMED2' and 'ROMACT' programmes with the

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1   The '10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion' were presented for the first time at the meeting of the European Platform for Roma inclusion in Prague on 24 April 2009. On 8 June 2009 the Council of Ministers in charge of Social Affairs annexed the Principles to their conclusions and invited Member States and the Commission to take them into account.

2   Principle No.10, Active Participation of the Roma: "The effectiveness of policies is enhanced with the involvement of Roma people at every stage of the process. Roma involvement must take place at both national and European levels through the input of expertise from Roma experts and civil servants, as well as by consultation with a range of Roma stakeholders in the design, implementation and evaluation of policy initiatives. It is of vital importance that inclusion policies are based on openness and transparency and tackle difficult or taboo subjects in an appropriate and effective manner. Support for the full participation of Roma people in public life, stimulation of their active citizenship and development of their human resources are also essential". Available at: https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/7573706d-e7c4-4ece-ae59-2b361246a7b0.

Council of Europe to invest in mediation, structured dialogue and capacity building of Romani communities and local authorities; and launched its own 'for Roma with Roma' transnational awareness-raising campaign. (European Commission, 2016, p. 6).

By 2016, the impact of the Commission's 'listening to civil society' was clear in its recommendations to Member States, which included a call to enforce anti-discrimination and anti-racism legislation; to monitor, fight, and sanction anti-Roma discrimination in all policy areas; to criminalise public incitement to violence or racially motivated hatred; to prevent forced evictions; and to eliminate segregation in housing and education. Member States were also urged to "make full use of National Roma Platforms to ensure inclusive involvement of all stakeholders in implementation, monitoring, reporting and policy review", and towards this end, "to further mobilise Romani communities" (*ibid*, p.17). From the Commission's side, DG Justice and Consumers launched and managed the 'Roma Civil Monitor' (RCM) pilot project involving more than 90 NGOs and experts across the EU.[3]

In its 2019 resolution on the need for a new and strengthened Roma framework, the European Parliament prioritised Roma participation by calling on the Commission to "sufficiently involve" Romani representatives and NGOs "through a visible and accessible consultation procedure, and to enable their meaningful participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of it, thus strengthening their ownership". The European Parliament also called on Member States to follow a bottom-up approach and involve Romani representatives, communities, NGOs and equality bodies in the design of their national Roma integration/inclusion strategies, and to enable their meaningful participation in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these Strategies (European Parliament, 2019).

Both the European Commission and the European Parliament proved receptive to Roma-led civic advocacy, and between 2011 and 2020

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3   Coordinated by the Center for Policy Studies of the Central European University in partnership with the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano and the Roma Education Fund. The full country reports are available here: https://cps.ceu.edu/roma-civil-monitor-reports.

adopted much of the language contained in the many recommendations and submissions from Romani and pro-Roma NGOs to endorse a more participatory and rights-based approach to Roma inclusion, not least when it came to high-profile recognition of antigypsyism as a specific form of racism.

As far as Member States were concerned, the RCM found that Romani representation and participation in policy processes was 'variegated'; those efforts given to Roma empowerment differed substantially. One important observation was that mere recognition of Roma cannot be a replacement "or substitute for capacity, or for access to knowledge or the resources conducive to meaningful participation in policy planning and decision-making." Recognition alone does not address the major power imbalance between public authorities and civil society actors, and "in local policy-making, where the opportunity to comment on policy plans arises, socially excluded Roma rarely have the capacities, the networks, and the confidence to do so" (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018).

Subsequent RCM reports found little evidence of capacity-building for local Romani NGOs that would enable them to organise effective community action or enter into partnerships with municipal authorities. This was identified as a serious flaw in that it "undermines an important tenet of inclusive community development and policy-making, namely that it should be centred on dynamic partnerships with the grassroots." Many of the RCM reports indicated government preferences for compliant Romani partners who could be accorded a tokenistic role in the policy process. A common observation was that many governments were ignorant and negligent, even antipathetic towards Romani civil society, "being reluctant to engage or enter into genuine dialogue with it … an experience shared by a broad range of civil society actors" (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018, pp. 20-21).

By 2020, the Commission's position on Roma participation had finally evolved into a full endorsement of what its founding Common Basic Principle No. 10 was back in 2009. The new '*EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030*' is

peppered with references to the imperative to "promote participation through empowerment, cooperation and trust", calls for capacity-building and Roma's political, economic and cultural engagement, and "the active participation of civil society in all stages of policy-making and ensure its involvement in national and EU platform processes".

However, beyond Brussels and beyond the rhetoric there have been early signs from two of the more illiberal Member State democracies that notions of participation, consultation, and transparency have already been given short shrift by the incumbent regimes. In Hungary, dozens of Romani and non-Roma NGOs criticised the draft government strategy in April 2021, as 'not worth a penny', claiming that the government completely excluded them from any consultation process. András Nun, director of the Autonomia Foundation, said that despite his foundation being a member of the Roma Coordination Council, it was not invited to help develop the strategy. Romani civil rights activist Jenő Setét predicted that, with or without Roma participation, the Hungarian strategy will be approved in Brussels. He explained: "What will happen is that the government will force a document through, gather civilians loyal to the government, who will nod fiercely that there has been social consultation, then throw them some concert, and go on to spend the EU funds on something else" (Báthory, 2021).

In Bulgaria, many Romani organisations boycotted the entire process in 2020, in protest at the Interior Ministry's spending of EUR 1.7 million from the European Social Fund (ESF) to train 480 police officers to detect the alleged "radicalisation" of Romani people in Bulgaria (Rorke, 2020). In March 2021, 13 Romani organisations from Bulgaria sent a letter to EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to protest the appointment of one of the trainers of the police project to head the Expert Working Group and condemn the lack of transparency, and described the process of consultation as a "complete mockery of Roma".

It should be noted, however, that in other Member States, such as Ireland, meaningful dialogue has taken place between government and civil society in relation to the revision of national strategies. It is too

early to assess whether the trend across the continent veers more towards Roma participation, or the model of token consultation with compliant organisations who dutifully rubber-stamp a modified copy-paste version of the previous Roma integration strategy. It is safe to assume – across a continent beset by a viral catastrophe and preoccupied with life-and-death contingencies – that nothing transformative has occurred in the past year with regard to Roma participation in public policy. In fact, things have worsened for Roma with the outbreak of Covid-19.

The acute vulnerability of impoverished and rights-deprived Romani communities was exacerbated by hate speech blaming Roma for the spread of the virus. Anti-Roma racism, which manifested itself in violence, intimidation, and inflammatory rhetoric, was a feature of the policy response to Covid-19 in many states. Marija Pejčinovic Buric, Council of Europe Secretary General, expressed concern at measures "that could result in further compromising the human rights of Roma and hampering their equitable access to the provision of basic public services, most importantly health care, sanitation, and even fresh water"; and her worry that "some politicians blame Roma for the spread of the virus". Two UN Special Rapporteurs were moved to protest at the overt support of Bulgarian state officials for discriminatory measures imposed on Roma "on an ethnic basis" as part of the broader efforts to contain the spread of Covid-19 (Rorke and Lee, 2020).

A cautionary tale: the perils of participation

There is an abundant sociological literature on the risk of cooptation, understood as the elite strategy of using apparently cooperative practices to absorb those who seek change. Back in 1948, Philip Selznik, in his *Foundations of the Theory of Organizations*, detailed how those who seek change, once drawn into collaboration with elites, alter their positions, hoping to gain new strategic advantages through compromise. Through such cooptation, challengers come to share "the *responsibility* for power rather than power itself", and the movement becomes effectively disarmed.

Thus coopted, the logic goes, they can no longer challenge, only support, the existing system and the power of the elites (Holdo, 2019). While this truncated account might be overly deterministic for many tastes, such dilemmas are nonetheless familiar to all who have (with any modicum of success) engaged in policy advocacy or been active in movements for social change; and are especially familiar dilemmas to NGOs committed to combating anti-Roma racism and discrimination and promoting community empowerment and participation.

The perceived danger with 'close cooperation, collaboration and consultation' is that NGOs might get 'tamed and house-trained', start to absorb expert advice about 'managing expectations', and begin to heed official exhortations to be more patient; to dutifully and repeatedly compile recommendations that are 'reasonable', evidence-based, and economically 'viable' within the given context.

In this cautionary tale, activists get repackaged as 'stakeholders' and are urged to avoid being overly negative or confrontational. In the interests of 'balance', no conference is complete without a session devoted to a parade of 'best-practice' projects. Instead of always harping on about human rights abuses, civil organisations are prompted by the cheerleaders of spin and sustainability to 'shift the narrative' with affirmative, feel-good stories of individual successes against the odds, upbeat 'bootstrapping' tales where good-will triumphs, and the deserving prosper in a manner that 'ordinary people' (white people) can connect with.

This induced passivity allows for abject policy failures to masquerade as 'pathways to progress', duly repackaged as invaluable 'lessons learned' to inform 'future steps'. At all costs, at whatever EU-organised event participants find themselves at, must strain to be constructive, and avoid anything so unseemly as 'naming and shaming' – especially when it comes to political leaders of Member States who take pride in prejudice, and flout those much-vaunted 'European values' with impunity.

As for those high-visibility participatory moments at EU summits and high-level meetings, activists often find themselves corralled into two-minute speaking slots in overpacked sessions, sandwiched between banal

lengthy opening addresses and successions of concluding remarks where leading officials praise one another, resolve to do better, and blandly deplore injustice in general. In such controlled settings, opportunities to go 'off-script' and challenge the carefully choreographed consensus have become severely circumscribed.

One consequence of such 'taming', and the attendant constraints on participation is that many civil actors engage in self-censorship: some for fear of damaging their funding prospects and falling off the guest-list of the EU's 'trusted interlocutors'; others stay low-profile because they legitimately fear the consequences for their work, their organisations exposed to politically orchestrated ignominy at home in their damaged democracies. For some, this reticence is borne of opportunism, enlightened or otherwise; for other organisations, it is a sober calculation that this is a price worth paying to continue with their work, and sustain their commitments to their designated target groups or communities.

This cautionary tale about the perils of cooptation carries a health warning for well-intended civil society actors against becoming unwitting accomplices in a wider drama that constrains dissent and neuters dialogue; reducing participation to a set of anodyne routines that tacitly reinforce a neo-liberal status quo, leavened with a dose of 'recognition' of the contribution Romani culture has made to Europe's wondrous diversity. As a battered and bedraggled Europe, preoccupied with more pressing matters, adopts the new improved EU Roma Framework, there is a cold calculation afoot among governing elites: if needs be, get vocal occasionally on cultural recognition and the need for awareness raising; pay lip service to deploring the persistence of prejudice, and periodically extoll the virtues of social cohesion; but beyond the rhetoric of recognition, there will be no yielding on meaningful redistribution.

Ten years on from the launch of the first EU Framework, the message from those who hold power in Member States with substantial Romani populations is clear: forget any concrete commitments to ensure full access to clean water and sanitation, don't hold your breath about decent public healthcare, social housing, or a halt to forced evictions; don't expect us to end school segregation by 2030, or take police officers to task for racist

brutality. Above all, don't expect us to heed your naïve leftist calls for an end to poverty and discrimination; and forget any notion that we would even contemplate a disruption of the structures and habits that reproduce inequality. The message from this cluster of nativist ruling elites is simple. As Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán put it, the issue of Roma inclusion must be approached on the basis of what he calls the very simple 'underlying principle':

> *"I approach the issue by asking whether Hungarians can feel at home in their own country. Meaning, in their cities and villages. The question is whether Hungary is a country where a minority group can build such a system or network with which it can regularly force its will on the majority. Or, do we want to live in a country where, although there are minorities and majorities and we have respect for each other, the majority is still the majority.*
>
> *And this majority needs to feel at home. It cannot happen that in order for a minority to feel at home, the majority must feel like strangers in their own towns, villages, or homeland. This is not acceptable. And as long as I am the prime minister, nothing of the sort will happen. Because this is the country of the natives, our country..."*
> (Hungarian Spectrum, 2020)

Faced with such a blatant repudiation of European values that – along with so much else emanating from the regime in Budapest – went unchallenged and unremarked upon by the EC, there is a growing perception that the avenues currently available within the framework for Romani civil society participation have morphed into a debilitating cul-de-sac. As Member States turn in their revised and updated national strategies, it is an opportune moment to reflect on one mode of Roma participation, and to question the very purpose and utility of civil society monitoring.

There is a compelling argument to be made that investing so much energy into monitoring (no) progress; providing evidence and recommendations that are duly ignored; and furnishing reports that have no official standing, serves only to coopt and disempower civil society groups. As long as these monitoring reports can be disregarded by Member State governments, and as long as the European Commission does not deploy the reports' findings to directly challenge the often misleading, and sometimes mendacious submissions by Member State governments, time and effort spent dutifully monitoring the situation 'on the ground' is simply time and effort wasted.

Further, as the organisations get sucked into 'policy-wonking', and grappling with the minutiae of how to close the implementation gap in peripheral locations that have been starved of public funding for decades, there is a danger that NGOs mutate from watchdogs into pragmatic cheer-leaders for incremental reforms (that often fail to materialise), who unwittingly legitimise processes that deliver nothing for their communities, and leave the structures of inequality and exclusion unchallenged.

Like all the best cautionary tales, this yarn contains more than mere kernels of truth, and to a greater extent than one can concede without deep unease, it does reflect the reality of current predicaments faced by those who seek profound and meaningful change in the lives and future prospects for Romani communities across the continent, now routinely categorised as Europe's largest ethnic minority.

It is however, just as plausible to interject and assert that 'it ain't necessarily so'; that activists for social change are not so pliable and unknowing that they can be coopted with such consummate ease; that outcomes are not pre-determined, and that in many Member States where politics has not been reduced to a zero-sum game advocacy and campaigning for social change remains vital; and that the hard graft of embedding meaningful change into the structures of state and society necessarily involves often painstaking dialogue and deliberation with a whole host of elite formations. This is not co-optation; it is rather the case that strategies of struggle and resistance must always adapt to circumstance, and those who wish to effect social change must grasp every opportunity to advance the cause of their particular constituency.

The EU Roma Framework and why civil monitoring matters

Despite its strenuous efforts to appear as a politically neutral adjudicator and a disinterested guardian of the treaties, the European Commission is an altogether more complicated entity, which faces as much criticism from those who champion a more social version of the European ideal as it does from Eurosceptics, sovereigntists, and the motley crews of illiberals and conspiracy theorists. While the European Commission likes to position itself as the 'honest broker' between Member States concerning Roma inclusion, civil society 'coalitions of the willing' need to be mindful of the democratic deficit at the heart of EU institutions, which according to critics such as Yanis Varoufakis "were established as democracy-free zones by design" from the get-go in the 1950s:

> *"…the whole operation in Brussels is based on a process of depoliticising politics, of taking what are essentially profoundly, irrevocably political decisions and pushing them into the realm of a rules-bound technocracy, an algorithmic approach."*
> (Buxton and Varoufakis, 2016)

This depoliticising of issues that remain profoundly political was evident in earlier interventions about Roma inclusion, where misunderstandings led European institutions to view the issue as a set of technical challenges that could be addressed by legal reform, existing funding opportunities, and the spread of good practice. They failed to recognise that this was "an essentially political question requiring substantial reallocation of resources and the skill to forge a wider consensus within states to accept the changes necessary to ensure equality of opportunity" (Kovats, 2001, p. 105).

When the European Council endorsed the EU Framework on 24 June 2011, Commissioner Reding was moved to declare that it was a "huge step forward for millions of Roma", and that the EU was sending a strong signal: "The EU is sending a strong signal: the exclusion of the Roma is not compatible with our societal values and our economic model". Despite the talk of "putting Roma integration high on both the EU's political agenda

and member state national agendas", the emphasis was on socio-economic integration as a set of challenges in need of a technocratic fix, rather than a profoundly political coming to terms with structural racism and inequality. What was needed to fix the situation for the millions of Roma in Europe, according to Commissioner Redding, was "concrete measures, explicit targets, earmarked funding and sound monitoring and evaluation".

Civil society criticisms took the Framework to task for its failure to specify measures to combat discrimination, intimidation, hate speech and violence against Roma, and for setting vague and unambitious targets (Rorke, 2013). The national strategies, missing much by way of explicit targets, adequate funding, and mechanisms for robust monitoring, also lacked mechanisms for Roma participation, and failed to recognise the need for resolute and unequivocal action to combat racism and discrimination. For its part, the Commission was urged to react more frequently and more forcefully to racist incidents targeting Roma; to identify challenges in the domestic implementation of the Race Equality Directive, and work with Member States to remedy them; to set up an EU-wide monitoring mechanism on hate crime against Roma; and to take the lead in addressing the impact of institutional racism (Rorke, 2012).

These key messages from civil society advocacy and monitoring remained consistent over the years, and, as mentioned above, from 2016 onwards, the Commission took heed, and shifted to a more rights-based approach, complete with direct recommendations to Member States to end segregation, to enforce anti-discrimination legislation, and to combat antigypsyism; and the impact of civil society monitoring, consultation, and recommendations was clearly visible in the new EU Roma strategic framework 2020-2030.

Whilst this new initiative is an improvement on the previous EU Roma framework 2011-2020, and contains much of merit, the problem of implementation remains the same. In those Member States with the largest Romani populations, weak governance, endemic corruption, and routine segregation have gone hand-in-hand with unabashed anti-Roma racism from the highest public offices.

Despite Commission President von der Leyen's very welcome and declared commitment to "replace antigypsyism with openness and acceptance, hate speech and hate crime with tolerance and respect for human dignity", this will be a very cautious roadmap. It is not just that this current Commission is risk averse and distinctly right of centre, but its position is considerably weaker than ten years ago in terms of its credibility, legitimacy, and authority. The EU has been further compromised by what its critics see as its paralysis in the face of rampant corruption in certain Member States; its incapacity to check authoritarians as they systemically undermine the rule of law, media pluralism, and academic freedom; the decline of its authority in the Western Balkans due to inaction on enlargement (Buyuk, 2021); and its complete failure to devise a common migration policy that is not 'morally warped' or deeply complicit in the torture and abuse of captive migrants (Malik, 2020).

Political reality suggests that for its duration this Commission will not be prepared to stick its neck out and pick a fight with Member States on the issue of Roma inclusion. Now is a good time to disabuse ourselves of the notion that the Race Equality Directive (RED), infringement proceedings, Commission communications, or parliamentary resolutions from Brussels or Strasbourg will make much of a difference to the lives of millions of Roma. On the evidence of what has transpired to date, patiently waiting for policy frameworks, funding mechanisms, and inclusion strategies to embed themselves in the common sense of everyday politics is just not an option.

And it is for this reason that every action taken by Romani and pro-Roma civil society groups remains of crucial importance. Every opportunity to make Romani voices heard, to up the ante with regard to Roma participation, and to intervene in the policy process must be taken. This includes the opportunities provided by direct European Commission funding to Romani and pro-Roma civil society groups to build capacity, to challenge exclusion and racism, and to monitor the process in Member States and beyond up to 2030.

It is worth recalling that some of the most penetrating critiques of failures at a national level in the last Framework not only surfaced in the RCM reports, but remain just as pertinent at the kick-off of its 'strategic'

successor. Access to justice was absent from the first Framework, and despite references to UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Commission again neglected to include access to justice as a horizontal priority, essential for "sustainable development in peaceful and inclusive societies" (Goal No 16).

A recurring point common to many of the RCM country reports was that full transposition of the RED into domestic law has not translated into effective action against anti-Roma discrimination. The opinion of the RCM researchers is that, despite EU legislation, "there are no effective mechanisms to protect victims of police violence, little reliable information or data to give a precise account of the scale of the problem, and a low success rate in cases investigated".

In the five CEE Member States with significant Romani populations, the RCM research found that Roma experience ethnic profiling, stop-and-search, and encounters with police officers that do nothing to foster trust in law enforcement: "A lack of accountability verging on impunity in some countries means that police officers often resort to the deployment of excessive force, and remain cavalier about the human rights and dignity of Romani detainees".

Apart from mention of "enhancing the training strategies of law enforcement", there is nothing in the new EU Roma strategic framework to confront the issue of widespread police brutality against Roma. The problem goes deeper than police brutality and the accompanying culture of impunity. Structural racism is deeply embedded in the entire criminal justice system, and the impact on Romani communities goes unchecked.

Many Romani respondents to RCM researchers did not pursue justice for fear that things might turn out even worse, and their lack of trust was grounded in a perception that judges lacked sensitivity and harboured the same anti-Roma prejudices as the majority population. In addition to wariness concerning the quality and outcome of judicial processes, many Romani respondents were daunted by the length and complexity of legal proceedings, and the time lapse between the initial filing of a complaint and a tangible judicial outcome.

The active participation of scores of organisations across the Union lent considerable heft to the RCM findings, despite the provisional status of the reports. The monitoring outputs do not suggest that this was the work of the cowed and co-opted, but rather a sustained and very public inquiry by broad coalitions of Romani NGOs, highlighting the many failures of governments to honour their commitments to Roma inclusion. The reports also hinted at the huge potential, as yet only partially tapped, for broad civic participation and public debate and dissent on how best to combat not just antigypsyism, but all forms of racial discrimination.

What is to be done?

The question should not be directed primarily at Romani activists, who have done everything under the sun over recent decades. They've engaged in grass-roots community-based activism; repeatedly taken to the courts in pursuit of justice; invested much time and effort in national and international 'evidenced-based advocacy'; networked, lobbied, submitted countless recommendations to the relevant responsible authorities; formed coalitions and alliances, picketed and protested, reasoned and rallied against racism and injustice.

Right now, it would be more apposite to shine a light on what non-Roma are doing; especially those who wield power and privilege, who consider themselves to be liberals, progressives, or position themselves on the side of the angels: what are they doing to dismantle the structures and break the habits that reproduce the racist suppression of our Romani fellow citizens?

In the broader political and social context, mobilisation and struggle to 'stress the system' and fight against all forms of injustice is more critical than ever. At every intersection in such struggles, social movements and political formations which profess to be inclusive and concerned with deepening democracy need to reflect just how inclusive and empowering they are when it comes to the fundamental rights of Roma. Similarly, public authorities, parliamentary groups and international agencies that

claim to be liberal and enlightened need to interrogate their structures and operations to root out the whole gamut of rotten practices that have sidelined, trivialised, or marginalised Roma.

The responsibility to uproot and undo that damage done by racism lies squarely with those who wield power and privilege at the expense of the excluded. As the powerful are unlikely to do so of their own accord, they must be pushed and prodded; they must be sued and shamed, watched and monitored; those who wield power for unjust ends must be publicly and forcefully held to account by all means necessary that are consistent with non-violent struggle.

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ADVANCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF ANTIGYPSYISM AND THE EXCLUSION OF ROMA THROUGH CIVIL MONITORING

by Jonathan Mack[1]

At the start of a new decade of a renewed EU Roma policy – the 2020-2030 *EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation* –, we look back at the lessons learned from the previous EU and national-level policy-making efforts; in particular, at efforts to advance evidence-based policies through Roma participation, data collection, reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. The shift from a policy framework that aimed for the "socio-economic integration of Roma" (European Commission, 2011) towards a framework for "Roma equality, inclusion and participation" (European Commission, 2020) indicates not only a widening of scope and policy objectives, but relates to one of the key issue of contention over the past decade: framing and sharpening the understanding of the root causes of Roma oppression, discrimination, and exclusion; thus the question of the responsibility of the state and of majority society for decades – even centuries – of antigypsyism in Europe. This article explores how antigypsyism was addressed in the Roma Civil Monitor (RCM), and how civil monitoring

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alongside Roma mobilisation and civil society advocacy contributed to deepening the understanding and recognition of antigypsyism as the root cause of exclusion; it discusses the related opportunities and challenges, and outlines future perspectives for strengthening civil society monitoring and advocacy.

A shift of perspective: the recognition of antigypsyism in European policies

The first *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* (European Commission, 2011) acknowledged the discrimination of Roma; however, the framework mainly focused on implementing policies and measures at the national level in the thematic policy areas of education, employment, housing and health without tackling racism and discrimination sufficiently. The ambiguity and limitations of this policy approach can be found especially in institutional behaviour and narratives during the time of the launch of the framework in 2011. When French President Sarkozy in 2010-2011 forcefully evicted and deported Roma – who were EU citizens – to Eastern European EU Member States, it not only sparked a European-level public debate, but fuelled the historically dominant public narrative that defines the Roma as a security threat, reinforcing exclusion and repression (Frazer, 2013; van Baar et al., 2019; Rorke, 2019). Governments, political leaders, and the media were often the driving forces in the framing of a narrative about a "Roma problem" that blamed Roma themselves for their inhumane living conditions, unemployment, lack of education and, in general, for the consequences of racism and discrimination that Roma suffer. Populist, right-wing extremist and often even mainstream democratic political leaders exploited racist, stigmatising narratives in public discourse and in election campaigns to gather public support. But antigypsyist discourses also served them well as a tool for pursuing political goals and fulfilling certain functions, such as legitimising discriminatory measures, including forced evictions, instances of collective punishment, and educational

and residential segregation (Mack et al., 2017; Ryšavý, 2015; European Roma Rights Centre, 2019), and led to a tightening of the migration and border regime and the promotion of neoliberal economic and social reform (Drál, 2005). Governments systematically denied the existence of human rights violations as well as the structural root causes and the role and responsibility of the state for all of their citizens; most obviously the former included the holocaust of the Sinti and Roma, while other forms of historical injustice such as slavery, forced assimilation, forced sterilisation, and state-organised segregation were often hardly recognised in many EU Member States (European Parliament, 2015). The EU advanced key anti-discrimination legislation, such as the Racial Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43/EC), but even in cases when overwhelming evidence proved structural discrimination and segregation in Member States, the European Commission was not able to enforce its legislation. From 2014 to 2016, the European Commission launched infringement procedures against the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary related to the educational segregation of Romani children, but no major improvements in this situation have happened yet (Rostas, 2019).

After the launch of the first EU Roma Framework in 2011, European institutions and national governments seemed to believe that delivering change was mostly a question of investing sufficient funding into the right measures and projects. Even the European Roma Policy Coalition, a civil society coalition that played a decisive role in advocacy associated with the first EU Framework, gradually dissolved after the policy framework was in place. Many of these stakeholders did not take into account that a strong and constant "headwind" and the "virus of antigypsyism" (Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016) could render many of these efforts futile, and they ignored the fact that growing populism and right-wing extremism were increasing societal polarisation and threatening our democracies, the rule of law, and the basic security of Roma. The questions what are the root causes of Roma exclusion, who has responsibility for exclusion, discrimination, and injustice, as well as who should be held accountable for improving the situation have remained major issues of contention over the past decade.

Romani activist and former MEP Soraya Post (S&D group; in office 2014-2019) led the work in the European Parliament to foster the more comprehensive recognition of antigypsyism:[2]

> *"To this day, there seems to be some misunderstanding about anti-Gypsyism, as many associate it with discrimination. However, discrimination is only one of the varied faces of this complex, specific form of racism directed towards Roma, which was created by a social consensus centuries ago and has been practised in our societies – without exception – ever since."*
> (Post, 2019)

Civil society advocates also challenged the narrow view of discrimination based only on the visible manifestations of antigypsyism, as this position often ignores the structural dimensions and the hidden and implicit forms and mechanisms of antigypsyism in institutional behaviour, narratives, and public policies.

In 2016, the Alliance against Antigypsyism published a *Reference Paper on Antigypsyism* to address some of the key issues of contention among civil society and governmental and intergovernmental stakeholders, as well as to articulate the need for a paradigm shift of perspective in debates and policies related to Roma:

> *"Firstly, it is essential to see that antigypsyism is not a 'minority issue'. It is a phenomenon of our societies, which has its origin in how the social majority view and treat those whom they*

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2   European Parliament resolution of 15 April 2015 on the occasion of International Roma Day – Anti-Gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II (2015/2615(RSP)); European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism (2017/2038(INI)); European Parliament resolution of 12 February 2019 on the need for a strengthened post-2020 Strategic EU Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies and stepping up the fight against anti-Gypsyism (2019/2509(RSP)); Scaling up Roma Inclusion Strategies; Truth, reconciliation and justice for addressing antigypsyism (2019 study commissioned by European Parliament); Interparliamentary Committee meeting (ICM) 2018 Fundamental rights aspects of Roma inclusion and fighting anti-Gypsyism.

consider 'gypsies'. To combat antigypsyism, our attention needs to shift to mainstream societies, while raising the voices of those who are dramatically affected by antigypsyism, but also usually silenced by it.

Secondly, antigypsyism is not the result of the poor living conditions many Roma have to live in, or the result of 'how different they are'. The idea that promoting Roma integration is the main path to countering antigypsyism is a fallacy that misconstrues the origins and essence of antigypsyism. It inverts cause and effect.

This means that, thirdly, addressing the effects of discriminatory treatment – poverty, poor quality housing, substandard education, to name a few – is necessary, but in and of itself does nothing to eradicate the ultimate source of the disadvantaged position of many Romani citizens. Consequently, antigypsyism cannot be simply treated as a thematic issue, alongside housing, education, health and employment. It needs to be dealt with as an integral part of thematic policies.

Antigypsyism is not only widespread, but also deeply entrenched in social and cultural attitudes and institutional practice. This makes the challenge of tackling it both more urgent and more difficult. Antigypsyism is like a continuous headwind. 'Roma inclusion' will remain illusory as long as we do not confront the headwind itself."
(Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016)

The Alliance and wider Romani civil society shifted the burden of responsibility and accountability to majority society and to the democratic institutions that are responsible for upholding the rule of law. The issue of contention requires the recognition of majority society and of institutions to "shift from [the] victimisation of Roma towards states' acknowledgement

of their role in reinforcing racism against Roma and their obligation not only to protect Roma but also to achieve substantive equality for all" (Mihalache et al., 2019).

Until now, the social acceptance of antigypsyism in Europe has remained extremely high, being rather the norm than the exception in public, political, and media discourse (Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016; Cortes et al., 2019; McGarry, 2017). While the fight and resistance against racism – in particular, against structural and institutional forms of racism –, as well as the struggle for civil rights, equality, dignity, and the full societal and political participation of Roma have been a major focus of a growing social movement and the mobilisation of Roma across Europe over the past decades, the political discourse on racism and antigypsyism only slowly gained ground at the European level at the end of the last decade, in particular among international institutions (EU,[3] Council of Europe,[4] OSCE,[5] IHRA,[6] and the UN[7]).

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3   The EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance issued in 2018 a guidance paper on combating antigypsyism (European Commission, 2018); the Austrian EU Presidency convened a large international conference on combating antigypsyism that led to a key set of recommendations (Federal Chancellery Republic of Austria, 2019); and the Fundamental Rights Agency published a first report focusing on antigypsyism based on its previous data collection efforts (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2018).

4   The Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance published as early as in 2011 a policy recommendation on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma (Council of Europe, 2011/2020), which describes not only discrimination in education, employment, and other areas of life, but also manifestations of antigypsyism such as hate speech, media discourse, and hate crimes. The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025, in which combating antigypsyism is considered a key priority.

5   In 2016, the German OSCE Chairmanship hosted with OSCE-ODIHR and partners a high-level event on confronting antigypsyism and the role of majority societies (Central Council of German Sinti and Roma. 2016. Confronting Anti-Gypsyism is Responsibility of Mainstream Society, Needs Strong Political Leadership, Say Participants at OSCE Chairmanship Event. Press Release).

6   The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) adopted under the German IHRA Chairmanship in 2020 a non-legislative Working Definition of Antigypsyism. (https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definitions-charters/working-definition-antigypsyism-anti-roma-discrimination).

7   The UN had already adopted in 2015 a report on the human rights situation of Roma worldwide with a specific focus on antigypsyism (UN, 2015).

The European Commission conducted between 2017 and 2018 an evaluation of the first *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020*, which highlighted the conclusion that – among other factors – the policy framework did not sufficiently address antigypsyism as a specific form of racism, and that the latter constitutes a major structural barrier to inclusion policies and measures (European Commission, 2018b; European Commission, 2019). The new *EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation* finally reflects an increasing understanding and shift of perspective towards recognising antigypsyism as a specific form of racism and a root cause of exclusion, as well as addressing the role and responsibilities of mainstream societies and institutions (European Commission, 2020; German EU Presidency et al., 2020).

This growing institutional recognition is especially the result of the continuous Romani civil society mobilisation, advocacy, and monitoring, including the work of the RCM, as will be further explored in this article. However, in spite of this positive development, the danger is that governments engage in a meaningless rhetoric of recognition as a means of shifting the blame and of co-opting civil society language, but remain unwilling to engage in real redistribution and change (author's interview with Bernard Rorke). "The recognition of antigypsyism in European Parliament and European Commission policy papers is not the end of the struggle; it is more of a small milestone in a long-term bottom-up movement and process. A number of gaps remain, including the shift […] from recognition to an increased understanding of antigypsyism to effective policy and enforcement responses [that] address […] antigypsyism both at national and local levels." (Mihalache et al., 2019)

This article will reflect on how the shift of perspective regarding antigypsyism was addressed in civil monitoring; discuss the new opportunities for knowledge production created by the RCM; as well as analyse the lessons learned and challenges from the previous monitoring cycles in order to draw conclusions and highlight the perspectives of future civil monitoring approaches.

Towards the monitoring of antigypsyism through the RCM

At the time of the launch of the RCM in 2015, the European Commission barely recognised antigypsyism and the complexity and scope of structural and institutional discrimination (as reflected on in the previous chapter), and it did not recommend monitoring it. The call for tenders of the European Commission,[8] therefore, addressed the monitoring of discrimination, but did not foresee the wider scope and implications of antigypsyism. The first monitoring approaches related to the EU Framework raised doubts among civil society that Member States would self-critically report and make transparent their data and reporting: it was obvious that evidence-based policies would require a more holistic approach to reporting, monitoring, and evaluation in order to measure progress, as well as hold responsible stakeholders accountable.

The RCM Consortium advocated for the monitoring of antigypsyism to become an integral part of the RCM, which proposal was accepted by the European Commission:

> *"Anti-Gypsyism [has] received increasing recognition recently. While this theme is closely linked to anti-discrimination, we plan to distinguish between the two themes: anti-discrimination can focus us on legal and institutional provisions in fighting against discrimination against the Roma, and anti-Gypsyism can cover broader patterns of social communication, opinions and attitudes." (Central European University, 2015)*

Guidelines for national civic monitoring were developed – building on the experiences of the 'Decade for Roma Inclusion' shadow-reporting practice – including for the field of antigypsyism, for which no reference point existed. The monitoring guidelines reflected a dual approach: on the one hand, *Fighting Antigypsyism* was addressed as a specific structural and horizontal precondition of the successful implementation of national Roma

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8   European Commission – call for tenders: https://etendering.ted.europa.eu/cft/cft-display.html?cftId=941

integration strategies in the first monitoring cycle (2017-2018), covering institutional setting and public discourses and narratives; on the other hand, antigypsyism was addressed as a horizontal cross-cutting issue in the thematic policy areas of education, employment, and housing and health in the second monitoring cycle (2018-2019).

In the context of the first monitoring cycle on structural and horizontal preconditions, the specific guidelines on antigypsyism focused on three main dimensions (Roma Civil Monitor, 2017): The first dimension addressed the institutional settings for fighting discrimination and addressing antigypsyism, focusing on the state's recognition and awareness of the existence of antigypsyism, counter-strategies and relevant structures, related funding, measures for increasing diversity among public servants, and promoting awareness about antigypsyism among duty-bearers and public institutions. The second dimension focused on strengths and gaps in monitoring as well as preventing and countering hate crime and hate speech, in particular by analysing the national implementation and effectiveness of Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law; but also access to justice, victim support programs, and monitoring, prevention, and sanctions against antigypsyist hate speech in public, political, and media discourses. The third dimension additionally addressed all those antigypsyist narratives and attitudes that are not banned by law; therefore, it focused on programs for measuring and researching antigypsyism, and on prevention and awareness-raising measures directed at both public institutions as well as wider society that have the aim of changing the narrative about Roma.

In the same monitoring guidelines of the first monitoring cycle, various forms of discrimination against the Roma – thus, the main manifestations of antigypsyism – were addressed in a separate chapter entitled *Anti-Discrimination* in order to monitor especially the implementation of the Racial Equality Directive which was a key priority of the EU Framework for National Roma Integrations Strategies up to 2020 (European Commission, 2011) and of the Council Recommendation (Council of the EU, 2013). However, the RCM consortium recognised the limitations of the Racial

Equality Directive, and the related risks of an individualised framing of discrimination and socio-economic inclusion without addressing structural racism – as in the context of police violence and forced evictions. Therefore, this chapter focused on the national transposition, implementation, and effectiveness of the Racial Equality Direction, the work of the equality bodies, and the governmental policies and measures aimed at addressing key forms of structural discrimination, such as educational and residential segregation, forced evictions, discriminatory behaviour by police, prosecutors or courts, access to identity papers, access to clean water and sanitation, and respect of the right of free movement. The benefits and weaknesses of a separate or inclusive framing of complementary *Anti-Discrimination* and *Addressing Antigypsyism* chapters for monitoring and policy analysis purposes will be critically assessed in the following chapter about challenges and limitations.

Besides the chapters on anti-discrimination and 'addressing antigypsyism', the first monitoring cycle guidelines on structural and horizontal preconditions included a major chapter on governance and the overall policy framework. From a civil society perspective, these dimensions, especially the issues of Roma participation, representation and empowerment, intersectionality, the public policy framework, structures and funding, as well as the approach to monitoring and data collection, are equally important elements of any comprehensive strategy for fighting antigypsyism and promoting the equality, inclusion, and participation of Roma. As the *Reference Paper on Antigypsyism* points out, "[t]o combat antigypsyism, our attention needs to shift to mainstream societies, while raising the voices of those who are dramatically affected by antigypsyism, but also usually silenced by it" (Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016). Nevertheless, the article does not fully address this governance dimension due to its limited scope and analysis.

During the second monitoring cycle, antigypsyism was addressed as a horizontal, cross-cutting issue in the four thematic policy areas of education, employment, housing, and health (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018a). Each thematic chapter included a compulsory section on manifestations of antigypsyism in the given policy area, highlighting, for example, educational and residential segregation.

The third monitoring cycle (2019-2020) allowed the national RCM consortia to identify the blind spots of national Roma policy and to define key priorities relevant to the national context (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019a). Many NGOs addressed issues related to antigypsyism – for example, hate speech (Bulgaria, Spain, Lithuania, Slovenia), media discourse (Italy), antigypsyism in social work (Germany) and in public administration and institutional behaviour (Germany, France, Finland), as well as (counter-) strategies for participation, empowerment, and civil society development (Austria, Latvia, Estonia, Netherlands, Spain, France, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020a).

Based on the national monitoring reports developed in each monitoring cycle, a synthesis report summarised the key conclusions across countries. The synthesis report for the first monitoring cycle included a chapter on addressing antigypsyism and on anti-discrimination according to the guidelines (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018b). For the second monitoring cycle, the synthesis report highlighted antigypsyism and structural discrimination in the thematic fields of education, employment, housing, and health (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020b). The third cycle's synthesis report provided an overview of very diverse issues addressed by different countries (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020a). Additionally, the Consortium published thematic fiches on substantive thematic areas and on horizontal measures, including anti-discrimination[9] and fighting antigypsyism,[10] which highlighted key elements of country approaches and gaps; however, the fiches did not make a systematic comparison of all areas specifically related to antigypsyism.

Opportunities for and the contribution of the RCM to knowledge-building about antigypsyism and exclusion

The following sections of this article were developed based on the reflection, input, and critical comments of many colleagues from the RCM network who shared details of their valuable experiences of the past three years,

9   Roma Civil Monitor. (2018). Thematic Fiches: Anti-Discrimination.

10   Roma Civil Monitor. (2018). Thematic Fiches: Fighting Antigypsyism.

mostly from national and local levels. While the article cannot fully present all the different realities and experiences of all countries participating in the RCM, the reflections contribute to some key conclusions and to a more complex understanding of the added value and challenges of monitoring antigypsyism.

Towards a system-level analysis of exclusion

The RCM defined its objectives and the added value of monitoring antigypsyism in the RCM monitoring guidelines related to the first monitoring cycle in the following way:

> *"Antigypsyism is insidious because of its high level of social acceptance. The moral stigma generally attached to other forms of racism is largely absent [with] racism against Roma. […] In order to dismantle [a] solidified antigypsyism, member states have to transform the behaviour of their societies at every level. At the same time [,] they should strengthen the voices of those dramatically affected by antigypsyism. Specifically[,] monitoring manifestations of antigypsyism and what member states do against them should contribute to raising awareness of it, and eventually to transforming the currently latent, tolerated racism against Roma into […] socially unacceptable behaviour. First, however, it must be correctly identified and made visible."*
> (Roma Civil Monitor, 2017)

The previously outlined socio-economic integration policies and measures of the EU Roma Framework until 2020, as well as the initial reporting, monitoring, and data collection approaches, risked looking only narrowly at Roma inclusion without addressing the historical, structural, and institutional dimensions of antigypsyism and the mechanisms of exclusion, and without monitoring the role and behaviour of majority societies and state institutions (Reuss et al., 2019). Governmental reporting on policy measures and the collection of quantitative data often only reflect a snapshot of reality at a certain point in time. However, institutional

antigypsyist practices of state-led violence against Roma and forced sterilisations (Albert et al., 2017), racial profiling and registration, as well as collective criminalisation by law enforcement and the judiciary can be traced back over one hundred years (Töpfer, 2019; End, 2019; Fings, 2016). Stereotypical representations and narratives are at the core of the centuries-old reproduction of antigypsyism, and are part of cultural and artistic repertoires, in particular in literature, theatre, film, and media (Mladenova et al., 2019). Paternalistic and sometimes benevolent antigypsyist practices have defined the approaches of welfare services and churches (Werner Boada, 2019; Meier, 2017; Roma Civil Monitor, 2019b), and even the ongoing educational and residential segregation that many Roma face are the result of decades-old policies and institutional measures (Picker et al., 2019; Rostas 2019). Monitoring the current realities and policy measures requires a historical lens to increase understanding, help interpret the mechanisms of exclusion, and develop adequate counter-measures. The RCM therefore addresses the racial undercurrent of Europe's history, and contributes to bringing historical knowledge and academic knowledge production into policy debates.

The RCM followed the rationale of identifying the mechanisms and manifestations of antigypsyism in order to make them visible and recognised. The RCM therefore expanded the scope of civil monitoring way beyond the scope of the actual EU Roma Framework in order to generate knowledge about the political, societal, economic, and cultural context of Roma equality and inclusion. The reports reveal how important it is to recognise the context and complexity in which various social inclusion measures take place.

> *"The case studies presented in this report reveal [that] the root of many problems [that Roma are facing] is antigypsyism – too little is being done to challenge the cultural, institutional and political foundations of racism towards the Roma. This neglect and lack of resolve can be classified as a long standing and unresolved problem with significant consequences. The RCM reports reveal that too often political leaders prompted by*

> antigypsyism are playing the 'race card' against the Roma[;] in other words 'othering' and scapegoating the Roma for political ends. The monitoring reports reveal […] longstanding concern about the media and its demonisation of Romani communities, [while] a relative blind spot is the growing role of social media in scapegoating the Roma, a problem the RCM reports have dramatically highlighted. The RCM reports provide important insights into the economic, cultural and spatial consequences of antigypsyism that constrains and minimises Roma life chances."
> (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020a)

The RCM contributed to understanding the overall environment in which Roma live and in which Romani civil society operates, in particular by identifying how antigypsyism perpetuates the attitudes of governments and their inaction. The international capacity-building workshop for the national monitoring coalitions in the third monitoring cycle thus raised the question why a system-level approach to evaluating policies is necessary for addressing systemic antigypsyism. Besides the historical roots of antigypsyism, Marko Pecak pointed out that "many societal institutions provide […] service[s] of unequal quality and resources to Roma compared to the dominant society" and that "the complexity of the history and systems means that the level of intervention (government institutions) must match the level of the issue", as well as suggested that "evaluating an antigypsyist public policy can help with identifying the negative impacts and issues Romani communities face, bring [identify] the issue as responsibility due to government failure, [and] provide options on how the government can solve the problem with a lens of Roma equity (it can actually incentivise governments to take action or revisit certain practices)" (Pecak, 2019). The civil monitoring created opportunities for the more holistic monitoring of Roma equality by focusing on specific issues of antigypsyism, such as institutional settings, structural discrimination, hate crime and hate speech, and also the narratives and public discourses that shape the daily realities of Roma, as well as applied a critical analysis of antigypsyism as a cross-cutting issue and structural barrier in the main thematic areas: "It is not possible

to understand and analyse the social exclusion and discrimination faced by Roma without analysing what impact antigypsyism has in the various societal and policy fields. Antigypsyism is an independent variable in social exclusion and inequality patterns" (author's interview with Guillermo Ruiz). As Lídia Balogh points out in this volume regarding intersectionality – which should not be perceived only as a specific separate policy field, but taken into account and used as a lens to analyse structural inequalities in all fields of life – the analysis and monitoring of antigypsyism also requires such a cross-cutting horizontal approach. Antigypsyism as a root cause and exclusionary mechanism can be analysed in the structural and horizontal preconditions of policy measures, in matters of participation and equality, and in inclusion-related approaches in all specific thematic areas; but also in public, political, media, and cultural discourse and practices.

In this way, the RCM contributes to framing the contentious issues around Roma inclusion that challenge the dominant institutional diagnosis of and rationalisation for governmental interventions that are outlined in the introduction to this article. The system-level analysis addresses especially the issue of the historical underpinnings and cumulative inequities involved in the phenomenon. It expands the earlier individualised anti-discrimination framing into a wider, structural analysis of society and of applied antigypsyism. The framing of antigypsyism not only helps to understand and diagnose exclusion-related problems, but advances a new inclusive narrative about Roma equality and empowerment and about the roles and responsibilities of mainstream institutions, as well as articulating comprehensively the issue and rationalisation of policy interventions:

> *"Reports powerfully tell that antigypsyism [should] be addressed specifically as a historically accumulated and legitimised social and political agenda which cannot be sufficiently addressed with anti-discrimination policy frames and diagnostic measures. Cross-country discussions started in the RCM group on how interventions [aimed at] fighting antigypsyism [should] or could be identical to or different from the established anti-discrimination policy interventions."*
> (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018c)

The important debates among researchers and civil society organisations that were initiated in and through the RCM regarding the framing of 'addressing antigypsyism' and tackling the manifestations of discrimination need to continue, especially in order to consolidate a common understanding and effective operationalisation for monitoring purposes.

How this subject is framed plays an important role in the operationalisation of this monitoring, in defining the research priorities and methods of data collection, and also in the interpretation of data. Although there is a growing civil society and institutional consensus, as well as established standards about equality data collection (ENAR, 2015; OSF, 2014; European Commission, 2016; European Commission, 2017; Fay et al., 2019), Reuss and Mack highlight the risks and limitations of existing data collection approaches, in particular when it comes to ethnic data, issues regarding the protection of sensitive data, and the reinforcement of ethnic labelling and stigmatisation; but also in relation to the explanatory value of only researching quantitative data about Roma without analysing the mechanisms of antigypsyism:

> *"Without in-depth knowledge of the effects and manifestations of antigypsyism, research and data analysis run the risk of reversing cause and effect, and thus contributing to reproducing antigypsyism. With regard to data collection to combat discrimination and inequality, the recognition of antigypsyism must be the basis for the interpretation of socio-economic conditions." (Reuss et al., 2019).*

Therefore, a clear understanding of antigypsyism will permit not only the identification of exclusionary mechanisms, but also the reconstruction of issues of responsibility and accountability. The RCM succeeded in building on the added value of case studies that collected knowledge and evidence from the local level. NGOs' grassroots experience represented relevant and valuable testimony concerning how public policies work in reality – local evidence sometimes even contradicted institutional and

expert assessments; furthermore, it generated relevant insight into the mechanisms of antigypsyism and contributed to the understanding and interpretation of data.

The conceptualisation of data collection approaches, the framing and labelling of research issues, as well as the interpretation of collected data are thus not self-evident and given preconditions, but should be critically assessed, and require us to take up political positions based on a profound and comprehensive historical understanding of the oppression, injustice, and racism against Roma.

The impact and benefits of monitoring antigypsyism

The RCM researchers and national coalitions that were interviewed were sceptical about being able to fully measure and define the impact of the RCM at this stage, including regarding the monitoring of antigypsyism; however, they identified several important effects and benefits created by the work. Many coalitions highlighted the importance of their participation in the RCM as a learning process, and the latter as a capacity-building network.

> *"It has been an important and originally less pronounced outcome of the RCM project that both the civil society partners and the expert group have engaged in cross-regional exchange and learning [about] inclusion and exclusion problem[s], policy dilemmas, experiments, and debates on Roma equality in different parts of Europe. Instructive lessons have been drawn [about] rare complexities [in relation to] converging and diverging manifestations and faces of inequalities in Southern Europe, the Nordic countries, Western, and Central and Eastern Europe."*
> (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020c)

The RCM contributed to increasing civil society capacity to monitor and address governmental interventions in a comprehensive way, based on the RCM monitoring guidelines. For many coalitions, the RCM constituted the first practice of researching institutional and structural antigypsyism

and identifying the various dimensions and mechanisms of antigypsyism through case studies. In particular, the recognition of alternative forms of knowledge production about antigypsyism, including the valuation of subjective experience that puts Roma's experiences and voices at the core, increases Roma's ownership and participation in knowledge production. 'Addressing antigypsyism' proved for many coalitions to be a very useful framing device for articulating realities and research conclusions. Thus, the coalitions were able to increase both visibility and awareness of the experiences and voices of Roma by contributing through their sharp analyses and by making recommendations regarding the emancipatory movement, mobilisation, and advocacy of Roma, while also translating the latter realities into policy debates. Additionally, the CSO monitoring coalitions were able to consult a very wide and diverse range of stakeholders concerned with Roma equality issues, from people directly affected and self-organisations to welfare organisations, equality bodies, local administration, and academia. Many RCM coalitions noted that, by looking directly at the realities and policy impact experienced by the people affected, but also by considering the multiple perspectives of all relevant stakeholders, their own recognition of the value of evaluation and monitoring increased, and they were able to take a leadership role in shaping policy debates using new evidence and multiple perspectives.

While government reporting to the European Commission during the first EU Roma Framework (reports that were often not published or accessible to the public) took a very limited form (European Commission, 2018c; European Roma Civil Society Coalition, 2019; European Roma Civil Society Coalition, 2020) and was focused on policies, implemented measures, funding invested and targeted beneficiaries, the civil society reports were very comprehensive accounts that addressed not only state action, but also inaction, gaps, and the issues of effectiveness and impact. RCM coalitions reported that their specific expertise related to fighting antigypsyism was recognised based on the reports, and some had been invited to run awareness-raising training events, even by public administrations. The RCM thus increased the recognition and legitimacy of the knowledge production of the monitoring coalitions: "For many NGOs the essential

added value of RCM was the symbolic status of the produced monitoring reports as EU publications" (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020c). In a similar way, several RCM coalitions felt that the symbolic status of the RCM reports had contributed to an increase in the recognition of antigypsyism as a relevant topic at the institutional level; the comprehensive overview of patterns of antigypsyism in society allowed CSOs to enter into dialogue with institutions at the national level about the fight against antigypsyism. The knowledge of the RCM, particularly about antigypsyism, was not only relevant in the policy debates associated with the EU Roma Framework, but also in other policy fields such as online hate speech, hate crime, and anti-racism action plans, and was of use in public and media discourse. The new 2020-2030 EU Roma strategic framework underlines the importance of mainstreaming Roma equality across all relevant policies fields; therefore, this increases the importance of the capacity of civil society to monitor antigypsyism and mainstream the fight against antigypsyism.

At the EU level, the RCM contributed to developing the capacity of European Romani and pro-Roma civil society to engage in the EU Roma Framework post-2020 policy debates about the monitoring system and indicator framework (European Roma Civil Society Coalition, 2019; European Roma Civil Society Coalition, 2020), and to advocate for adequate Roma participation in the FRA Roma Working Party, which, nevertheless, continues without Romani and pro-Roma civil society participation. The example of the German RCM coalition that initiated an exchange with other racialised communities about equality data collection reflects the growing need and capacity of civil society to participate in defining standards for data collection and monitoring, as well as to demand the adequate participation of civil society in all aspects of monitoring and evaluating policies and measures (Egenberger et al., 2019). Based on the advocacy work of the RCM coalition, the German government decided in November 2020 to include and finance several measures against antigypsyism in the frame of an action plan against racism and right-wing extremism, which included the evaluation of all measures against antigypsyism based on civil society participation, and the establishment of a monitoring body on antigypsyism (Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und

Roma, 2020). In the Netherlands, according to the CSO coalition, the RCM report (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018d) and advocacy efforts, together with the FRA survey (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2020), contributed to a motion for the recognition and fight against antigypsyism being adopted in the national parliament in October 2020.[11] In Lithuania, the RCM report contributed to successful civil society advocacy to end forced evictions and to define a new housing policy approach (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018e). In Austria, the RCM leading organisation Romano Centro successfully put the recognition of antigypsyism on the national agenda, which contributed to the Austrian EU Presidency event on combatting antigypsyism and to the adoption of the IHRA Working Definition on Antigypsyism by the national Cabinet of Ministers in April 2021.[12] These few examples illustrate just some contributions of the RCM. Nonetheless, it remains difficult to single out and link the success of even these examples (but also others) to only to the RCM, which is contributing to various parallel advocacy and mobilisation efforts. Moreover, analysing the advocacy impact of the initiative remains outside the scope of this article, which focuses on sharpening the understanding of antigypsyism and of exclusion of Roma.

Sharpening the understanding of exclusion: substantive insights[13]

Much can be learned from the substantive insights of the national RCM reports to sharpen the understanding of antigypsyism, as will be demonstrated in the following section by a number of selected examples, without providing an exhaustive account and analysis of all issues and countries covered by the RCM. The interviewed researchers highlighted how the monitoring exercise and the guidelines contributed to uncovering new and often ignored issues, and to developing new knowledge about antigypsyism, but also that the RCM often helped to address certain

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11 Roma Utrecht Foundation (2021). Antigypsyism politically recognised in the Netherlands.

12 https://www.bundeskanzleramt.gv.at/medien/ministerraete/ministerraete-2021/54-ministerrat-7-april-2021.html

13 With the contribution of Gwendolyn Albert.

issues about which researchers had a first impression about the prevalent mechanisms, and to expose these more systematically with solid evidence and in an institutionally recognised format.

The RCM revealed how antigypsyism motivates both action and inaction by law enforcement in many countries, leading to racial profiling, the over- and under-policing of Romani communities, repressive collective measures, criminalisation, as well as the denial and ignorance of anti-Roma bias in the context of hate crimes. Antigypsyism compromises the rule of law and undermines state responsibility to ensure the security of Roma. Across Europe and across thematic policy areas, the RCM revealed that antigypsyism significantly decreases the effectiveness of any social inclusion policy, in particular those connected to education (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018b).

In Bulgaria, the RCM coalition unveiled how antigypsyist attitudes among majority society led to 'white-flight' in schools in which have more than 25% of Romani students, creating a large number of secondary segregated schools – these outnumber primary segregated schools by as much as a factor of three and thus require specific attention and different interventions than segregated schools in areas associated with residential segregation (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018f). While the French RCM researchers initially considered the monitoring guidelines on school segregation to be irrelevant in their national context, they uncovered complex mechanisms of antigypsyism that lead to residential and educational segregation (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018g). Antigypsyism leading to educational discrimination and forms of segregation was also addressed by the German RCM coalition, which published the third report about the historical roots, mechanisms, and manifestations of antigypsyism in social work and public administration (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019b). The Austrian RCM addressed how the government tends to outsource its own institutional responsibility (for instance, to improve the educational success of Romani children) to Romani and pro-Roma NGOs, while ignoring antigypsyism in the educational system and consequently its own structural responsibility to change institutional behaviour and improve the educational system for all students (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019c).

The Czech RCM problematised the dominant narrative and understanding in Czech society according to which "anti-Roma sentiment" is considered a result of "Roma causing problems", as this narrative (which reverses cause and effect, victim and perpetrator, as well as the discourse about "mutual coexistence") only covers up and denies the strong antigypsyist undercurrent in Czech society (Albert, 2019; Roma Civil Monitor, 2018h). In a similar way, in Hungary the RCM report analyses public discourse about "mutual aggression", which equates the reactions of a heavily stigmatised and racialised Romani community with dominant and socially accepted racist public discourse and hate speech, again inverting cause and effect. This shows the social acceptance of a "Roma criminality"[14] narrative in the justice system – which has also convicted more Roma for "anti-Hungarian bias motivation" than racist perpetrators for incitement or anti-Roma hate speech (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018i). The criminalisation of Roma and Travellers by members of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and political leaders, and in particular the criminalisation of trespassing and halting sites, is addressed by the UK RCM which analyses and points out the role of the 'yellow press' in inciting antigypsyism in public and media discourses – a grave topic that obviously requires further monitoring and research across Europe (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018j). In Lithuania, the RCM identified in the context of substance-abuse issues the collective public criminalisation and stigmatisation of the Romani community, which has led to the scapegoating of Roma and repressive measures, as well as to the inaction of the government and failure to take responsibility for the primary inclusion- and equality-related issues of the community (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019d). The Dutch RCM revealed the complex mechanisms of antigypsyism across most areas of life and problematised the generally repressive policies and measures of the public authorities on a local and national level. Furthermore, it revealed how the so-called mainstream approach that does not allow 'ethnic targeting' can lead to inaction and

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14   Sometimes, politicians and media use in local languages expression "Romani criminality" giving even stronger ethnic attribution and culturalisation of criminality (e. g., in Slovakia, Czechia or Bulgaria).

ignorance of the government; for instance, the government claimed that they cannot record ethnic data related to hate crimes; however, registering a racist bias does not require ethnic data, but the identification of the racist motivation of the perpetrators (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018k).

While institutions in the past often dismissed the call to recognise and fight against antigypsyism based on a lack of data and information, the RCM reports have succeeded in documenting the ongoing progress in knowledge production that uncovers and helps counter antigypsyism.

Challenges and limitations of the civic monitoring of antigypsyism

As much as the contributions of monitoring antigypsyism are related to the overall added value of the RCM, certain challenges were embedded in the structural conditions and limitations of the process itself. Several country teams felt that the timeframe and the financial resources (thus also the human resources) for each country and monitoring cycle were limited, which represented a burden in relation to achieving the same level of data collection and in-depth analysis for all relevant substantive areas. The reports often had to rely on pre-existing knowledge and thematic research from various local, regional, and national organisations to comprehensively cover all areas and questions. This made it especially challenging to promote the required shift of perspective in relation to addressing antigypsyism, as knowledge production with the critical analysis of antigypsyism still constitutes an emerging research field in many countries. Some researchers highlighted that the country clustering approach (according to the size of the Romani population and to the gravity of the problem) did not necessarily correspond to the gravity of antigypsyism in each Member State. For instance, while the Romani population in France and Italy might only represent a small proportion of the total population, it was suggested that more focus and resources be dedicated to these countries because of the gravity of antigypsyism, specifically regarding residential segregation and exclusion.

Although the RCM project was initiated by the European Parliament and Commission as a capacity-building program, the main attention of those involved in its overall implementation had to be focused on the preparation and delivery of high-quality reports. Nevertheless, the civil society consortium identified the key needs of the national monitoring coalitions and researchers, and invested accordingly into capacity-building as a precondition of the monitoring exercise. The capacity-building component aimed at policy monitoring and analysis and report development not only included training, networking, and peer exchange, monitoring guidelines, and the creation of a resource pool at the European level, but lots of the resources and time of the EU-level consortium were invested into coaching the national coalitions and authors throughout the whole RCM project, as well as during the commenting and reviewing process and revising of reports. During the three project years, the RCM consortium, international experts and national researchers went through a joint learning process that was particularly focused on negotiating a clear understanding of antigypsyism and developing a comprehensive monitoring approach. Nevertheless, several coalitions felt that the focus on the delivery of high-quality reports limited investment into the capacity-building process on the national level, in particular as regards the training and coaching of grassroots organisations and new researchers – which was considered important for involving an expanding network of researchers and organisations. Especially related to antigypsyism, civil society members expressed a need for more investment into capacity-building areas such as peer exchange and training with additional thematic inputs, as well as into dissemination and advocacy capacity in order to increase the impact of this work. Some researchers highlighted the need to plan dissemination and advocacy from the very beginning, and as a priority dimension of the RCM; in particular, how to translate the conclusions and recommendations from a pre-digital shadow-reporting approach into digestible narratives that can reach and impact public and political discourses, as well as policy-making processes.

A major challenge remains for civil monitoring: that hardly any structures exist that are capable of the systematic monitoring and research of antigypsyism. The Austrian RCM demonstrated the contribution of their specific biannual monitoring reports on antigypsyism for data collection, awareness-raising, and advocacy, as these also informed the RCM reports, but the former lack a sustainable structure and funding (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018l). The Swedish expert commission on antigypsyism produced an important white paper that uncovered 100 years of antigypsyist policies and practices, but this lacked continuity and follow-up (Carrera et al., 2017). In Germany, Sinti and Roma self-organisations and academia have laid the ground over two or three decades to advance historical research on antigypsyism, as institutionalised in the academic network 'Society for the Research of Antigypsyism' and in the recently established 'Research Centre on Antigypsyism' at the University of Heidelberg, which mostly covers historical research about the Holocaust and about antigypsyist narratives and visual representation, but does not cover many policy-relevant areas (Roma Civil Monitor, 2018m). The potential for building stronger connections between civil monitoring and academic research has not been fully exploited, in particular in relation to the analysis and understanding of the historical underpinning and structural roots of today's realities and exclusion problems – and on the other hand, in relation to making academia more inclusive and self-critical as regards democratic knowledge-production, as well as producing knowledge relevant for public policies that can deliver impact and change for racialised communities. It also became evident in the RCM that more mainstream structures that deal with equality and non-discrimination at the national level, such as equality bodies, national human rights institutes, and anti-racism and anti-discrimination organisations, should recognise antigypsyism and integrate efforts to counter it into their mandates and objectives; namely, to contribute to monitoring, disaggregated data collection and research; support victims of discrimination to report and seek justice; and raise awareness among marginalised communities about racial discrimination and protection mechanisms (Mihalache et al., 2019). The French RCM

researchers noted that, due to the complex and deep internalisation of antigypsyism by the affected communities, the lack of trust in institutions, and consequent underreporting by the former, it would not be possible at this stage to collect representative statistical data about antigypsyism, but the focus should rather be on analysing processes and enforcement mechanisms in order to develop a deep understanding of the functioning and sanctioning of antigypsyism.

Besides the issues of capacity-building and the practical implementation of civil monitoring, a key challenge for the monitoring of antigypsyism that remains is the necessary consolidation of its conceptual basis, framing, operationalisation, and policy implications. As the introductory chapter of this article has shown, it has been a slow process in recent years to replace the dominant socio-economic integration narrative and 'modus operandi' with a more comprehensive understanding of the implications of institutional and structural antigypsyism on equality and inclusion. While there is growing recognition of antigypsyism as a specific form of structural and institutional racism by civil society and EU institutions, this recognition remains contested, especially on the national level and by the public, where the emerging debate about antigypsyism and anti-Roma racism is only slowly reaching a wider audience. Evolving debates among Roma civil society and academia about terminology are contributing to the consolidation of a clear anti-racist narrative (Lajčáková et al., 2020; Cortes et al., 2019; Oprea et al., 2019), although many governments continue to lack a clear understanding of this concept, or deny the existence and relevance of antigypsyism and racism more generally, and as a consequence also deny institutional responsibility for these phenomena.

The RCM researchers expressed that there is a need for a working definition of antigypsyism that is comprehensible to a wide range of actors, consistent in its concept and language, and appropriate for use in monitoring and policy-making. The debate about the understanding, framing, and definition of antigypsyism and about a working definition should continue to develop, and this requires not just translation and

transposition into national contexts and languages, but also the emergence of proper discourse and reflection about it both on the European and national level (see Lajčáková et al., 2020).

In addition, the RCM researchers reported concern about whether the different forms of use of the term antigypsyism (e. g., as a root cause of exclusion, or as exclusionary mechanisms, but also as the related manifestations and consequences) can still ensure analytical clarity and foster a common understanding. The question was raised whether critical theories and perspectives about antigypsyism can serve as effective language for advocating and communicating with policymakers, who often reject anti-racism as not sufficiently operationalised for policy implementation, and as an abstract, moralising buzzword. It has been a challenge for civil society advocacy to not only draw attention to specific policy and legislation-relevant areas of antigypsyism, such as the context of hate speech and hate crimes, but also to demonstrate that the cross-cutting policy analysis regarding antigypsyism reveals governmental failures related to the ineffectiveness of public policies, funding, and inclusion measures. Other researchers voiced concern that Member States would label 'addressing antigypsyism' a foreign concept imposed "from Brussels" – the latter which often serves as the bogeyman in the national context – or that Member States would even satisfy the new requirements for the renewed 2020-2030 EU Roma strategic framework on paper, but that this would not lead to any institutional change or practical implementation due to the lack of change in the societal-political context or increasing civil society advocacy. The French RCM analysed the misconception of the identity labels used by public administration to develop policy measures for "Roma", while in reality their approach targets any persons perceived and labelled a "gypsy" in the public imagination, reflecting a core element of institutional antigypsyism (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019e).

Some of the RCM coalitions reflected on the RCM monitoring guidelines during the first monitoring cycle, which included separate chapters on 'anti-discrimination' and 'addressing antigypsyism'. The RCM coalitions that were interviewed generally highlighted that the monitoring

guidelines on antigypsyism and discrimination were very helpful, particularly due to the specific questions and recommendations attached to the monitoring exercise. However, the separate framing involved in taking into account discrimination as a manifestation of antigypsyism appeared confusing to some coalitions, and led to overlap and duplication both within these two sections and between the first and the second monitoring cycle. For instance, discriminatory behaviour by police, prosecutors, and courts was addressed in the 'anti-discrimination' section, but also often raised by many national coalitions in the context of access to justice, and countering hate crime, hate speech, and the antigypsyist rhetoric of institutions in the section 'addressing antigypsyism'. Another example is that in the first monitoring cycle the 'anti-discrimination' section addressed educational segregation and discrimination, as the RCM consortium aimed to address the major structural problems during the first round which were often ignored by the European Commission, while the second monitoring cycle on thematic policies also focused on discrimination in education. As outlined in the previous chapters, the initial rationale of the framing was that anti-discrimination was an established policy field with legal and institutional provisions that have been defined in the EU Roma Framework, and in relation to which the European Commission has regulatory power based on the Racial Equality Directive. In this area of 'anti-discrimination' hard facts and tangible manifestations of discrimination may be monitored and specific forms of discrimination identified and distinguished. In the 'addressing antigypsyism' section, the RCM aimed to cover the broader societal and political context, social communication and the opinions and attitudes that create a culture of impunity and affect all other areas of equality, inclusion, and participation. However, this section also included the dimension of hate crime and hate speech, as these viral and life-threatening expressions of hatred go way beyond mere issues of discrimination; thus, legal and institutional provisions had to be monitored as well in the section on 'addressing antigypsyism'. Most RCM coalitions underlined the importance of not only including antigypsyism as a cross-cutting issue, but welcomed the specific additional monitoring chapter on 'addressing

antigypsyism' as a contribution to the identification and recognition of antigypsyism beyond the anti-discrimination framing. The guidelines on 'anti-discrimination' and 'addressing antigypsyism' could probably be streamlined, combined, or slightly restructured in the future to address more comprehensively the analysis of anti-racism and anti-discrimination legislation, mechanisms, and institutions, as well as of the institutional settings and societal and political context, while avoiding duplication between the different monitoring cycles. All forms of antigypsyism need to be defined and addressed under respective criminal or civil matters in national laws so that there is no room for confusion or impunity. As such, the RCM should go beyond the existing legal and institutional provisions in order to constantly promote system-level monitoring that analyses the structural and institutional dimensions, the societal context, the root causes, and the racial undercurrents of Europe's history.

Another highly relevant debate among RCM researchers concerning the civil monitoring process in recent years is related to the question how much weight should be attributed to antigypsyism or to other factors that reinforce exclusion. In this regard, notable differences could be found between Western and Eastern EU Member States. In countries with more robust and better functioning social inclusion and welfare policies, more focus was given to problems of antigypsyism, while in the post-communist countries with weaker systems the focus was on ensuring basic welfare and improving the humanitarian situation (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020c). This reflects the various problems and functions associated with antigypsyism – for instance, with regard to legitimising discriminatory measures, promoting neoliberal social reform, or strengthening border regimes – but may also reflect different strategies, strengths, and weaknesses of civil society regarding resistance to dominant policy frames and racist public discourses. This debate raised the question how to accentuate political priorities in order to promote Roma equality and participation through inclusionary measures or activities aimed at fighting antigypsyism.

> *"In rare cases internal tensions and conflicts among the NGOs in the coalitions concerned diverse interpretations of the problems of exclusion and assessment of the policy answers. Such conflicts were related, for example, to the questions such as whether the country actually needs a Roma inclusion strategy, or [if] fighting antigypsyism is sufficient; or whether the ongoing social exclusion of Roma and ineffectiveness of the measures implemented by […] civil society [are] primarily due to a lack of involvement of Roma or other reasons [such as] diverging preferences [regarding the] targeted and mainstreaming approach; or other issues, including personal conflicts or concurrence among […] NGOs."*
> (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020c)

While some researchers of national RCM coalitions were hesitant to follow the RCM monitoring guidelines for the thematic inclusion policy areas, as they perceived the problems mainly to be issues resulting from antigypsyism, other RCM researchers expressed concern that too much attention was being given to monitoring antigypsyism, as important technical knowledge about institutional structures, budgeting, and policy cycles would be required to translate the problem analysis into the language of the authorities and transform solutions directly into policies and budgets. Similar arguments were voiced in the past by representatives of the European Commission, echoing concern that the growing mobilisation and advocacy of Romani and pro-Roma civil society to fight antigypsyism would substitute inclusion policies and funding. Taking into account that 'socio-economic integration' approaches still represent the dominant framing, and that institutions on a national level mostly ignore or deny antigypsyism even now, this debate should not blur the sharp understanding of the connection between antigypsyism and inclusion, and consequently the role and contribution that these approaches offer for promoting Roma equality, as explained by the *Reference Paper on Antigypsyism*:

"Antigypsyism is not the result of the poor living conditions many Roma have to live in, or the result of 'how different they are'. The idea that promoting Roma integration is the main path to countering antigypsyism is a fallacy that misconstrues the origins and essence of antigypsyism. It inverts cause and effect. This means that addressing the effects of discriminatory treatment – poverty, poor quality housing, substandard education, to name a few – is necessary, but in and of itself does nothing to eradicate the ultimate source of the disadvantaged position of many Romani citizens. Consequently, antigypsyism cannot be simply treated as a thematic issue, alongside housing, education, health and employment. It needs to be dealt with as an integral part of thematic policies."
(Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016)

Civil society networks at the EU level (Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2019; European Roma Civil Society Coalition, 2020) and the RCM significantly contributed to this debate with a clear understanding of 'addressing antigypsyism' both as a specific as well as a cross-cutting issue that reconciles these two perspectives based on a complementary, holistic approach to fighting antigypsyism and advancing equality and inclusion. This debate reflects the need expressed by participating organisations for better understanding, operationalisation, and data collection regarding antigypsyism as a horizontal phenomenon, as well as promoting the learning process and exchanges about how to counteract antigypsyism in all areas of life. In particular, addressing the horizontal dimension requires exploring the connection of antigypsyism to the complex mechanisms and dimensions of institutional behaviour, ethnicising discourses, and paternalistic practices, for instance, but also sharpening the analytical tools that are used to monitor antigypsyism not only in its visible expressions but in its hidden and implicit forms, such as a lack of political will, inaction, disempowerment, and denial.

The systemic nature and manifestations of antigypsyism are not just the object of such monitoring exercises, but in fact constitute a challenge to and can even undermine the impact of such monitoring and knowledge production itself.

> *"Data and studies in themselves do not generate political will that translates into effective (governmental) action. For this to happen, research and the production of data and knowledge must be related to the objective pursued. The countless human and fundamental rights violations, school segregation and forced evictions of Roma in many European countries are well documented. However, as long as antigypsyism is widely embedded, accepted and legitimised in society and in political discourse, there will be no political will to end discrimination and inequality. As long as antigypsyism is not taken seriously and recognised as a fundamental problem at the national and local levels, discrimination and exclusion will continue. Anti-discrimination data collection will thus necessarily fail to achieve its purpose and run the risk of cementing racial prejudice (as a self-fulfilling prophecy)."*
> (Reuss et al, 2019)

As the RCM reports were commissioned by the European Commission, the main approach was to publish key conclusions from the civil society assessment alongside those of national government reports; however, no across-the-board mechanism was established requiring governments to take note of and react to the civil society reports, as institutionalised in certain UN and Council of Europe monitoring systems.

It is clearly not just knowledge and data about inclusion and about antigypsyism that is missing in terms of improving the situation of Roma; rather, the latter is about building the power to achieve substantial change. Some RCM coalitions perceived challenges and were hesitant about how to confront authorities concerning issues of antigypsyism or with critical assessments of governmental policies and activities or malfunctioning

at the local level because they feared they would lose their standing and resources. In a societal context in Europe – one that is fuelled by racist and populist hate speech and a narrowing space for civil society – in which antigypsyism remains more the norm than the exception, it is not only structures and methods that are required to monitor antigypsyism, but courage, political and financial independence, and the power to create public debate about antigypsyism and about the role and responsibility of mainstream institutions with respect to it.

Conclusions

The RCM pilot project created the first civil monitoring practice across EU Member States for addressing the complex mechanisms and manifestations of antigypsyism, as well as analysing the policies and strategies for countering and preventing antigypsyism. Monitoring antigypsyism has contributed to sharpening the understanding of oppression, discrimination, and the exclusion of Roma. The RCM has produced substantive insight into how antigypsyism becomes manifest, and has created a strong analytical and advocacy tool for civil society that helps shift the focus to the role of majority society and to the responsibilities of the institutions that should defend and represent democratic values and the rule of law. Monitoring antigypsyism has proven to be of strong and relevant explanatory value in a comprehensive system-level analysis, in particular in relation to advancing understanding about the political, societal, economic, and cultural context in which efforts to promote Roma equality, inclusion, and participation take place.

This article has identified relevant lessons learned for future monitoring practices by reflecting on the benefits, impact, challenges, and limitations of monitoring antigypsyism based on the experiences of the RCM. In conclusion, there is a need to continuously strengthen discourse at the national and EU level to consolidate the recognition, understanding, and framing of antigypsyism, including by adopting a working definition of antigypsyism as a basis for monitoring, countering, and preventing

it. The analysis stresses the importance of monitoring antigypsyism as a specific policy issue, but also of applying it as an analytical, cross-cutting issue (similar to intersectionality) across all relevant thematic policy areas and even in hidden and implicit expressions, institutional behaviour, ethnicising discourses, and paternalistic practices. The RCM paves the way for a comprehensive, system-level monitoring approach to antigypsyism and structural discrimination; however, it is necessary to ensure more systematic data collection and comparison over time and across countries with regard to the various aspects of antigypsyism. At the same time, it can be beneficial for civic knowledge production to tailor approaches to the national context, to identify the blind spots that result from historical injustice, to understand both structural and institutional antigypsyism, and to recognise, validate, and invest into knowledge production and case studies at the grassroots level.

The RCM has contributed significantly to the capacity building of local and national civil society organisations through an intensive learning-by-doing and coaching process. Nevertheless, more investment into capacity-building was requested by national coalitions to facilitate transnational peer exchange and networking, as well as to increase, on the national level, the network of researchers and (grassroots) organisations to generate more profound understanding and capacity – in particular, regarding the articulation of structural and institutional aspects of antigypsyism. Furthermore, it is essential to strengthen the dissemination and advocacy capacity of national coalitions in order to communicate the conclusions and recommendations using effective narratives in public and media discourses, as well as to advocate them at the policy-making level.

The RCM sheds light on how specific monitoring structures for antigypsyism on the local and national level can make an important contribution to civil monitoring efforts and policy debates. Roma-led monitoring bodies on antigypsyism can improve victim support structures, but also register, document, and advocate evidence at the policy-making level about antigypsyist incidents and the experiences of Roma with racism; those which are never reported to public authorities, for instance, in the

context of hate crime and hate speech, but also instances that are not clearly covered by law. The RCM can provide direction for academic research, but also bring the insights from emerging academic research on antigypsyism into public policy debates – which is important, especially with regard to analysing the long history of antigypsyism in Europe. Taking into account that there is a risk of public policy monitoring reflecting only a current snapshot of the realities of Roma, it is important to promote the stand-alone monitoring of antigypsyism, and to establish structures that analyse historical injustices and forms of antigypsyism, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, or independent expert commissions on antigypsyism. This first monitoring practice also highlighted the need to mainstream the monitoring of antigypsyism, and to engage mainstream structures (such as equality bodies, human rights institutes, and anti-discrimination bodies) in this work, which is a part of their responsibility.

Monitoring, countering, and preventing antigypsyism plays a fundamental role in the effective implementation of the 2020-2030 EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation. How monitoring antigypsyism will be adequately addressed in future civil monitoring still needs to be defined, also in the reporting of the Member States and of the European Commission, along with how effective Roma participation may be ensured in all processes. The growing recognition of antigypsyism is not the final step but a necessary one on the path towards redistribution and systemic change. The monitoring of antigypsyism exposes the responsibilities and failures of governments and strengthens the system of accountability; it will challenge the prevalent social acceptance of antigypsyism and the barriers that prohibit the promotion of equality, inclusion, and participation for Roma. Above all, the bottom-up struggle for justice, equality, and participation requires empowerment, social mobilisation, and tireless civil society advocacy, to which this civil monitoring initiative, and especially the monitoring of antigypsyism, can significantly contribute.

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UNCHARTED TERRITORIES AND CROSS–CUTTING PUBLICS: INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF JOINT EFFORTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY REPORTING ON MAINSTREAM AND ROMANI WOMEN'S ISSUES

by Lídia Balogh

This essay is a series of reflections regarding a specific segment of civil society reporting in the European context; namely, the joint endeavours of mainstream and Romani (or pro-Roma) actors concerning women's rights. Through the consideration of conceptual, political, and practical aspects, I arrive at the conclusion that these kinds of initiatives – as acts of "strategic sisterhood" (Nyhagen, Predelli and Halsaa, 2012) – may be fruitful in terms of raising insightful questions and helping obtain a better understanding of certain complex social issues, especially by revealing the interconnectedness of seemingly separate issues or by offering new viewpoints. I will use the concept of intersectionality to highlight certain phenomena associated with inequalities.

Just to clarify at the very beginning: by 'civil society reporting' I mean activities undertaken by civil society actors (as for 'civil society actors', I share questions and considerations below) involving collecting, processing, organising, and presenting information related to a social issue, a political development, a legislative area, or to a public policy field. These documents are typically prepared and submitted upon the call of an international or

supranational organisation (e.g., by a United Nations (UN) entity, by a Council of Europe convention mechanism, by the European Commission (EC), or by an international NGO). When the role of a civil society report is to amend or challenge the information provided by an official/governmental report on the same topic, it is called a 'parallel report', an 'alternative report', or a 'shadow report'. Sometimes NGOs are invited to report to the government of a foreign country regarding an issue of transnational relevance: e.g., the U.S. State Department's annual, country-specific *Trafficking in Persons* reports are supposed to be syntheses of official communication and information provided by relevant NGOs. As for the impact of these kinds of contributions, it is difficult to measure or to prove direct causality. However, the knowledge provided by civil society reporting is supposed to become absorbed within a monitoring or decision-making process, or, ideally, to change a perspective. For example, the issue of intersectionality, in terms of race and sex, was channelled into the context of CEDAW via its monitoring mechanism – i.e., via the CEDAW Committee's ongoing work of interpreting the Convention's principles and aims (Schulz, 2013).

Notably, I share here my ideas in the context of the 'Roma Civil Monitor' project (RCM),[1] funded by the EC, which aimed "to contribute to strengthening the monitoring mechanisms of the implementation of the national Roma integration strategies", on the one hand (on a more direct level), "by supporting the preparation of high-quality, comprehensive annual civil society monitoring reports", and on the other hand (rather indirectly) "by developing the policy monitoring capacities of civil society actors". The aim of project call was, at least in the case of countries with significant Romani communities ('Cluster 1 countries'),[2] to recruit a diverse body of civil society organisations: "Selected NGOs taken together should have experience in various thematic fields and horizontal issues, and various types of localities. They should include NGOs with Roma and women in

1   See: CEU's Roma Civil Monitor webpage.

2   Call for proposals for civil society capacity building and monitoring of the implementation of national Roma integration strategies for Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia (Cluster 1 countries), 6 April 2017.

their leadership". The participating NGOs were supposedly coalitions on the national level tasked with preparing monitoring reports collectively. Understandably, given the broad range of fields and topics to be covered, collaboration between Romani women's organisations and mainstream women's rights organisations was not specifically required by the call. Eventually, as for the Cluster 1 countries, only one Romani women's association (operating in Romania) and one mainstream women's rights NGO (from Bulgaria) were included; among the total of 92 organisations there were three more Romani women's organisations (one from Greece and two from Spain).[3]

As for my position within the framework of the RCM project, I served as a 'gender expert' from the second year of the project, tasked with providing consultation for participating organisations and reviewing draft reports from the perspective of gender equality issues. As for my related experience beyond this project, I have contributed to previous civil society reports on the implementation of *Hungary's Roma Integration Strategy and the Decade of Roma Inclusion Action Plan*;[4] to an alternative report submitted to the UN CEDAW Committee jointly by the Hungarian Women's Lobby and the European Roma Rights Centre,[5] and a submission to the UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur on violence against women on mistreatment and violence against women during reproductive health care.[6]

3   See: Roma Civil Monitor – List of NGOs involved.

4   Civil Society Report on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and Decade Action Plan in Hungary in 2012; Updated Civil Society Report on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and Decade Action Plan in Hungary in 2012 and in 2013.

5   Alternative report submitted to the UN CEDAW Committee for consideration in relation to the examination of the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Hungary January 2013 by the Hungarian Women's Lobby and the European Roma Rights Centre.

6   The submission was initiated and coordinated by the Association of Independent Midwives, with the contribution of experts and representatives of the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Alternatal Foundation, the EMMA Association, and the Changes in Maternity Care movement; see: Submission on the issue of mistreatment and violence against women during reproductive health care with a focus on childbirth, as the subject of the next thematic report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women [May 2019].

About Civil Society Reporting

Before presenting the (direct or indirect) benefits of joint civil society reporting in the field of women's rights, I must touch upon a series of questions, without promising definitive answers.

The first is the very question: *What are we referring to when we talk about civil society actors?* In the academic literature, even the variety of terms used for these entities may be confusing – not just because the different terms may be used for different types of non-state actors, but also because terminological choices may correspond to the authors' approaches. Focusing on the area of the EU, Schoenefeld (2020) identifies three major conceptual 'framings' associated with a preference for the following terms: i) interest groups (emphasis on political advocacy), ii) NGOs (often used in the context of governance), and iii) civil society organisations (associated with participation).

Then: *Do we take civil society actors, especially NGOs, to be organic features of societies?* There is huge scholarship about the process of 'NGO-isation' that started in the second half of the twentieth century in the Western world, and then in post-socialist countries as well, with special attention to the process of the 'NGO-isation of civil society', which is considered as something inorganic (promoted and financed by external forces) and controversial. Císař (2020) reflects on the relevant processes in Eastern Europe, and on a kind of perceived alienation: "According to critics, the variability of potential civil society organisations was thus reduced to the narrow concept of professionalised advocacy organisations unable to engage citizens." Regarding joint civil society reporting initiatives, when we look for contributors, we may experience that advocacy organisations do not sprout from the ground, and this is especially true in the field of Romani women's issues. It is wishful thinking to expect that we may find an eligible Romani women's association in every region that can be considered authentic (preferably, grassroots), but which at the same time has the capacity for advocacy projects on national or European levels.

A connected question is: *Do we take NGOs at face value?* One of the more controversial aspects here is accountability. As claimed by Roy (2014): "In the long run, NGOs are accountable to their funders, not to the people

they work among". The second major controversy, intricately connected to the first one, is about legitimacy, given that, as Slim puts it (2002), "NGOs are essentially self-mandating" – referring to the circumstance that NGOs are not elected by constituencies. However, being 'self-mandating' does not necessarily mean 'self-determining', especially in the case of Central and Eastern European NGOs, which are often established and maintained with the financial support of Western/Northern organisations: the donors' agenda may influence the focus of resource-dependent 'Second World' NGOs (Fábián, 2014).

Coming closer to the issue of civil society reporting, the next question is: *Are NGOs expected to express bold criticism about the conduct of the state?*

There may be situations when non-governmental organisations are formally integrated into state apparatus (e.g., for the purpose of implementing social integration projects), thereby becoming dependent on state funding; thus "[t]o remain worthy of support, the organisation must furthermore consider toning down its criticism of state policies" (Nielsen, 2008, p. 38). Meanwhile, those NGOs which are recipients of foreign funding are subjected to legal restrictions and political hostility in certain countries, sometimes being explicitly labelled 'foreign agents' (Tysiachniouk, Tulaeva, and Henry, 2018).

At this point, we may ask: *What thus motivates NGOs to prepare and submit reports to international entities?*

Let me start with the counter-motivations. Civil society reporting is a 'luxury' in terms of human resources, as it needs a high level of knowledge of the field and special experience, not to mention working hours and coordination efforts. For project-funded NGOs (that may lack funding for ad hoc activities like report writing) this may mean a significant amount of extra voluntary work, both for the staff and experts involved: i.e., burning the midnight oil, and sacrificing recreation time. In certain schemes – e.g., in the context of the EU – funding may be available for NGOs engaged in civil society reporting.

Still, there is usually another discouraging factor: frustration. As we know, the primary purpose of civil society reports is disputing a country's official report or communications, or providing information about

otherwise unreported anomalies or structural problems for international organisations. It largely depends on the internal dynamics of the primary target audience (i.e., the international organisation), and on the receptivity of the secondary audience (i.e., the scrutinised government), but reporting may be an echoless and/or fruitless advocacy endeavour.

In cases of reporting to inter-governmental or supranational organisations, yet another inconvenience may be that NGOs experience 'double-communication' and loyalty conflicts. The situation is easy to understand, although it may be embarrassing. When NGOs are invited to criticise their governments (in certain Central and Eastern European countries, this means risking being stigmatised as a 'traitors of the nation'), the given international/supranational organisation is still typically interested in getting along well with the governments of the state parties or Member States. The dynamics are similar when an NGO reports to a foreign country's government (e.g., on a topic of special concern, like human trafficking): ultimately, the diplomatic relationship between the two countries is imbued with special value, understandably.

Notwithstanding the latter, and despite all the above-listed sources of frustration, some motivational factors remain for NGOs to become engaged in civil society reporting. As for the outcome, the document itself can (usually) be utilised in a number of ways: activists may use it as an awareness-raising tool; it can be shared with the media with the goal that its contents reach a broader public; and it can be offered as a point of reference for academics as well. Moreover, there are two other obviously positive aspects that are especially relevant in the cases of joint reporting: new or strengthened relationships among civil society actors, and new understandings of (cross-cutting) issues.

About the use of the concept of intersectionality

From this point on, I focus on a specific field: namely, I consider the benefits of the joint reporting endeavours of mainstream women's NGOs and Romani or pro-Roma NGOs that deal with women's issues. The significance of these kinds of issues cannot be understood and measured

without the concept of 'intersectionality'. As for the origins of the latter, it is attributed to Crenshaw (1991), who developed the concept with the primary aim of analysing the plight of African American women (whose situation is determined by, according to her terminology, the 'intersection' of race and gender). While nowadays some claims are made that the concept of intersectionality belongs in its original context (Davis, 2020), Crenshaw's idea has since started on an international career. Since then, as Yuval-Davis concludes, "[t]here has been a gradual recognition of the inadequacy of analysing various social divisions, but especially race and gender, as separate, internally homogeneous, social categories" (2006, p. 206). With regard to Romani women's issues in Europe, feminist scholars and activists in Europe started to suggest intersectionality as a relevant conceptual framework from the 2000s onwards (Kóczé, 2009). From the beginning of the 2010s, European Romani women activists increasingly often used the term intersectionality in their statements, thereby aiming to "point to multiple sites and axes of oppression in the analysis of their social position" (Curran, 2016).

Meanwhile, however, certain tendencies are emerging both in activists' rhetoric and in the academic discourse regarding the conceptualisation of intersectionality (or the use of the term). Recently, some have claimed that there has been an "intersectionality backlash" (Hill Collins, 2017), or that the concept of intersectionality has been misused in some contexts (Schiek, 2018). In 2020, when Kimberlé Crenshaw was interviewed about the current state of the concept – "You introduced intersectionality more than 30 years ago. How do you explain what it means today?" –, she answered: "These days, I start with what it's not, because there has been distortion. It's not identity politics on steroids" (Steinmetz, 2020).

I also stop here to share my concerns about tendencies which I perceive as distortions regarding the concept of intersectionality, at least from two perspectives.

First, there is the tendency to associate the buzzwords 'experience' and 'identity' with intersectionality, and to focus on the individual's 'position'. For example, an academic paper from 2008 presents a "model of intersectional invisibility" which "attempts to understand the doubly

marginalised experience of people with intersectional subordinate-group identities" (Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach, 2008, p. 389). In a paper published in the same year, Davis shared her concerns that "[i]t is not at all clear whether intersectionality should be limited to understanding individual experiences, to theorising identity" (2008, p. 79). Yuval-Davis also observed that "[w]hile originally developed as a counter to identity politics that emphasise […] unidimensional versions of identity, some of these intersectional approaches have become a kind of fragmented identity politics" (2015, p. 93).

Apparently, the meaning of identity is changing in this context in policy documents. According to the *Glossary&Thesaurus* of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), intersectionality is an "[a]nalytical tool for studying, understanding and responding to the ways in which sex and gender intersect with other personal characteristics/identities". As we see, the term 'identity' is rather used as an interchangeable synonym for 'characteristics', which implies that it is rather about the features of a person, be they real or perceived as real by others. The '*EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation*', launched in 2020, refers to this definition by EIGE, but applies a slightly modified version (leaving out the term 'characteristics'), in claiming to have taken "an intersectional approach, sensitive to the combination of ethnicity with other aspects of identity" (European Commission, 2020a, p. 2). Csányi and Kováts perceive this tendency as unmistakable:[7] "[…] the ultimate framework of intersectional politics is individual subjective experience and identity"; according to the latter, this amounts to a rejection of social-science knowledge: "[p]olitical statements can be true or false, as long as they refer to objective social circumstances, but one cannot have a discussion about subjective experience: the experience of suffering and identity is unquestionable". This (solely) identity-centred conceptualisation of intersectionality not only hinders academic debate but may have alienating impacts at the social movement level as well, as it bears the risk of lessening the chance of solidarity (among the women's movement, for example).

7 Besides this column in English (Csányi and Kováts, 2020a), the authors published their views in the form of a full academic article in Hungarian (Csányi and Kováts, 2020b).

Second, intersectionality has recently been conceptualised as a means of discrimination; practically, it is used sometimes as a (fancier) synonym of multiple discrimination. A prominent manifestation of this tendency is the European Commission's (2020b) *Gender Equality Strategy' for 2020-2025* which claims in its preamble that: "The strategy will be implemented using intersectionality – the combination of gender with other personal characteristics or identities, and how these intersections contribute to unique experiences of discrimination – as a cross-cutting principle". This conceptualisation is repeated in the main text of the strategy (in Section 4: *Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies*): "Women are a heterogeneous group and may face intersectional discrimination based on several personal characteristics. For instance, a migrant woman with a disability may face discrimination on three or more grounds". I agree with critics that this discrimination-centred, static, and 'additive' conceptualisation of intersectionality, which does not look at injustices beyond discrimination, is weak theoretically, and not useful politically for challenging the structures of oppression (Csányi and Kováts, 2020a). Sometimes the discrimination-based approach is applied in an even more shallow and conceptually flawed way; see for example the claim in a joint report by the Center for Intersectional Justice and the European Network Against Racism: "Systemic inequalities arise both from negative stereotypes attached to certain identities, or through positive stereotypes leading to implicit preferences". Why is this shallow? Because these kinds of claims do not address underlying economic- and power-related interests and suggest that we just have to be more conscious about our own stereotypes, and this will fix the problem of social inequality. And why is it flawed? Because it ignores the vast phenomenon of indirect discrimination, wherein stereotypes do not necessarily play any role at all.

I agree with Davis, who suggests that intersectionality should be used "as an analytic resource rather than just an identity marker" (2008, p. 79), and I am eager to share Davis' optimism regarding the potential of this approach: "Intersectionality initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated" (2008, p. 68).

According to Davis, intersectionality is a "travelling theory" that demands an openness to different voices and perspectives, wherever it is used, thus scholars are supposed "at all times be prepared not only to criticise the ways intersectionality is taken up and used, but also to question their own basis for authority as well as their own terminologies and methodologies" (2020, p. 124). As for my own stance, I suggest that using intersectionality as an analytical tool would not only deepen our understanding regarding the situation of those marginalised people who 'live in an intersection' (e.g., of race, sex, and class), but it would also broaden our interpretation regarding a number of social dynamics: as Yuval-Davis (2015) reminds us, intersectional analysis is relevant to all people. Hereby, I present three questions that may be relevant for those who are involved in civil society reporting regarding the combined fields of women's issues and Romani issues in Europe. I claim that these issues are better addressed – within the framework of a civil society report, but also during social science research – by applying an intersectional lens. These issues involve understanding: i) reproductive rights in a broader-than-usual sense; ii) connections between housing and domestic violence; and iii) the value of women's work.

Reproductive rights from a broader perspective

The first issue I recommend rethinking here, in the name of intersectionality, is women's reproductive rights. In the mainstream women's rights discourse, the phrase 'reproductive rights' often refers simply to access to abortion, or maybe to access to birth control, but in the context of 'pro-choice' argumentation it usually focuses on individual women's right to choose not to have children. However, as bell hooks pointed out in an interview in 1993 when looking back at the history of the African American women's movement: "yet for many women of colour, many of us, particularly from religious backgrounds who don't see abortion as even the central reproductive right issue, for many of us the priority has to be care for the body, healthcare" (Lutz, 1993, p. 423). Similarly, according to Price's account: "a growing movement created and led by women of color

[in the U.S.] has emerged to broaden the scope of reproductive rights",
and that the movement was "[f]rustrated by the individualist approach
of the pro-choice framework" (2010, p. 42). While for the mainstream
women's movement the right to abortion (as unlimited as possible) is a
major cause, bringing masses of protesters to the streets, there are silent
masses of women for whom this issue is less to be seen as an enjoyment
of a right, but rather as deprivation of (health care) rights. For example,
according to a report on Hungary (launched by the European Parliament)
"concern may arise" that disadvantaged Romani women "use abortion as
a contraceptive method" because they cannot afford or do not have access
to appropriate family planning methods (Crowley, Genova and Sansonetti,
2013, p. 33).

Moreover, minority women, women of colour, and migrant women
may face bias, discrimination, and mistreatment in the health care
system, especially during maternity-related services: this phenomenon is
visible in the U.S. (Kane Low, Moffat and Brennan, 2006), but it is
present in relation to Romani women in European countries as well.[8]
While the situation of minority/Romani women may be addressed by
special measures in this field, this analytical approach – broadening
the scope of women's reproductive rights and considering the relevant
perspectives of women with different backgrounds – may be beneficial
for highlighting and understanding a series of crucial issues, including
regional inequalities in terms of health care infrastructure, or the different
forms of obstetric violence. These are all relevant topics when assessing
the impact of a country's (or a region's) legislation or policies about
(majority and minority) women, within the framework of a civil society
reporting project.

One of the shadow reports submitted within the framework of the
RCM project on Slovakia includes a description of a special problem,
with so many implications that are worth considering through an
intersectional lens:

8   For example, regarding the Balkans see: Janevic, Sripad, Bradley and Dimitrievska, 2011;
     or regarding Slovakia see: Center for Reproductive Rights, 2017.

> *"Among the controversial aspects of apparently neutral rules disproportionately targeting Roma women has been the requirement that new mothers need to stay in hospital for four days. […] Roma mothers, often from marginalised areas, leave hospitals, leaving their babies behind for a couple of days, to take care of their husbands, older children or simply due to humiliating treatment. Even without medical justification, women are detained in hospitals under the penalty of losing several hundreds of euros in childbirth allowance – a policy that has a specifically negative effect especially on Roma women."*
> *(Roma Civil Monitor, 2019, p. 61)*

Indeed, this seems to be a problem which does not affect middle-class women. More precisely, middle-class women may not perceive it as a problem at all because of their conditions or opportunities: if they dislike the hospital setting, they may opt for a planned home birth (supported by a midwife and a doula), or in the hospital they may be able to afford the extra cost of being housed in a private room in which family members are allowed to stay overnight. Or they may have paid babysitters to take care of their older children, or domestic aides to help out with the household while they are away and recovering from childbirth. Thus how to improve the situation for Romani women? Simply eliminating the rule which affects Romani women in a disproportionately negative way would not necessarily serve the best interest of the affected mothers and newborns, unless quality postpartum care services are provided to them at home (by visiting health care professionals); not to mention the concern that some of the women who feel forced to leave hospital right after giving birth may be living in an abusive environment. If we were in the position of competent decision makers, what would we do? Apparently, this is an 'intersectionality is action' situation; and if the aim is to find a sensible and reasonable solution, voices of women from the relevant social groups should be heard and considered.

Domestic violence, access to housing and intersectional obstacles

As for the structural understanding of violence against women, including domestic violence, which is based on the recognition of socio-economic factors, the Council of Europe's '*Istanbul Convention*' (Council of Europe, 2011a) may serve as a relevant point of reference – at least among civil society actors, given the political controversy about this convention, and also given the fact that some governments in the Central-East European region have rejected the ratification of the former. Actually, the text of the Convention focuses on economic forms of violence, and on the economic consequences of violence for victims, and it is rather the *Explanatory Report* (Council of Europe, 2011b) that highlights the factor of economic dependency as one of the root causes of victimisation. However, the Istanbul Convention still provides a unique opportunity to discuss the issue of women's housing situation in relation to the phenomenon of domestic violence, and to apply the analytical concept of intersectionality as well. For example, Staiano (2020) presents the role of housing in relation to migrant women's risks of domestic-violence-related victimisation as being among the special residential status provisions relevant to them in certain Western European countries. From a broad perspective, Westendorp (2020) claims that "[w]hen the main human rights instruments that contain the right for housing were drafted, there was no specific attention to the right to housing for women; housing was, and largely still is, regarded as a family right rather than as an individual right", without considering that "women (and children) might need an autonomous right to housing and above all safety within their own four walls" (p. 191). Obviously, this claim is highly relevant in the framework of the current Roma inclusion strategies and provisions, but moreover, recognising the role of women's housing dependency related to domestic violence may inform mainstream policies as well (also given the role of class and other factors). When we are assessing the system of social housing (in a country or in a municipality), for example, we must consider whether it is accessible for single mothers as well. Or, when we are assessing women's employment situation (in a region or a sector), we must consider whether a single woman can afford independent housing.

These are key questions from the perspective of preventing and combating domestic violence as well – and these questions should be considered within the framework of relevant civil society reports too.

If we want to learn more about the relevance of domestic violence policies from the perspective of Romani women's needs, we may find statistics and empirical research results regarding shelters (Beker, 2019). But obviously, the accommodation of abused women and their children in shelters is an emergency measure, and a temporary one, and does not guarantee in itself a new, violence-free life for the victims. According to a case study on Spain (Sosa, 2017, p. 193-194):

> *"[…] women referred to the tenure as a major concern, hindering any possibility to separate from the abuser and their ability to start over. 'Getting a house' was determinative for them in order to leave, especially when they had children. This was considered by the victims as something affecting Romani women in particular, given their general lack of economic means to procure a house on their own, and the limited resources of their families."*

One of the shadow reports launched within the framework of the RCM project about Bulgaria also mentions concerns regarding the housing opportunities of Romani women in the context of domestic violence:

> *"[…] they often have to apply for municipal housing, but State representatives send them to different places and institutions to gather documentation. Clients' Bulgarian is poor, and they get confused a lot [with] understanding the requirements. In addition, they are required to pay fees for each document that has to be gathered, and often they cannot afford it."*
> (Roma Civil Monitor, 2020, p. 29)

Clearly, if the housing opportunities of women (in general) were improved, women in abusive relationships could consider the option of leaving to be realistic, maybe even before abuse escalates into serious

forms of domestic violence. To elaborate the best policies in this field that serve the widest possible circle of women, the different realities of different groups of women should be considered. Namely, the fact that a woman's housing opportunities may be defined by several aspects: not just by class and ethnicity, but also by her motherhood or by caregiving role, and the interplay of these conditions may severely hinder her eligibility for certain housing solutions, even if the related policy has been planned in a benevolent way.

Considering the value of women's work

And then there is the (connected) issue of women's work. The idea that being employed is liberating for women has been an axiom for the Western women's movement, and women's employment is presently fiercely promoted by the EU. According to Repo's strong statement, "EU gender equality policy emerged as a means to reorganise women's work and personal lives in order to optimise biological reproduction and capitalist productivity by simultaneously increasing women's fertility and their labor market participation" (2016, p. 307). While employment may be key to women's economic independence, we must acknowledge that reality for many women is a far cry from the reality of the middle-class, mainstream woman – the latter having much more opportunity to pursue a well-paying professional career or undertake a rewarding and satisfying job. Citing again bell hooks (herself from an African American, working-class background), we must "talk about what type of work liberates. Clearly better-paying jobs with comfortable time schedules tend to offer the greatest degree of freedom to the worker" (2000, p. 49). Taking a closer look at social inclusion measures, we may realise that many of the 'training and employment' programmes offered to Roma and/or socio-economically disadvantaged girls/women in some European countries hardly ensure economic self-sufficiency for the participants, or open up career paths for them. A report published within the framework of the RCM project on Slovakia presents an example of this (combining a brief case description with a concise analysis):

> *"[…] segregated and low-quality education likely has disproportionate negative impacts on girls who are often enrolled into problematic learning programmes called 'Practical Lady'. These programmes are essentially based on anti-Gypsyist and gender stereotypes and result in even fewer chances to find [sic] employment in the labour market. The learning programme, which, according to our assessment, enrols more than 600 Roma girls, offers skills such as preparing a shopping list, cooking or gaining [learning] hygienic habits." (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019, p. 74-75)*

There is another crucial issue related to women's work: the question of the compound value of a lifetime's work – namely, the issue of a pension. This perspective is rarely applied when assessing the situation and opportunities of Romani women, and data about this topic is scarce.[9] In general, analysing the impact of pension rules on women from different walks of life may lead to the conclusion that the value of women's (paid or unpaid) work should be reconsidered.

Concluding remarks

As illustrated above, it may be eye-opening to use the analytical concept of intersectionality: we may not only obtain a better understanding of the specific situation of those who are affected by 'intersectional oppression', but also obtain deeper understanding of certain cross-cutting social issues (such as the roots and consequences of violence against women). Within the framework of joint civil society reporting undertaken by mainstream and minority women's organisations together – through a process of discussions, coordinated data collection, field mapping, analysis, then discussions again –, the lens of intersectionality may be applied very effectively, promising to generate relevant considerations and conclusions.

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9   E.g., some relevant data is provided from 2013 by the Roma Survey of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), see: Fundamental Rights Agency (undated).

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GOVERNMENTALITY IN AND THROUGH THE MONITORING OF ROMA INCLUSION STRATEGIES

by Nađa Greku

This paper builds on post-structural theory and, in particular, the 'Foucauldian Research Agenda' as promulgated by Michael Merlingen. It examines governmentality in and through the monitoring of Roma inclusion strategies by applying micropolitical analysis to monitoring initiatives in two socio-political contexts – EU Member States, and enlargement countries. Namely, it examines the experiences of the actors (experts) involved in the 'Roma Civil Monitor' pilot project implemented in 2017-2020 (which concerned EU Member States) and those who operate under the aegis of the network of monitoring initiatives in the enlargement countries, including the monitoring efforts associated with the 'Roma Integration 2020' project (an ongoing project which started in 2016 and concerns the enlargement countries – the Western Balkans Six and Turkey) and the 'Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Turkey', led by the Roma Active Albania and European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network. The author zeroes in on the political rationalisations and technologies that inscribe the agency of civil society and identifies practices which transgress the observed governmentalities. The two case studies serve as didactic, illustrative examples for researchers focused on governmentality in relation to Roma. Furthermore, this paper reflects on the heuristic potential and the limitations of governmentality theory for Roma-focused scholarship and draws attention to the micro-sites

and micro-practices of the everyday governance of Roma which unsettle the accustomed notions of spectacular power relations among actors. The paper draws on interviews conducted with project personnel of the following institutions/organisations: the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations; the Roma Integration 2020 project of the Regional Cooperation Council; the Open Society Institute; Roma Active Albania; and the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project (two out of four organisations that are implementing the initiative were interviewed: Central European University, contracted by the European Commission to carry out the initiative, and the 'European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network', subcontracted by CEU), as well as the publicly available documentation produced by the mentioned actors.

Contextualising monitoring

The transnational character of the Romani community and the longstanding appeal to administer the political representation, reparations, and security of Roma – as expressed by the Romani leaders who attended the 'First International Roma Congress' held in 1971 in Orpington, United Kingdom – underpin the demand to establish (and maintain) networked governance exclusively focused on Roma that operates beyond the state level.[1] The performativity of such governance, especially in increasingly neoliberal environments, includes the customary monitoring (evaluating and learning) practices. Consequently, a myriad of questions that address the problematisation of the role and capacities of civil society arise, as well as those about navigating the relations of the civil society organisations and other actors included in Roma-focused, transnational networked governance. What is the relation between the civil society organisations' representatives as experts and other experts who represent state and international organisations in terms of monitoring Roma inclusion strategies? Which norms and expectations shape power relations among

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1   CEU Romani Studies Program. (2021). Conversation with Grattan Puxon at the Jubilee of the First World Roma Congress. YouTube video (accessed 19 October 2021).

these actors? Which strategies are employed for navigating the everyday relations among the actors who participate in monitoring and, through this, define the related norms?

To understand the forces that inscribe the agency of Roma civil society in the monitoring process of Roma inclusion strategies and consider the specific (transnational) networked governance of Roma, governmentality theory was chosen as a promising theoretical framework. As Merlingen underlines: "Governmentality theory is a tool to study networked governance beyond the state". Moreover, this paper follows the contours of the Foucauldian Research Agenda advanced by Merlingen to unpack the governmentality observed in and through the monitoring of Roma inclusion strategies (Merlingen, 2011). Governmentality in and through the participation of civil society in the monitoring of Roma inclusion strategies is examined by zeroing in on the political rationalisations and technologies put into service by the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project, the Roma Integration 2020 and the Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in the Western Balkans and Turkey through conducting interviews with experts participating in these projects and consulting the documentation produced by these actors. Additionally, it should be noted that regionalisation projects, whether they apply to the EU or the Western Balkans, as well as the clustering of the enlargement countries in an imagined region (often referred to as the Western Balkans Six plus Turkey, which includes Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey) add yet another dimension to governmentality dynamics. Namely, the EU enlargement process underlines cooperation among the Western Balkans countries through the 'Multi-annual Action Plan for the Regional Economic Area', which promotes cooperation among the countries of the Western Balkans Six region in terms of regional efforts to harmonise policies that enable the digital integration of the region, unobstructed mobility, a free flow of goods, services and capital and overall trade as a means of achieving convergence with the EU, but also the joint efforts of the countries as a region to streamline the Roma equality and inclusion agenda into the mainstream policies of countries and the region

more generally. Thus, it is not only the state level but – due to increased regionalisation as a prerequisite for the potential EU accession of the enlargement countries – also the regional level that becomes a space in which governmentality is shaped and performed. That is to say, this is not a comparative study (of the EU and the enlargement region) per se, but a showcasing exercise involving various context specific governmentalities. This is the case because these projects do not operate on an equal footing. First, there is an obvious difference in the administrative frameworks (including the financial component) of these two projects. This implies that the experts operating within these two projects do not necessarily share political rationalisations and political technologies, as the distinct material conditions of each project shape their organisational semiotics. While there is not much space to elucidate on these material constraints, this could be an insightful area for further research. Second, the nature of the political mandate behind each of the projects is yet another difference among them – about which more can be found in the later parts of this paper. Third, the history of the regions must be taken into consideration. The Western Balkans region is expected to undergo prompt socioeconomic transition as part of its harmonisation with the EU's *Acquis Communautaire,* and at the same time to make sure that Roma, who were already (due to racialisation) often left behind, catch up with the mainstream in a space which operates in line with the principles of meritocracy and assumed 'racelessness'. Notably, the genealogy of the transition and the democratisation phenomena in the two imagined regions also influences the positionality of the respective civil societies. As mentioned before, this is largely a question of norm-setting. For example, the European Commission aims to ensure that state institutions in enlargement countries include civil society in monitoring and agenda-setting in relation to Roma inclusion strategies, beyond mere *box ticking*. Last but not least, the difference in the density of the governance networks (i.e., the number of actors and their relations, including potential clashes), must be taken into consideration.

Finally, this paper does not aim to define any of the observed monitoring mechanisms as superior to others, but offers two case studies to encourage further discussion about the heuristic potential and limitations

of governmentality theory for Roma-focused scholarship. Foucauldian governmentality theory is widely present in publications that address issues related to biopolitics, such as the migration and mobility of Roma, housing, health, education, and employment. In this respect, the work of Van Baar comes as great encouragement to take a stab at untangling transnational networking through examining the micro-practices of Romani grassroots' (counter)governmentality, which is often falsely deemed rather powerless or ineffective (Van Baar, 2005). However, the research potential of the micropolitical analysis – in terms of how the individual actors that represent institutions and organisations and civil society frame their roles, and in which ways they (inter)act – for understanding the governmentality of Roma remains rather untapped. As Merlingen notes, experts are "critical" when it comes to analysing how power is exercised (Merlingen, 2011). Therefore, the contribution of this paper is how it draws attention to the micro-sites and micro-practices of the everyday governance of Roma, which often unsettle the accustomed expectations of spectacular power relations among actors. I proceed as follows. The next section briefly discusses Foucauldian governmentality theory and the practice of monitoring to set the stage for the two didactic, illustrative examples. This is followed by a reflective segment on the promise of micropolitical analysis as a research tool for those concerned with the everyday governance of Roma.

Governmentality theory, Roma and monitoring

In his vast work on governmentality, Foucault identifies various problematizing manners and practices related to population regulation which fortify the power of the state through the (self)governing of individuals. Therefore, as Foucault claims, the focus on governmentalities implies an examination of (political) activities and thinking (Foucault, 1991, 1998, 2003). Building on the pioneering thoughts of Foucault and on his own contribution to the study of international organisations, and in particular, research on European security and defence policy, Merlingen asserts that governmentality theory (and his proposed Foucauldian Research Agenda) makes a case for the microanalysis of power (Merlingen, 2011).

Additionally, he emphasises the inventiveness associated with achieving governmentality goals that can be observed in political rationalisations and technologies that actors resort to (Merlingen, 2006). Therefore, governmentality theory defines a framework according to which power becomes subject to scrutiny on the everyday level of its inscriptions and transgressions. The microanalysis of power therefore implies focusing on the smaller scale at which power is re(produced), such as in the daily interactions among a limited number of actors (experts) with regard to an activity or a set of activities in which governmentality can be closely observed. In an effort to conceptually delimit and pursue remarks by Merlingen on micropolitical analysis, this paper examines the governmentality in and through the monitoring of Roma inclusion strategies by investigating how monitoring initiatives funded by the EU are performed in two socio-political contexts: EU Member States, and enlargement countries. Regarding the EU Member States, national and local authorities design and implement policies that address Roma exclusion; the EU as a *sui generis* supranational polity operating with a limited mandate also participates in governing the Roma – for example, by instigating and promoting monitoring or Roma integration projects. Civil society, which often documents in the form of shadow reporting the shortcomings and success of the states and local authorities, and in some cases and to a different extent participates in the design and implementation of the national Roma inclusion strategies, often finds an ally in the European Commission. The European Commission regularly and indirectly helps maintain Roma civil society and is engaged in agenda-setting and monitoring the national Roma inclusion strategies in both EU Member States and enlargement countries. It does not simply exert a coercive power over states while supporting civil society or negotiating EU accession, as this would violate its limited mandate. The EU navigates its position as an actor which promotes certain norms related to dialogue and inclusiveness through incentivising states to align with these norms by providing them with the financial and expert support that is needed to invest in reporting on their progress in the field of Roma inclusion, but also through investing in projects which promote the

role and strengthen the capacities of Roma civil society organisations, thus helping unsettle the power asymmetries between the state and civil society. Reporting on the progress of the countries aspiring to join EU is a particular instrument of normative power, 'which in relation to 'Chapter 23- Judiciary and Fundamental Rights' of the *Aquis* also particularly applies to Roma. Additionally, more novel attempts to introduce interactionist role theory in ontological security studies underline that the EU is constantly in pursuit of strengthening its own identity by taking on various roles in the neighbourhood and enlargement region (Klose, 2020). This theoretical framework can be further extended to the analysis of other agents' (including civil society's) involvement in governing Roma and offers promising insights for future research. Governmentalities can be observed in relation to this multileveled networked governance that include civil society organisations, state institutions (including local authorities), and the European Commission, through a micropolitical approach – by zooming in on relations among actors; specifically, their rationalisations and practices. Focusing on the micropolitical in this case implies examining the encounters and power dynamics between the policy officers of EU-funded projects with the relevant Directorate-General officers through which the European Commission asserts its own envisaged governmentality of Roma, but also between/with the experts of Roma civil society organisations and civil servants. The experts of monitoring projects which this paper focuses on are interlocutors of change who manage and negotiate the norm-setting process that influences both the governmentalities of state institutions and Roma civil society, but also, as will be shown, the European Commission. Why focus on monitoring? Monitoring is a practice which relies on various techniques that support the norm-setting/order-instigating process. The latter not only increases structure (order), but can also serve as a means for simultaneously influencing the political agency of actors – a means through which civil society is *'normalised'* and the subjectivities of individuals participating in monitoring are moulded through discipline and the disruption of resistance, but also by encouraging (preferable modes of) resistance through fabricating political rationalisations and normalising

them. Put simply, as Merlingen underlines in his reflections on power and governmentality, this is an issue of norms as an instrument of constraint and emancipation (Merlingen, 2007). In societies which adhere/aim to values such as democracy and transparency, monitoring also implies a plurality of actors engaged in such an enterprise. It can also require the mediation and constant renegotiation of political rationalisations and technologies. As Cravero notes, the "… involvement of civil society has also been sought as a way to strengthen the legitimacy of the international organisations and their activities" (Cravero, 2019). However, the participation of civil society is not to be downsized to mere box-ticking or political tokenism, as civil society has access to a growing repository of (and a capacity to aggregate) specific, indigenous, from-the-field knowledge, to which the Roma Civil Monitor reports and the shadow reports in the Western Balkans testify. The contributions of civil society may come in various forms, including mitigating the supposed risks which prevent the fulfilment of the envisioned Roma inclusion strategies (read norms/order) – such as, for example, pinpointing the inadequacies of bureaucratic apparatus; outlining the ambiguities of the language through which regulations are conceptualised; participating in agenda-setting by raising issues often overlooked by institutions (whether deliberate or not), and in many other ways. Therefore, the political rationalisations and the technologies which the various actors (international organisations, transnational institutions, the state, Roma civil society organisations) who participate in monitoring or support civil society in monitoring implement is yet another window into the governmentality of Roma. The illustrative cases presented in the following two segments of this paper examine political rationalisations and technologies observed through a political microanalysis, which sets out to interrogate the epistemological hierarchies observed between the project implementing and managing officers; reflect on the noted conceptual preferences; and outline the everyday strategies which mould the subjectivity of actors participating in these monitoring (enhancement) initiatives. The analysis provided here is based on interviews conducted with the project personnel from the following organisations/

institutions: the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (one interview conducted with a policy officer); the Roma Integration 2020 project of the Regional Cooperation Council (two separate interviews conducted with policy officers); the Open Society Institute (one joint interview with two of the project management staff); Roma Active Albania (one interview with the representative of the organisation) and the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project (two separate interviews with the project implementation and managing staff from Central European University and one interview with a staff member of the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network) during July-August 2021.

Monitoring of EU Member States' Roma inclusion strategies – the case of the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project

The European Parliament initiated and endorsed the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project which was implemented between 2017 and 2020, thereby launching the EU-wide EU-funded civil monitoring of Roma inclusion policies. The project was proposed by a Member of the European Parliament, Kinga Goncz.[2] Central European University, the organisation which implemented the project, as part of managing the project brought together, subcontracted, and coordinated various Roma-focused and Roma-led organisations, including the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network, the European Roma Rights Centre, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, and the Roma Education Fund. The overall management pertained to a transnational actor – the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers. As per the related strategic document, this platform primarily aimed to support the development of the monitoring capacities of Roma civil society in EU Member States, and to produce and disseminate reports that reflect the monitoring observations made by Roma civil society organisations (Roma Civil Monitor, 2017). The interviews that

2   Matarazzo, M., Naydenova, V. (2019). Post-2020 EU Roma Strategy: The Way Forward. Open Society European Policy Institute.

were conducted underlined the evolving nature of the project, describing it as a process of the constant renegotiation of relations within and among each of the organisations/institutions over the past three years. The Roma Civil Monitor team developed the guidelines for the policy monitoring and the reporting that were followed by the civil society organisations and the civil society coalitions participating in the project. The draft reports were reviewed by the Roma Civil Monitor team and independent experts in diverse policy areas, who provided the civil society organisations with feedback and advice regarding further revisions of the reports. The final reports needed to pass through a quality-control process at the level of the Roma Civil Monitor project, and were subsequently submitted to the European Commission. The Commission was able to comment on them and ask additional questions that might challenge the civil society organisations' observations and assertions. Civil society organisations with the assistance/supervision of the Roma Civil Monitor needed to address these comments/questions of the European Commission before the reports were approved for publication – the latter appended with the EU logo, a reminder of the EU's normative power.

When it comes to the relations among various actors participating in this project, the Roma Civil Monitor staff played the role of interlocutor. Some of the interviewees referred to the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers as an "ally" of Roma civil society in their often-conflicting relations with the administrations of EU Member States. They also underlined the solidarity-based nature of partnerships built with other participating organisations and described their partners as "reliable" and/ or "hardworking". Those interviewees who had worked directly with the civil society organisations stressed that they were under constant pressure to balance the disciplinary aspect of their role as mentors, continually seeking to implement kinder practices to secure the participation of civil society organisations and enable fruitful and timely results of their joint work. Additionally, examples of situational stratification were pointed out. Namely, in some cases the civil society organisations led by older Romani men were not glad to have Romani women as their mentors and/or mediators.

One of the interviewees noted that the language and attitudes used by the older Romani men from civil society organisations when interacting with Romani women from the Roma Civil Monitor or women within their own organisations could be described as "mansplaining and paternalism". In other cases, older Romani men would rely on the skills obtained by the young Romani (women) to further the work of the coalitions. One of the interviewees also mentioned as a current challenge the issue of deciding how to act in response to homophobic statements by some Roma civil society organisations, adding that their organisation condones such behaviour and speech, yet is still learning how and when to appropriately address them. As Collins notes, the borders among groups with different statuses are reaffirmed in everyday interactions (Collins, 2000). The presence of Romani women and Roma who do not fit the imagined gender or sexuality norms in projects such as the Roma Civil Monitor or within civil society organisations overall represents a distinct interruption of the expected patriarchy-infused relations and often creates tension among actors.

As information brokers, they had to "find the balance between too strong and too soft language" and remain sensitive to potential ways of receiving the information outlined by any of the participating actors. The Roma Civil Monitor personnel who were interviewed underlined their role in connecting Roma civil society organisations on the national and EU level through their work. Relations among the civil society organisations on the local level, as the interviewees noted, can often be burdened by local rivalries stemming from different views about political issues, or simple competitiveness in terms of securing funding. The overall financial insecurity which the civil society organisations face due to unsustainable funding prevents them from creating stronger national alliances. It also leaves them more susceptible to the co-opting mechanisms of the state, international organisations, or any other actors that offer financial support. However, in many of the participating countries several civil society organisations had to cooperate in terms of reporting within the Roma Civil Monitor project, therefore the project promoted cooperation among Roma civil society organisations. Workshops which the Roma Civil Monitor

organised served as a particular space not just for building the capacity of Roma civil society to monitor, but as an opportunity to elevate cooperation and solidarity among civil society organisations. The interviewees noted that even in such a cooperation-focused environment certain hierarchies among civil society organisation emerged in terms of variable levels of – for example – skilfulness, as well as experience and the coordination mechanisms that were employed. This represented a layer additional to the somewhat hierarchical relations among the European Commission, the Roma Civil Monitor project implementation staff, and civil society organisations' experts.

Relations-wise, the Roma Civil Monitor constantly needed to balance between requests and complaints put forward by the European Commission and those of the civil society organisations. The most contentious issues were related to the European Commission insisting on a softer language of critique, and the request to further standardise reporting and to better quantify it. However, this is not always something civil society organisations are ready to do. As one of the interviewees noted, in some cases civil society organisations stated that they did not wish to technically develop reports as they saw their institutional mission as beyond reporting, yet they simultaneously underlined the importance of having their voices reflected in reports. In such cases, the Roma Civil Monitor had to show flexibility and accommodate requests from all participants, which sometimes implied persuading civil society organisations to take the lead in project writing by offering to engage external experts to work directly with the civil society organisations on developing reports. They also engaged in negotiating with the European Commission about the type of information which was part of reporting, since the civil society organisations could not always provide quantitative data, although they had relevant insight into the quality of national policy implementation and impact. Here, it is important to note that not all knowledge and information can be made subject to numericalisation. As Lokot asserts, "complex social and cultural issues do not easily lend themselves to quantification" (Lokot, 2019).

Roma Civil Monitor staff showed sensitivity to heterogeneity in terms of Romani identity and highlighted the blind spots of national strategies

which stem from perceiving Romani identity as homogenous. Referring to the Roma Civil Monitor reports, one of the interviewees brought up the example of Luxemburg, where the national Roma inclusion strategy is often deemed "not needed" by the (small in term of numbers) local Roma, while Yenish community members who are considered a Romani subgroup do not benefit from the strategy as they are not specified in the strategy according to their Yenish name. Moreover, they were not involved in strategy development, nor did the strategy specifically address their needs. The Roma Civil Monitor enabled that this and similar identity-related conundrums were present in the reports, thereby highlighted the gaps in pre-existing Roma inclusion strategies. This comes as an interruption to the governmentality of national administrations that are prone to moulding identity through homogenisation. Identity and naming discrepancies are obvious to the local Roma, thus indigenous knowledge about identity is transmitted through the Roma Civil Monitor to state administrations, which often (even when they do include Roma) are not knowledgeable about these issues or deem them trivial. Translating (indigenous) knowledge from the field into the standardised European Commission formats can be a challenge. Therefore, Roma Civil Monitor experts played the role of negotiators and translators who in their everyday practice managed to renegotiate the orderliness-related requests from the European Commission and find ways to translate the knowledge and efforts of civil society into standardised performance assessments (vocabulary). Consequently, this resulted in a multitude of *ad hoc* activities and required the inventiveness of the Roma Civil Monitor staff. The idiosyncratic nature of their (support for) monitoring micro-activities often brought to the surface *metis* knowledge that needed to be translated to become acceptable according to the administrative norms of the Commission (see Scott, 1998).

Interviews with Central European University and European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network employees brought to the surface feminism as one of the norm-setting currents shaping the relations among the actors working on this project. As Ackerly et al. note, feminist methodologies are characterised as "collective, self[-]reflective, and deliberative", describing how these two organisations which are part of

the Roma Civil Monitor implemented their role of supporting Roma civil society organisations' monitoring capacity (Ackerly et al., 2006). Various authors recognise the potential of feminist values in relation to perceiving monitoring as what Azevedo et al. refer to as "a vehicle of social justice" (Azavedo et al, 2019). Solidarity with civil society was also an issue raised by interviewees. Solidarity was translated into various micro practices such as providing/extending the time needed for civil society organisations to deliver their contributions; providing additional resources, such as the assistance of experienced experts who could support the civil society organisations with policy analysis and report drafting through individualised coaching (which was neither planned nor budgeted for within the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project); consulting and advising the civil society organisations in relation to activities outside of the Roma Civil Monitor (such as launching cooperation with governmental structures or answering their questions and requests); and organising solidarity calls during the pandemic to share and learn about joint struggles. As Lokot asserts, "…feminist analysis can offer insights into power imbalances between researchers and refugee communities, and research informed by feminist values can offer potential to redress them" (Lokot, 2019). The feminist values (or, as one of the interviewees noted, inclusive values) of the Roma Civil Monitor staff honed awareness and promoted kinder practices, thereby nurturing horizontal relations within the team and in communication with civil society and partnering organisations. The Roma Civil Monitor experts underlined the symbolic power associated with the presence of the EU logo on the reports concluded by civil society. Namely, one of the experts reflected on the example from Croatia, where the former's symbolic power increased the leverage and supported the prominence of a young Roma civil society leader following his work on the monitoring report. At the same time, members of civil society from one of the participating post-communist countries reported that civil servants would ask them to publicly raise issues which the civil servants saw as impinging on strategy development and monitoring that the latter were personally reluctant to draw attention to. The growing prominence of the civil society organisations thus became viewed by some

civil servants as a vehicle for raising issues which they personally did not feel comfortable raising within their workplaces (institutions), which implies censorship within the institutional mechanisms that implement and monitor the integration strategies. Furthermore, as feedback from the coalitions shows, participation in the Roma Civil Monitor contributed to the civil society organisations from the Czech Republic building closer cooperation and becoming viewed as more legitimate actors, which resulted in them contributing to the Roma integration strategy for the period 2021-2030 (information provided by the RCM team). In terms of rationalisation, particular sensitivity to power relations and their role in a project which among other goals has the purpose of securing equal footing for civil society organisations in terms of the latter's relationship with governments came across in interviews. The increase in the role of civil society in monitoring was perceived by the experts as an attempt to transgress the hierarchal relations between the state administration and civil society. During the interviews with the Roma Civil Monitor staff, the presence of an ontology of suffering was noted when interviewees referred to civil society organisations. The need to "empower" civil society and ensure it has a more prominent role in agenda-setting was stressed. This may have been the reason why there was less focus in the interviews on promising practices, although the document which defined the work of the Roma Civil Monitor underlined the need for a "balanced approach" (Roma Civil Monitor, 2017). As Penntinen asserts, the greatest burden of the ontology of suffering which focuses on vulnerability or weakness is that it "overlooks thus silences the human experiences which show the potential to recover, heal and experience heartfelt curiosity and openness regardless of the outside circumstances" (Penntinen, 2013) While there seems to be little of an affirmative ontology associated with addressing the relation between the national administrations and civil society organisations, in terms of how the Roma Civil Monitor built its relations with civil society organisations, partnering organisations, and the European Commission numerous inclusive and affirmative practices were involved. These practices could potentially serve as guidelines for delivering more inclusive monitoring in other projects, but also for the national

administrations and local authorities. Finally, further micropolitical research in terms of examining the rationalisations and practices of the experts within the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, as well as of the state and local institutions and Roma civil society, could provide better insights for both policy makers and Romani scholars interested in governmentality and Roma.

Monitoring Roma inclusion strategies in the enlargement countries

While the mandate of the Roma Civil Monitor pilot project stemmed from the initiative in the European Parliament to support civil society in monitoring Roma inclusion strategies, and operated under the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers in the enlargement countries, it was the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations that through their internal assessment identified the need to support Roma civil society in the enlargement countries to monitor Roma inclusion strategies. Therefore, there is a distribution of tasks among the Directorates related to the Roma equality and inclusion agenda that is based on a regionalization (EU versus enlargement region) approach. Namely, the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers is tasked with activities related to the Roma equality and inclusion agenda within the EU, while the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations is tasked with implementing the Roma equality and inclusion agenda within the enlargement countries and Western Balkans Six region and Turkey. When it comes to the Western Balkans region, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations is focused on the implementation and advancement of stabilisation and association policy, as defined by the European Council.[3] Within the enlargement countries there are two initiatives which overlap to some extent and take the lead in terms of monitoring – the 'Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in Western Balkans and Turkey' and Roma Integration 2020.[4]

3   European Commission, DG NEAR. Responsibilities (accessed on 24 August 2021).

4   Other initiatives supported by the EU which promote good governance in relation to Roma are present as well, including ROMACTED, which is managed by the Council of Europe.

First, the Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in Western Balkans and Turkey is funded through the 'Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance'. Roma Active Albania is the leading civil society organisation within this project, together with the ERGO Network. This initiative works in close communication with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. Second, building on work initially implemented under the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015' initiative, the Roma Integration 2020 project originated as an initiative that: " … aims to contribute to reducing the socio-economic gap between the Romani and non-Romani population in the Western Balkans and Turkey and to strengthen the institutional obligations of governments to incorporate and deliver specific Roma integration goals in mainstream policy developments."[5] Roma Integration 2020 uses the term *integration* as it refers primarily to streamlining Roma into mainstream policy and harmonization in line with the norms set out by the European Commission. Furthermore, the mission of the project includes providing support to the governments of six Balkan countries and Turkey to ensure greater commitment of the governments to streamlining envisaged Roma integration goals within mainstream policy.[6] The main capacity building objective is focused on governmental institutions and framed through regional cooperation as a path-towards-the-EU narrative. The project is financially supported by the Open Society Foundations – the largest private donor to Roma-focused initiatives – and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. Roma Integration 2020 operates under the Regional Cooperation Council – a regional cooperation framework which sets out to support the region on its European and Euro-Atlantic integration path.[7] The political mandate of this ongoing project was reinforced in 2019 at a high-level ministerial meeting in Poznan through the endorsement of the 'Declaration of Western Balkans Partners on Roma

5   Regional Cooperation Council. Roma integration – Overview (accessed on 24 august 2021).

6   Ibid.

7   Regional Cooperation Council. Roma integration – About us. (accessed on 24 august 2021).

Integration within the EU Enlargement Process'.[8] Therefore, the Regional Cooperation Council and specifically these two initiatives emerged as a link between the EU governance related to the enlargement region and the Roma integration efforts of the countries in the region, which also come under the aegis of Chapter 23 of the Judiciary and Fundamental Rights of the EU's *Acquis Communautaire*. Consequently, the following questions arise: Which rationalisations and technologies are used by the experts of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Roma Integration 2020, and the Open Society Institute when addressing monitoring, and in communicating with Roma civil society? Do the rationalisations and technologies of Roma civil society reach the national administrations and international organisation they work with – and if so, in which way? Are they reflected in the European Commission's progress reports, and if so, do these reports appear as an instrument that Commission experts use to exercise the normative power of EU over the enlargement countries in terms of promoting Roma inclusion as a norm?

As Merlingen asserts, "contemporary neoliberal governmentality settles on the understanding that society is best governed at a distance through networks" (Merlingen, 2011). Therefore, the choice of the Regional Cooperation Council (which did not have previous institutional memory and experience of working with the Roma equality and inclusion agenda) exclusively as the institution under which Roma Integration 2020 operates is understandable. The Regional Cooperation Council, and consequently its project Roma Integration 2020, operate through the neoliberal technique of co-opting, in place of traditional rule by decree, while enjoying the benefits of delegated authority. However, as Barnet and Finnemore note: "Delegated authority is always authority on loan" (Barnet et al., 2004). Therefore, this authority is temporary and subject to the goodwill and interests of the enlargement countries, and in particular, their interest in EU accession and regional cooperation. The interviewed Roma Integration 2020 experts stated that they constantly need to find ways to keep the national administrations

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8   Available at: https://www.rcc.int/docs/464/declaration-of-western-balkans-partners-on-roma-integration-within-the-eu-enlargement-process (accessed on 24 august 2021).

engaged in monitoring and reporting using activities such as providing external consultants and proving their own impartiality. For example, one of the interviewees recalled a situation in which a minister did not want to have a meeting with the Roma solely because they were Roma. This came as a challenge, which was "ironed out", yet it reminded the interviewee of how limited their toolkit is when it comes to repercussions or disciplining governments. One of the interviewees noted that Roma Integration 2020 is "an extended arm of the European Commission". The European Commission operates largely according to the notion of information-based policy making, under which information is perceived as quantifiable data, and in consequence often structures monitoring (evaluation and learning) in terms of quantification, which is not always applicable. The expert who was interviewed further added that the national administrations often lack the requisite skills when it comes to reporting, generating hardships in terms of securing data – especially quantitative data – and have difficulty managing cooperation among different line ministries in relation to jointly developed reports. One of the interviewees noted that Roma Integration 2020 has limited influence in these situations, especially the latter. This is as a burden, as Roma Integration 2020 is also expected to be an information broker and a fact finder. These rationalisations of their role result in initiatives aimed at redefining pre-existing indicators; conducting assessments of public and business opinions about the social inclusion/exclusion of Roma and reporting on this; or, for example, advocating for the mapping of Romani settlements which require legalisation, which remains a contentious issue. In the recent years, the umbrella term 'Roma' has also caused certain tensions. Overall, Romani identity in terms of naming and counting is a contentious issue which would require extensive elaboration, but for the purpose of this paper it should be noted that all interviewees stated that they administer the issue *ad hoc*, making sure that the national administrations' and the civil society organisations', as well as the Council of Europe's proposal to use Roma as an umbrella term is respected. Some of the interviewees noted that they do believe that the topics of identity and naming have been heavily politicised by the leaders of the Ashkali and

Egyptians, and such divisions do not serve the public good of the Roma. A European Commission expert stated that the Egyptian parliamentarian convinced the Kosovan parliament to remove Egyptians from the national Roma integration strategy. As the expert noted, this is a decision to be respected, yet the latter's personal view is that it is an issue which stems from a political power struggle, adding further: "You have to follow the official lines but on the ground if we are supporting a scholarship for children we don't say no to Egyptians, we follow the umbrella term". Strategic documents produced by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations and Roma Integration 2020 continue to use the term 'Roma' as an umbrella one. Roma Integration 2020 noted that, in line with the Commission's approach as their financier, they use Roma as an umbrella term. As a Roma Integration 2020 officer noted, certain *ad hoc* activities and bargaining are needed to drive change and enable information-based policy making. On the other hand, the questions of how comfortable Roma feel with their homes being mapped, and how Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians feel about the Roma umbrella term remain contentious and are dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis.

The mandate of Roma Integration 2020, as its officers underlined during the interviews, is primarily supporting the enlargement region's governments to deliver tangible results for Roma by focusing on four topics – housing, health, education, and employment. However, as the project has evolved, new crosscutting issues have been added, such as fighting antigypsysism, which is a rather novel topic in terms of policy making but also on a wider social scale in the Western Balkans region, which often operates under the assumption of a raceless society. A study was recently commissioned to further interrogate the extent and subtleties of antigypsyism, and the terminology remains a topic of dispute, with Romani scholars often making the case for more emancipatory terminology, such as anti-Roma racism. Therefore, the influence of Romani scholars is present as well. The Roma Integration 2020 expert noted that they use the terminology suggested by the Commission both in terms of antigypsyism versus the anti-Roma racism dilemma, as well as when it comes to the

Roma umbrella term. While the Roma Integration 2020 official description does outline their support for dialogue on Roma integration among local institutions, civil society, and relevant international organisations, during the interviews it was underlined that their primary mandate is to support the respective governments. One of the interviewees, who also underlined their feminist values, stated that occasionally they host unofficial meetings with civil society organisations as a form of support for the official meeting formats. The expert added that there is a certain kinship among the Roma, and social capital on which they (experts of Romani origin) rely as a source of learning about the in-the-field successes and failures of Roma inclusion strategies. The Open Society Institute supports financially the Roma civil society organisations in the region. Its experts stated that two to three representatives are chosen through communication and agreement with various civil society organisations to attend such meetings at which civil society organisations can raise their concerns directly with the government representatives, with the assurance that there is a rotating mandate which implies that civil society organisations from all enlargement countries get to sit at the table but not at each meeting. Therefore, while each national administration has a representative at these meetings, civil society organisations are elected from two or three countries who act as spokespersons for Roma in all other countries.

The shadow reporting of the civil society organisations operating under the Joint Initiative to Empower Roma Civil Society in Western Balkans and Turkey is taken into consideration by the Commission when developing assessments of the enlargement countries. At the same time, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations promotes the participation of Roma civil society organisations in both national platforms for monitoring Roma inclusion strategies, as well as in regional events. The interviewee representing the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations noted that in the accession negotiations governments are the main interlocutors, although members of Roma civil society are depicted as the actors who know what happens in reality. This assumes that reports by the governments

are not always reflective of the state of play; consequently, civil society is imagined as a corrective for this somewhat distorted portrayal. This framing by the European Commission helps balance the assumed power asymmetries between the state institutions and civil society in terms of monitoring and reporting. During the interview, the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations' representative underlined their role in encouraging partnerships between civil society and the national administrations, but also among civil society organisations. As the European Commission representative noted, sometimes they send "a strong kind reminder" that monitoring needs to include civil society organisations to ensure dialogue between the state institutions and the latter. Furthermore, they incentivise the performance of civil society organisations by offering prizes for their contribution for community empowerment, and also to the local administrations for best practices. The 'EU Award for Roma Integration' is not solely a symbolic form of recognition which aims to reinforce similar good practices: it is associated with a financial prize that is intended to support the work of the winning organisations and act a sign of the latter's credibility, as the EU is often viewed as a source of quality-assurance within and beyond the region. Some of the winning organisations have been received by their respective national parliaments; invited to United Nations' conferences; and featured in the publications of the Austrian Airlines, while a German TV station dedicated a segment to some of them. The winners are chosen by civil society organisations as a means of enabling further respect and appreciation among other civil society organisations, who may be in competition with them. The European Commission representative further added: "In some countries national civil society is great, but in some situations they forget I am in the room and spend all the time fighting among themselves".

This implies that the European Commission representative does recognise their power position in relation to civil society as the former expects that the organisations should behave in certain manner when the expert is present. The European Commission representative further reflected on the plurality of civil society and underlined the need to overcome the observed

divisions and hierarchies among the Roma civil society organisations that create a "first and second-class civil society". The EU delegations also offer prizes to civil society for their outstanding work in the fields of human rights and democracy. The European Commission representative noted that although it is becoming more common for Roma civil society organisations to win these prizes, the organisations often complain that they do not win often enough. The European Commission representative notes that the process is extremely competitive, yet in their view fair. However, this claim to fairness is arguable, as the competitions are based on meritocracy which does not take into account the often unequal position (in terms of the resources and skills) of Roma civil society organisations in comparison to mainstream civil society organisations. Another political instrument that can be observed is the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations' nomination of experts for EU delegations in the enlargement countries who focus on Roma inclusion. The symbolic value of EU nominating personnel being in charge of overseeing the Roma inclusion process was welcomed by Roma Active Albania, the Open Society Institute, and Roma Integration 2020, who underlined that this is not solely a matter of a power which comes with moral authority, as the EU is often deemed, through the harmonisation process, to be bringing order to a "disorderly" region and defining norms. Namely, the presence of this Roma focal point enables rapid communication between the European Commission, civil society, state institutions, and other international organisations, and becomes a channel for civil society to address their concerns.

While it might come across that the focal points of the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations or Roma Integration 2020 personnel are powerless due to a lack of visible coercive power, they do have an influence on the states and the role of civil society in terms of agenda-setting. This influence largely stems from the fact that enlargement countries aim to join the EU, therefore any critique which might be present in the progress reports is perceived as a potential risk that can endanger or slow down countries' (for some, already lengthy) accession process. Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement

Negotiations experts do not enact punitive measures; instead, it is the language of criticism shaped through professional administration and management terminology and incentives in terms of praise and prizes that are the instruments of influencing states and civil society organisations. Therefore, civil society perceives the EU enlargement process as having the momentum to enhance the role of civil society, establish partnerships with governments, and influence agenda-setting. However, the examples of EU Member States such as Slovakia and Hungary that are notorious for their continual mistreatment of the Roma even after their accession to the EU leave civil society wondering if EU accession can support the inclusion of Roma in the long term, and to what extent. Additionally, the European Commission insists on the discourse of partnership-building to co-opt states and civil society into having mutual respect and to engaging in cooperation, and underlines its non-biased role by projecting the image of a body which operates strictly along the lines of professionalism and impartiality, with the aim of supporting the professionalization of local administration through the accession process. Rationalisations such as the extent of the mandate or professionalism as a form of neoliberal governmentality which separates the public and private are among the technologies used to inscribe the subjectivities of the individuals who participate in monitoring. Yet the latter is often interrupted through the solidarity generated in everyday micro-interactions that enables civil society to influence agenda-setting in terms of the monitoring of Roma inclusion. A future extension of this paper would need to include the broader reflections of Roma civil society on its own rationalisations, technologies, and self-narration(s). The rhizome-like network of civil society organisations appears to be headed towards a more centralised, regional format and transnational and transregional governmentality is not a novelty, as has been recognised by Van Baar (2005). However, the trend to regionalisation gains prominence through the spillover effects of the envisaged EU enlargement in terms of the Commissions' insistence on regional cooperation as an instrument for enhancing harmonisation with the EU's *Acquis Communautaire*. Finally, as the Open Society Institute representative noted, monitoring is a useful

practice, but it has its limitations in terms of bringing about change, especially if it involves monitoring without the possibility to directly influence agenda-setting. The interviewee noted that the Open Society Institute nowadays has more focus on supporting the political participation of civil society rather than on monitoring. Yet monitoring itself is an immensely political activity. The Directorate-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, on the other hand, underlined the crucial role of monitoring and securing the participation of civil society organisations. Given that the Open Society Institute is the largest private donor to the Roma, it remains questionable who (and in what capacity) will support the skills development of civil society with regard to monitoring the related strategies, and if monitoring will remain part of the traditional role of civil society, which is shifting its focus towards a different model of political engagement. Finally, Roma civil society risks certain division into those organisations and individuals which operate within EU Member States, and the Roma civil society of the enlargement countries, raising the issue of the further solidarity and cohesion of Roma civil society. The further exchange of best practices and lessons learned between the mentioned projects that operate in the EU and the enlargement countries could potentially create a learning space for experts but also support the cohesion of Roma civil society beyond EU borders.

The way forward

This paper has described a practical implementation of the Foucauldian Research Agenda, as referred to by Merlingen, using the example of governmentality in relation to Roma. It zoomed in on the micro-relations and experiences of the latter, outlining the undergirding political rationalisations, framings, and technologies which shape the monitoring process of Roma inclusion strategies and the extent of participation of civil society in two contexts – the EU, and the enlargement region. An analysis of the microworlds of governmentality unsettles the accustomed notions of spectacular power relations among actors. The examples raised here affirm

that although hierarchical relations do exist in terms of the power available to actors within the networked governance, how the actors (including Roma civil society) manage to transgress these asymmetrical relations takes various forms. Romani kinship as well as solidarity-driven practices on the micro-level come across as major vehicles of interrupting power relations. Furthermore, the former can highlight how EU membership reflects on civil society, in relation to which it should be noted that there is little communication and best-practice-sharing between the Roma Civil Monitor project and EU-funded monitoring projects in the enlargement countries. This suggests the vast potential that exists to tap into the forthcoming cycles of the aforementioned monitoring initiatives. Governmentality theory offers a research toolbox – focusing on political rationalisations and practices according to the complex notion of power relations. As such, it provides the opportunity for deeper insight into the inequality orders which Roma face, often perpetuated by the political rationalisations and technologies at play. It also shows how institutions which appear to have rather limited influence do find channels of inscribing the subjectivity of individuals and exert their power in subtle ways through inventiveness and normative co-opting practices. Governmentality theory offers insights into the limitations and potential of monitoring (evaluating and learning) as it highlights the rationalisations which restrain and/or elevate the capacity of actors. It captures the effects of larger political narratives such as Roma empowerment, regionalisation, and the enlargement process. However, governmentality theory may have – and is often criticised for having – limited predictive capacity. As an analytical tool, governmentality theory offers insights which may support the work of scholars (and perhaps some policy makers who critically reflect on their work) who seek to revisit and reshape the governance of Roma. This approach could support an examination of the blind spots which frame the role of civil society in and through monitoring, including the capacity of civil society for reporting and agenda-setting. In terms of Roma-focused research work, the Foucauldian Research Agenda proposed by Merlingen appears to have vast potential for untangling the governmentality forces and understanding what drives transgression in relation to network governance.

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ANNOYED AND LISTENING GOVERNMENTS

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The article is about reactions of governments to the 'Roma Civil Monitor' (RCM) reports and to three concepts widely used in RCM, as well as in other documents produced by international and national NGOs – *discrimination*, *segregation*, and *antigypsyism*. The examples come from the process of elaboration and presentation of the RCM in Bulgaria, with examples from other countries. The analysis uses some examples of direct reactions: these include speeches given by government officials during public events. However, most of the arguments are related to indirect reactions, which emerge in the form of the traceable influences of RCM on the way governments understand Roma inclusion, speak about it, and conceive their Roma inclusion policies.

Improving policies with words

There are many distinct and large discourse communities engaged in policy dialogue concerning Roma, which are constituted mainly around the procedures and genres embedded in various relations: national civil society, national governments, international civil society organisations, and

EU institutions, among others.[1] They do not necessarily share the same meanings – as instantiated by numerous examples of 'misunderstanding' – but they appear to share some common values and principles.

Using the much-quoted expression coined by J. Austin (1975), we could say that policies are about "doing things with words" as much as they are about doing things by direct action or by allocating resources. Policies for Roma inclusion do make a difference: they have a significant discursive component that arguably is no less important than the actual measures, public investment, etc. The discursive aspect of policies is technically the easiest to change; it is enough to produce an official text, to make a speech at a conference, to make a statement to the media, and such language in itself may start to change perceptions, concepts, etc. In reality, the language of Roma inclusion used by NGOs and activists, independent experts and technocrats, international organisations and governments (central and local), is very different: immediate reactions (positive or negative) sometimes come quickly, but there are often periods of long silence, or an apparent lack of direct dialogue. This silence does not necessarily mean that actors remain unaware of or unresponsive to important conceptual changes. In the case of large sets of comprehensive documents, or rather a long and complex process such as 'Roma Civil Monitor' (RCM), it takes time for governments to respond. Moreover, such reactions are often mediated by those of international bodies, which are difficult for governments to ignore. In this analysis, we try to show, using the example of three very sensitive and politically charged concepts (*segregation*, *discrimination*, and

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1   If we introduce values into the picture, we will find that there are also other communities which influence the policy dialogue without being recognised as a legitimate part of it. A typical example would be the clusters of national right-wing, nationalist and populist media that produce hate speech and multiply stereotypes about the Roma and other groups. In recent years, such communities even came very close to introducing their mode of speaking into serious policy documents. Actually, they did so in oral genres like media statements, talks given at public events, and even in parliamentary speeches, but were, it seems, less successful in having written documents stamped with the official approval of government institutions. In the case of countries from Central and Eastern Europe which are home to the largest number of Roma, this failure is due not least to the fact that the political discourse on Roma is closely overseen by the EU, and is part of important processes at the EU level concerning funding.

the newer *antigypsyism*), that governments react by elaborating their own parlance, which only gradually and with many setbacks converges with the language of NGOs, activists, and academia. Unlike the other two concepts, *antigypsyism* still appears much less often in texts produced by national governments, although it has found its way into EU language. In the new national strategic documents concerning the Roma inclusion for the period 2020-2030, under the strong influence of the EU, the term 'antigypsyism' is starting to be used. In some cases, governments have preferred other terms, such as 'racism experienced by Roma' or 'anti-Roma racism', which are recognised as referring to the same concept, although their meaning and connotations are not entirely the same.

The choice of these three concepts was motivated by the fact that they meet the criteria for being considered political 'keywords' in the sense introduced by Raymond Williams (1985) – i.e., "from strong, difficult and persuasive words in everyday usage to words which, beginning in particular specialised contexts, have become quite common in descriptions of wider areas of thought and experience". While all the mentioned words have a specialised, even strict legal interpretation in some contexts, they are definitely used with a variety of meanings to describe wider areas of thought and experiences. In second place, these three words are encountered in very brief texts and short summaries produced by civil society organisations.

It would be naive to believe that discursive change alone is enough to transform social reality. A growing body of research suggests that governments have developed tools to mimic compliance with international rules and standards in fields such as the rule of law or the protection of human rights to ease pressure on themselves without changing anything substantially. Agnes Batory (2016) gives examples of what she calls 'creative' or 'symbolic' compliance, which can be regarded as a clever form of non-compliance with the EU's normative order. One typical example of symbolic compliance was the mass expulsion of Roma from France which took place in 2010. The French government responded to the threat of being subjected to an infringement action by formally transposing relevant EU legislation, but continued nonetheless to pursue its eviction policy. Batory

confirms the usefulness of treating compliance as a contested process or as a kind of symbolic exchange in which each party is given the opportunity to claim victory. The adoption of a new conceptual framework, however, goes deeper than just agreeing on operational matters, and generally is very difficult to mimic; in some cases, genuine conceptual change comes after a government has responded with appropriate action. Even in the face of examples of creative compliance, one can still argue that concepts do exert significant power.

Discrimination, segregation, and antigyspsyism in RCM reports

The RCM reports were produced in three monitoring cycles, starting in 2017 (first cycle) and then continuing in 2018 (second cycle) and 2019-2020 (third cycle). Each cycle had a focus on different topics (Roma Civil Monitor, 2021). This section describes a frequency analysis of the use of the terms 'discrimination', 'segregation', and 'antigypsyism' in 56 country reports covering 19 countries that RCM grouped into three clusters – namely: EU Member States with the largest Romani communities (Cluster 1); Member States with significant Romani communities (Cluster 2); and Member States with medium-size Romani communities (Cluster 3). Except for these three groups, the RCM also covers EU Member States with much smaller Romani communities (Cluster 4), which were not included in the analysis. Due to the small number of Romani in these countries, the set of issues emphasised both in the public discourse, policy documents, and the work of NGOs appeared to be quite different from in the other three clusters. For this reason, and despite some exceptions,[2] this cluster was excluded from the analysis altogether.

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2   E.g., both segregation and antigypsyism receive serious emphasis in Latvian reports.

Chart 1. Frequency of use of the words 'segregation', 'antigypsyism', and 'discrimination' normalised per 10,000 words in RCM reports from all three cycles in the 19 countries included in Clusters 1-3
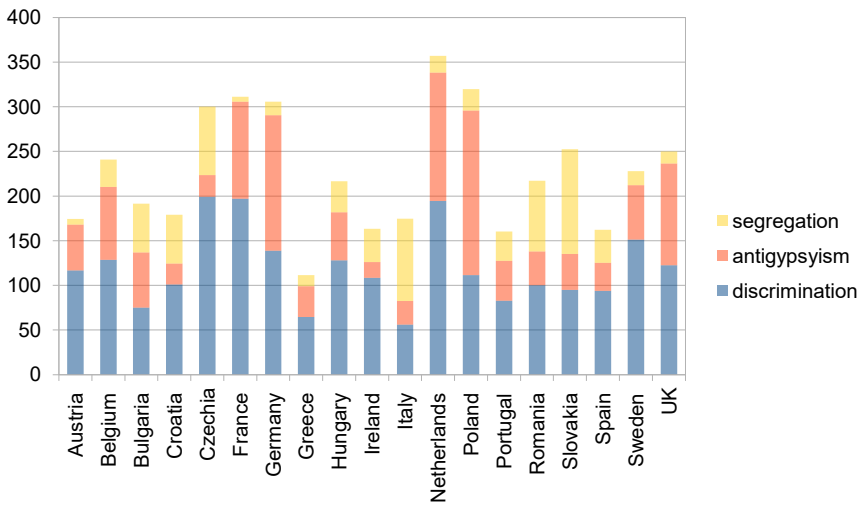
Source: RCM reports for Clusters 1-3 (19 countries)

In RCM reports, the keywords 'discrimination', 'segregation', and 'antigypsyism' are mentioned more often in reports from countries from Clusters 2 and 3 – i.e., in countries which generally have fewer Roma. The exception is Czechia: the Czech RCM reports are among those which put the strongest emphasis on discrimination, and relatively strong emphasis on segregation, but make few references to antigypsyism. Segregation is a key topic in the reports from Slovakia, Italy, Romania, Czechia, Bulgaria, and Croatia, but is in general discussed less often than discrimination, which appears to be the most well-established and widely used term. The term 'antigypsyism' appears quite often in some of the country reports (Poland, Germany, Netherlands, the UK, and France) and much less often in others, including those from Cluster 1. There is wide variation across national RCM reports in terms of the use of all three words, but it is most pronounced in the case of antigypsyism, which finding is in line with the fact that the latter is a relatively new concept associated with a variety of

broad definitions. It is yet not recognised by some governments, but it is apparently of various weight within the discourse of civic organisations in different countries. It is also reasonable to think that, to some extent, the vocabulary of monitoring reports is determined by the policies of the given countries. Countries with large Romani populations very often employ a lot of targeted measures that may lead, and in some case actually do lead, to segregation, which may explain why the latter appears to be a major topic on the policy agenda. On the other hand, countries with a smaller Romani population generally have very few measures targeting Roma, and very little data about Roma as a separate group, so beyond their inclusion in broad discussions about some mainstream policies, the former have little to say about Roma beyond issues of discrimination and antigypsyism. Finally, a third line of explanation – which requires a deep dive into history and for this reason will not be discussed in this analysis – relates to the specific trajectories by which the respective countries have come to recognise past injustices related to race and ethnicity.

It is worth looking at the way different countries are positioned in relation to the RCM reports on the conceptual map[3] we discuss. For this purpose, we may examine the emphasis put on 15 different keywords from the domain of discrimination, segregation, and antigypsyism.[4]

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3   The conceptual map is constructed based on the frequency with which the keywords are used in the reports. Similarity between countries is therefore based on similar weights being given to specific concepts in the country reports.

4   The keywords, all derivative forms included, are 'discrimination', 'affirmative (action)', 'segregation', 'desegregation', 'assimilation', 'racism', 'antiracism', 'antisemitism', antigypsyism', 'stereotype', 'stigma', 'prejudice', 'hate', and 'sterilisation'. The words were chosen because of their strong correlation in textual terms, and their belonging to the conceptual domain of interest.

Chart 2. Network of countries whose RCM reports share more than three strongly-emphasised topics related to 'discrimination', 'segregation', and 'antigypsyism'
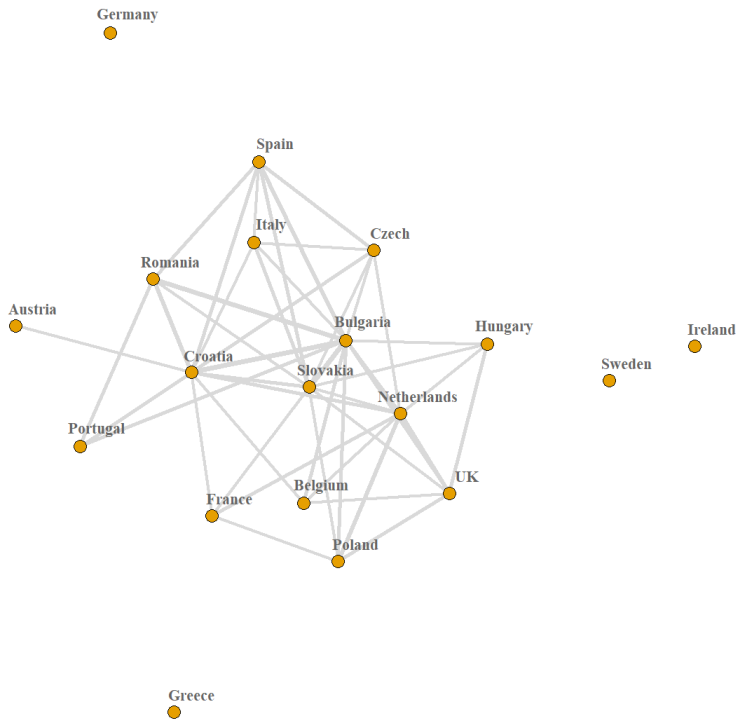
This network of countries that are interlinked by the concepts used in the RCM reports shows significant concentration at the centre, where we find several countries from Cluster 1, which have the largest Romani populations. Most of the national RCM reports bear a strong conceptual similarity to reports from several other countries. This is not surprising, bearing in mind the common framework which guided the production of the reports, but it also testifies to the existence of shared meaning.

Chart 3. Network of countries whose RCM reports share more than five strongly emphasised topics
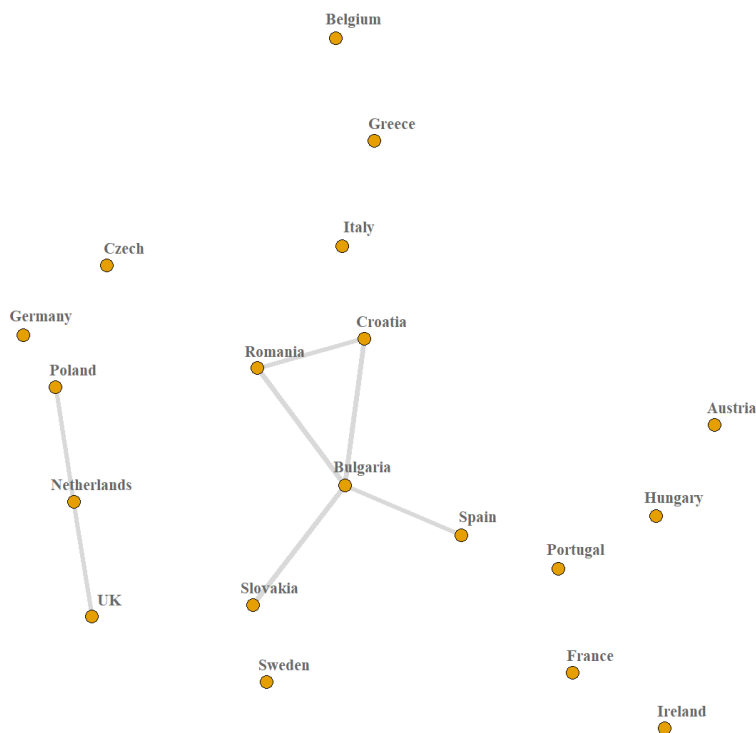
Under conditions of the strongest requirements for connectedness, only two components remain: one consisting of Poland, the Netherlands, and the UK; the other including Spain and countries from CEE, which all have a large Romani population, with the exception of Croatia. What the reports of these countries have in common is a strong emphasis on the same themes from the conceptual domain of discrimination, segregation, and antigypsyism. It remains to be seen if the conceptual framework that is manifest in the RCM reports will somehow be reflected in documents produced by the national governments – in particular, in the new national Roma integration strategies (NRIS). However, similarities between countries in terms of RCM reports may also be evident in NRIS.

Direct reactions and action in relation to RCM reports

It is not easy to identify a lot of explicit reactions by governments to the RCM if we exclude the interactions that occurred during events at which RCM reports were presented. It is equally difficult to find documents produced by national governments that contain references to the national RCM reports, or to the synthesis reports that summarise the findings. This does not mean that the RCM did not or will not have any effect on national policies for Roma inclusion. It means that the effects are liable to be mediated – sometimes through a lot of intermediary way stations. The silence in relation to RCM may also be because the production of government documents is a lengthy process: sometimes documents take years to produce, while often – like in the case of NRIS – they cover a long period of time, and are not likely to undergo substantial changes during their creation. It will be interesting to see whether the new NRIS (to be submitted to the European Commission (EC) in 2021) will include such references. However, this is likely, if the NRIS are produced in participatory way with members of civil society or experts invited to participate in related working groups.

This being said, some important reactions by governments have been documented that can be linked to the cycle of RCM reports. These reactions (of variable importance and consequence) arguably share a notable similarity: they have occurred in relation to policy areas in which the respective governments had already changed their way of thinking and speaking, and had genuinely adopted new policy concepts.

In Germany, measures for combatting antigypsyism were adopted by the Cabinet Committee on Racism and Right-wing Extremism. The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma welcomed the appointment of a commissioner for Sinti and Roma in Germany responsible for the fight against antigypsyism, analogous to a similar commissioner dealing with anti-Semitism. This step is expected to strengthen victim protection, support the education of staff holding office in public institutions, and trigger the implementation of specific sectoral programmes by the responsible ministries. The Cabinet Committee also accepted other of the Central

Council's proposals for targeted measures for combatting antigypsyism, such as the establishment of a national contact point within the framework of the 2020-2030 '*EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation*', and the evaluation of political measures and strategies for combatting antigypsyism in cooperation with civil society (Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2020).

In Bulgaria, the RCM reports may have influenced some policies, but they lack direct reference to the latter. Some commitments by the government were made – or rather, reconfirmed – during the presentation of the RCM, but these concern areas in which the government was already prepared to react by accepting the existence of certain (negative) realities and the relevance of concepts that describe them. During a conference involving the presentation of the Bulgarian RCM at which segregation in education was discussed, a response from the government was elicited (Amalipe, 2019). The possibility of this dialogue could have been predicted, even by looking only at the way the government speaks about segregation, but also note that the speech was translated into action at the local level: the Bulgarian RCM referred to the example of the municipality of Gabrovo, where a segregated school had been effectively merged with another one, thereby putting an end to school segregation (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019a). This is typical of the way in which processes such as the RCM influence government discourse, and later also government practice. This has happened before at a different scale with the forerunners of the RCM, which were typically of a smaller scope in terms of the number of actors involved, and the smaller coverage of countries.

For some organisations like the Roma Youth Organisation of Croatia, the RCM was a ticket for accessing working groups involved in the elaboration of the new National Plan for Roma Inclusion.[5] Similar examples of improved access to important bodies or umbrella organisations participating in the drafting of national plans for Roma inclusion were shared by organisations who worked on the RCM in Czechia. The Roma

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5   I owe this information to Marek Hojsik and Siniša-Senad Musić from Romska Organizacija mladih Hrvatske.

Youth Organisation ended up in what was perceived as a 'funny' situation: the former was asked by officials to raise an important issue which the latter could not, or would not, raise, presumably because of their fear of the reaction of the public. From the point of view of political discourse, this is actually a very serious situation: it is a further illustration of the indirect dialogue which can happen between representatives of civil society and government. Depending on one's perspective, this episode can be regarded as a manipulative and covert practice, or as governmental actors' trust in delegating a civil society organisation to play the important role of engaging in difficult dialogue with the public.

Silence, distorted listening, circumlocution, and doublespeak

Let us start by noting that creating a public language that can speak about race and ethnicity in a non-racist way is a difficult process involved with many setbacks, and an outcome that is far from guaranteed. Laczo (2019), in referring to the work of Kristóf Szombati (2018), writes that one of the reasons for the increase in the far-right's influence in poor Hungarian provinces is exactly the failure to develop a non-racist public language. Lacking the latter, it is not surprising that actors often remain silent for long periods of time, pondering what to say, or how to respond, or engaging in awkward interactions both in interpersonal relations (Anderson, 2010) and when an institutional response is expected.

In this and the next sections, some examples of suboptimal dialogue are presented based on the previous reception of documents similar to RCM reports. Having a dialogue can sometimes happen without actors speaking directly to each other, or by changing narratives without direct reference; this is like responding to a challenging question without referring to or turning to the actor who originally asked it. Distorted listening is another reaction for response-avoidance, after which information appears in a form far removed from the original. Such reactions are not unique to governments, especially in relation to difficult or embarrassing issues. In this section we refer to some examples which are not directly related to RCM,

but can give some idea of what may happen as time passes. Sometimes, distorted listening cannot be distinguished from changes of concept, as discussed in the next section – which is arguably the most decisive way in which government policies can be influenced 'by words'.

Texts such as those produced by the RCM often do not elicit a direct response. One can recognise that they have found their way into government discourse only by seeing their traces later. Very often this happens through the mediation of official documents that are produced by the institutions of the EU, which are more difficult for governments to ignore. Roundabout language is most typical of documents prepared by mostly impartial professionals, who have to keep in mind political correctness both regarding the reality of international commitments and the whole discursive universe related to issues such as human rights and discrimination. On the other hand, they have to be also mindful of the concerns of governments who prefer to speak about these realities in a different way.

Ignoring texts and analyses which say that some things exist that the government prefers not to recognise is part of the history of keywords such as discrimination and segregation. If governments are not capable of ignoring a certain text, they try to read into it only those sections that they can accept, and ignore the other sections. This is done much more easily if the said sections are relatively separate and independent from the surrounding context. An example of the selective reading and use of concepts occurred with what was taken from the World Bank's *Handbook for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma* (2014) by governments of Member States and the EU. The Handbook differentiates between 'desegregation' and 'non-segregation'. Desegregation is also defined in this complex document as the process of undoing segregation, while 'non-segregation' is defined as the principle of abstaining (as much as possible) from increasing existing segregation: this does not preclude making improvements in segregated areas, or relocating persons from segregated areas to better (social) housing located in the same or in other segregated areas (as, technically speaking, such relocation does not increase existing segregation). This concept allows the European Commission and Member States to label investments that reproduce segregation as 'non-segregation'. It should be noted that the term

'non-segregation' is rarely used, especially in comparison to established terms such as 'non-discrimination', which has the clear meaning of avoiding *any* form of discrimination. Probably this is the reason that the concept of 'segregation' appears to be more pliable and easy to redefine by constructing various derivative concepts.

The European Commission has accepted the introduction of this new doublespeak. Of course, the term non-segregation could have been avoided altogether, or could have been used to denote a different concept – i.e., to denote the principle of avoiding the perpetuation of existing segregation as well as the creation of new segregated areas. This obviously highlights the fact that strong keywords such as segregation, and all of its derivatives, do not emerge solely from adherence to principles and values, but emerge to justify and guide the evolution of real situations.[6]

The question is, does such incorporation of new terms (or their formal reframing) actually change policies (in terms of specific measures), or do governments only fit their messages to the new framing? Fitting messages is already a significant change, and can be a first step. Reactions sometimes look like a consequence of cognitive dissonance or a conceptual conflict that produces doublespeak: agents change vocabulary without changing policy. One example of this is the desegregation discourse – some have started to use the new vocabulary, but little has changed in reality.

Specifically, following infringement proceedings in Czechia, the government abolished special schools for children with mild mental disabilities (later renamed 'practical' schools), but Roma often remained in the same segregated facilities that are no longer called segregated, or were placed for some reason in separate classes. In these cases, the Czech

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6   This analysis of policy language should not be understood in any way as an accusation of hypocrisy targeted at those who coined and used the term non-segregation in the discussed sense. I think that in this case, as in many other ones, there are real dilemmas of existential proportions behind linguistic and conceptual twists and turns of the said kind. One such dilemma is the traumatic experience of relocation – an unavoidable companion to almost any desegregation effort, to which substantial precautionary material is dedicated in the Handbook produced by the World Bank. Even in the poorest communities and most deprived areas – and sometimes in precisely the latter areas, with the highest intensity – people tend to harbour a sense of attachment to their neighbourhoods and communities (Málovics et al., 2019).

government used colour-blind language to refer to circumstances without any obvious ethnic connotation, such as using the expressions 'preparatory classes', or 'mild mental disability'. 'Social disadvantages' and 'cultural differences' were recognised as sources of special educational needs, but children with these characteristics could not be educated in separate classes or schools. Avoiding speaking openly about a specific topic is a clear sign that the development of a non-racist public language to express ethnic difference is a long and difficult but unavoidable process for which silence, avoidance, and colour-blindness can be no substitute.

Similarly, in Bulgaria, in the process of closing down institutions for children in which Roma were over-represented, new community-based services were opened in the same place and often with the same staff, and probably with the same kind of day-to-day experience for children: they were just called a different name. These are all examples of how language alone did not have the power to change the underlying reality. The latter was rather used to conceal inconvenient truths than to drive social change. In Slovakia, desegregation and non-segregation principles were integrated into policy documents, but no desegregation action has been taken: in this case, the right concepts were used, but words remained inconsequential.

Another common reaction that can be expected is denial that a concept is useful at all – that there is something meaningful that could be captured by using it. The expression antigypsyism has just gone through this phase at an international level and in academic/professional discussions. This does not mean that this whole argument will not be reproduced in some form in national debates, including in the media, once governments start having to use the word.

In exceptional cases, real action can precede any spoken or written reactions. This appears to be the case in Slovakia, where the government, according to the RCM, did address the manifestations of antigypsyism without officially using the term in any documents (Roma Civil Monitor, 2019b). Political and social realities may sometimes arise before they are called anything: i.e., before words or expressions are attached to political concepts, but using a specific concept usually makes both discourses and policies more sophisticated (Ball et al., 1989).

Conceptual shifts and conceptual change

This section is dedicated to what is probably the most significant and sustainable reaction and the one which has the greatest potential to bring about lasting change. This is the actual adoption of new concepts or a whole new conceptual framework. Such dramatic change rarely happens in a single move: if it appears to have done so, it could be an example of doublespeak or distorted listening rather than a real change. If the change is real, it usually takes the form of a conceptual shift that can ultimately lead to a fundamental conceptual change. The adoption of new concepts does not just involve 'words' or a promise of future action. The distinction between discursive action in the form of 'pure talk' and actual policies is not so clear-cut. Arguably, words and concepts have no lesser effect in very practical fields such as social work (Lohse, 2016)[7] than in relation to more tangible changes, such as allocating more funds to specific services or appointing new staff.

Conceptual change is a very powerful tool in political and social transformation. Conceptual change is reflected in shifts as simple and trivial as changes of vocabulary, while may be more refined, as in the subtle shift in the meaning of pre-existing concepts, which is often difficult to grasp as it may happen over long periods of time. In this analysis, a simple vocabulary change is illustrated by the case of starting to use new words such as antigypsyism, and the coining of new word derivatives such as non-segregation. Another side of this coin is stopping the use of other words and phrases[8] that have become conceptually incompatible with shifting values and policy agendas: a typical example would be the language related to the securitisation of the Roma, which arguably now has shrinking space, despite some nationalists' efforts to reinsert it into the official documents of national governments.

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7   Lohse speaks of the influence that "the power to produce antigypsyist meaning and knowledge" exerts on social work in a society where antigypsyist resentment is immanent.

8   Tracing disappearing words and related concepts is not part of this analysis, as this requires a different set of instruments.

The history of political concepts that become catchwords usually involves their becoming multifaceted, acquiring new meanings, and becoming usable for diverse political goals. Even after a concept is defined in law, this does not prevent it from evolving into an instrument that can serve various historical movements.[9] There are various reasons why governments gradually adopt a new language when speaking about Roma. The most obvious is that they find themselves under pressure from international organisations, other governments, and/or their own civil society. There may, however, be less obvious reasons that should be identified: otherwise, we may be unable to explain why in some situations pressure from the mentioned agents exerts an effect, while in others it does not.

The concepts of discrimination and segregation have already gone through this process and evolved in different ways, often in the same national contexts. Despite the complexity of the underlying phenomena, the discursive strategy of making them inconsequential in policy terms boils down to something very simple: the use of the concepts in an ambiguous way that avoids specifying if such phenomena actually exist. Bulgarian examples are interesting, because even though Bulgaria has had an anti-discrimination body for a long time, discussion about discrimination is still very ambiguous and evasive. Quite surprisingly, in contrast to in many other Central and Eastern European countries, in Bulgaria segregation has genuinely evolved into an operational concept that has permeated policies of the government and local authorities. Therefore, it is discussed both in the RCM and government documents as a reality that truly exists and is amenable to government action. As a consequence, this topic was part of the official presentation and discussion of the findings of the RCM with government officials, while discrimination (in general) continues to be a delicate topic, although talking about discrimination has undergone significant evolution.

As mentioned before, the boundary between the distortion of a concept and the start of a genuine conceptual change are also not as clear-cut as it may appear. Conceptual change may actually start by superficially

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9   Such as occurred with the evolution of the word 'emancipation': a key concept from the same broad domain as discrimination, segregation, and antigypsyism (Koselleck, 2002).

accepting new concepts and designing discursive rules that permit speaking at length about something without saying that it actually exists or happens. Such discursive rules are a sign that there is yet no appetite to address the underlying reality with any seriousness, but the concept itself cannot be ignored because it has become part of the parlance of important stakeholders, such as influential international bodies. Accepting new concepts and designing discursive rules to describe a new and ambiguous reality related to the concept of antigypsyism, which already looks very complicated and multifaceted, with various definitions (albeit not necessarily incompatible), would at least entail quite different forms of action.

Some policy and legal documents may subtly convey a devalued image of Romani communities, concludes a literature overview published by the OECD (Rutigliano, 2020), which refers to the examples in Lajčáková et al. (2020), in which various forms of covert manifestations of antigypsyism are described, such as the use of proxy categories which members of the public readily associate with Roma, even though ethnicity is not explicitly mentioned.

The term antigypsyism had a significant presence at least in some of the RCM national reports, but from the perspective of national policies is brand new, and has yet to find its way into policy discourse. It is barely discoverable in any documents published by national governments, but is used with high frequency in RCM reports and has found its way into EU parlance, including official documents. Some notable illustrations show that it is already being discussed as a reality which exists, which can be observed, and potentially also measured and proven by evidence. As mentioned before, one might expect that the term antigypsyism and some similar terms will find a more prominent place in the new NRIS – and from there into more operational documents produced by governments. This scenario, however, is far from guaranteed, and as we have argued, governments have some subtle tools at their disposal for using words in ways that change their meanings.

The reference paper produced by the Alliance against Antigypsyism also considers the latter to be a phenomenon that is common among what the Alliance calls 'duty bearers' (i.e., persons in charge) either explicitly

or *inadvertently*. It appears from this statement that the Alliance regards antigypsyism primarily as a personal phenomenon rather than an institutional one, even when it produces institutional effects: *inadvertent* reactions generally stem from individual misconceptions. The authors of the paper also make the observation that the strategy typically employed by authorities concerning antigypsyism is to postpone a response for as long as possible. Ample empirical evidence can be presented to support this observation: we may note that this is rather part of the 'biography' of any such new concept that has significant transformatory potential (Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2017).

Some documents recognise "an emerging consensus" about antigypsyism as a specific form of racism against the Roma, although it is clear that currently there are various "attempts to describe the phenomenon and capture its complexity" (EU High Level Group on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Other Forms of Intolerance, 2018). The same document goes on to say that antigypsyism can be unintentional, unconscious, or even internalised by the Roma themselves.

One of the process indicators within the framework of monitoring indicators developed by FRA (2020) based on the work of the EU Roma Working Party requires that antigypsyism should be *recognised* in Member States' legal frameworks, policies, policy documents, and policy implementation measures, and that antigypsyism should be present as a category in data recording about hate crimes. However, the text of the proposed indicators does not indicate clearly what it means for a concept such as antigypsyism to be *recognised*. It appears that some of the governments which have never used this concept before will use it in texts or, as the Bulgarian government did, will coin or borrow a word or phrase alluding to this concept. The Bulgarian government used a phrase that counts as a definition of antigypsyism – namely. "discrimination and prejudice against Roma, sometimes referred to as anti-Gypsyism", which appears in previous reports. From a psychological perspective, antigypsyism is treated primarily as a form of ethnic prejudice, albeit one that is context-specific and highly relevant to policies as it affects their chance of success at the sub-national/ local level (Kende et al., 2020).

Now that the term antigypsyism has found its way into documents produced by civil society organisations like the RCM, but also by EU institutions and international organisations, it will become difficult for governments to fully ignore it. It will be interesting to see if the equivalents of terms such as 'non-antigypsyism' will emerge as they did with the expressions non-discrimination and non-segregation. 'Non-antigypsyism', similarly to terms such as 'non-discrimination' and 'non-segregation' are ways of defining combat against this form of racism in terms of general guiding principles, without saying whether this form of racism actually exists and is widespread, or whether it is just the implementation of the safeguards that will fully prevent it from emerging. Much more refined ways to speak about these issues in national languages and in English will emerge if the term antigypsyism starts its true political career in the parlance of national authorities – by governments, municipalities, etc.

The draft of the draft Bulgarian NRIS 2021-2030 translates antigypsyism literally as "anti-Roma discrimination". It is not clear in what sense this concept differs from "discrimination against the Roma" – a phrase that already existed in the Bulgarian political vernacular. Also, lacking reference to texts in English or other languages, a Bulgarian reader may not recognise at all that a new concept has been introduced with this document that had not appeared in the previous NRIS. The term antigypsyism in Bulgarian transliteration appears in the draft document only once – in the context of a reference to the definition adopted by the International Alliance regarding remembrance of the holocaust. It is notable that the draft Bulgarian strategy for Roma inclusion introduced alongside the reference to antigypsyism also includes the concept of *aporophobia*, which provides to some extent an alternative explanation.[10] It appears that neither concept has been

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10   The term 'aporophobia', coined by Adela Cortina in the last decade of the twentieth century, explains discrimination primarily through poverty and aversion and hostility towards the poor. In line with this interpretation, if pursued radically, racial and ethnic discrimination become just side effects of the rejection of the poor. It is not clear how (or from where) the concept of aporophobia ended up in the new Bulgarian NRIS.

used before in official government documents,[11] or at least neither have occupied a prominent position or were related to argumentation about the need to implement specific policies.

The chance of the concept of antigypsyism finding its way into policies which actually operate will be traceable – similarly to the evolution of concepts such as 'segregation' or 'discrimination' – at the level of government texts by checking whether they imply that this form of racism actually exists.

When government documents increasingly start implying that a thing exists, it is a sign that a policy response, if not already present, is forthcoming. Statements and analyses about complex social phenomena such as discrimination, segregation, and antigypsyism are always multi-layered and nuanced, but there are some rather simple and straightforward criteria which indicate whether governments (or indeed any other actors who speak about them) are taking them seriously.

The emerging acceptance of a new concept is exemplified by the recognition that it describes something that actually exists in society that can be tackled by policies. There are many nuances involved in such reactions, which can be detected early on at the level of (the ever-shifting) discourse.

Will governments, like some tend to do with discrimination, mainly discuss the 'prevention' of antigypsyism, often implying that it has no chance to arise at all because prevention is so effective? Will they say that antigypsyism has to be addressed, measured, stopped, etc., or even start using military metaphors such as 'combating' or 'fighting' the latter, which show that: i) the phenomenon exists; ii) it is something dangerous requiring unrelenting and unforgiving opposition, and iii) it is being taken seriously, which would imply it is deeply rooted and difficult to eradicate? Looking back at the discursive history of the terms segregation and discrimination, it is very unlikely that the concept of antigypsyism will find broad recognition from the outset. There is nothing wrong with prevention in itself. It is much

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11   This is almost sure for aporophobia. The term 'antigypsyism' – being more popular among Bulgarian NGOs – had a greater chance of finding its way into government documents.

better to create an environment in which racism has no chance to emerge at all in any form. When the term is used to imply that something is of dubious existence, it is not usually related to the elaboration of any concrete policies or activities. When concrete activities aimed at prevention are described in an overall context of covert denial, they may show that the phenomenon actually exists, and that measures being undertaken appear to be insufficient or inadequate in the face of the challenge. Alternatively, they may otherwise uncover weaknesses in the very concept of prevention when it is applied to a phenomenon that is already widespread and part of a dominant reality and discourse. This is because it can be difficult to explain how a dominant discourse can be challenged by 'prevention'.

There is a full discursive set of terms – and actually a whole discursive universe – in which discrimination is discussed in an unspecified way: as something which is usually not clearly defined[12] but most importantly is a (negative) phenomenon which may not exist (in any significant proportions) because it has been fully prevented or it is barely observable.

Quite naturally, first reactions are shorter in length and could be more affective than later reactions. Early reactions usually come in the form of brief statements that belong to genres such as quotations in the media, responses to questions during a public event or in media interviews, and nowadays, increasingly diverse textual, oral, and multimedia outputs such as posts, tweets, etc. There have not been many such reactions concerning RCM on behalf of governments, as opposed to those produced by the community and broader national and international civil society.

A quick overview of presentations and summaries of findings from the RCM, including pieces as short as tweets, shows that most messages do

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12 Saying that a "phenomenon is not clearly defined" for the purpose of policy-making should not be understood in the sense that no clear definition exists anywhere, be this in international agreements, treaties, national legislation, or policy documents. It should be understood in the sense that at a practical or operational level, it is clear that the term is used in a variety of contexts and with a variety of implied meanings, including naive practical definitions, colloquial use, etc. Such use of terms can be traced in important documents such as government strategies and plans and reports related to public investment, which illustrates that roundabout language is not innocuous but has important consequences for the everyday practice of professionals from various fields and the routine procedures and operation of government bodies and services, etc.

not contain any information apart from a reference to the RCM. However, some of the messages contain extracted and condensed information from documents of length and complexity: in some cases, the spotlight is on topics which governments consider 'hot' or 'hazardous', such as racism, discrimination, segregation, or other issues.

Very short summaries provide quite useful information about the deep conceptual structure of complex messages and large texts: they tend to retain the keywords, and sometimes nothing beyond that. Tweets are an extreme example of short summaries. Looking through tweets that go beyond just announcing the publication of RCM reports, we clearly notice that very short summaries tend to concentrate on the bare essence. To give a typical example, a tweet from the ERGO network summarises the content of the Hungarian RCM report as focusing on segregation, racial profiling, and antigypsyism. This is thus a list of two powerful keywords and an expression referring to one of the most extreme manifestations of discrimination. In essence, it is a brief statement about the centrality of a specific conceptual framework in relation to other conceptual frameworks that are also reflected in complex documents like the Hungarian RCM report.

There are still no summaries about what governments have read into the RCM reports, nor many tweets or posts. Explicit references to the large body of documents produced in relation to RCM will probably be directly made in documents of similar complexity, such as in the forthcoming national documents for promoting the equality, inclusion, and participation of the Roma – or perhaps the impact will be felt only in the spirit of official documents, whose agendas and tone are mediated at the EU level.

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