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'Vulnerability of Roma' in Policy Discourse on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings in Serbia

Perspectives of the National Policy Actors

'VULNERABILITY OF ROMA' IN POLICY DISCOURSE ON COMBATTING TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS IN SERBIA: PERSPECTIVES OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ACTORS

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of research on national anti-trafficking policy actors' discourses **on 'vulnerability of Roma' to trafficking in human beings in Serbia**. According to most of the interviewed policy actors, Roma are one of the "vulnerable groups", constituting at least half of all human trafficking victims. However, many of the interviewees argue there are no *specific* vulnerability factors that can be associated with Roma. Yet the analysis of their discourses suggests that *institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity'* and *racism* can be considered the specific factors. It further suggests that these two factors do not only increase vulnerability of Roma, but also prevent local anti-trafficking policy actors from providing assistance and protection to Romani victims of trafficking. In addition, the analysis also indicates that *reconstruction of the concept 'Romani culture'* is another factor that prevents local anti-trafficking policy actors from helping Romani victims of trafficking. The research presented here was concerned with the different meanings embedded in the concept 'vulnerability of Roma'. The juxtaposition of policy actors' discourses alongside discourses represented through the national strategic policy documents reveals several problematic category making processes and conceptualizations. For instance, as we will soon see, the subtle conceptualization of *'trafficking in Roma'* as a *Romani problem* and then, further to this, as a *Romani women's problem*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Only by conducting a brief desk investigation into trafficking in human beings in Serbia, one can quickly assess that Roma are explicitly identified as one of the "vulnerable groups" or one of the "groups at high risk" by academic research as well as by international, intergovernmental, and non-governmental organizations' reports and policy documents. For instance, *The European Union Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016* defines 'Roma' as a "vulnerable group": "Vulnerable groups are at greater risk of human trafficking. Such groups include children, especially early school leavers, children left behind, unaccompanied children, and children with disabilities, as well as people in the Roma community" (EU Strategy, 2012, p. 14).[1] One might also note that, even though 'Roma' are listed here as one of the "vulnerable groups", they are also said to be overrepresented in other categories defined as vulnerable in the EU Strategy. For example, a recent study on some Serbian settlements with high Romani populations talks about Roma as 'early school leavers', presenting school dropout rates of 80 to 100% for Romani children (Cvejić, 2014, p. 113). In addition, an academic article, focusing on 'vulnerability of Roma' to trafficking in human beings in Serbia, presents an estimation regarding the ratio of Romani to non-Romani victims of approximately 50:50 (Poucki & Bryan, 2014, p. 158).[2]

With this in mind, when I began my research, I assumed that strategic policy documents on the national level aimed at combatting trafficking would consider the above when singling out 'vulnerable groups' or/and enacting measures which attempt to address the factors that increase vulnerability of Roma.[3] However, these documents neither single out 'Roma' nor concern themselves with Roma explicitly. It is interesting to view this as an example of a situation when the processes of Europeanization and the accompanying adaptation pressure do not lead to a complete convergence with the EU anti-trafficking policies: not to suggest that they should.[4] Yet, one wonders *why this is the case.* This conundrum motivated me to look at the domestic decision making processes (Yovcheva, 2007). It was an incentive to explore discourses on 'Roma' as a group vulnerable to trafficking in Serbia. The first question this analysis intended to answer is - *what can discourses of the national anti-trafficking policy actors tell us about 'vulnerability of Roma' to trafficking*? Further to this, my resulting interviews with policy actors lead me to conduct additional analysis into the discourses of two national strategic policy documents. The research focus became a search for the implicit meanings embedded in the concept 'vulnerability of Roma' within the anti-trafficking policy discourse in Serbia. As argued by

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1   By using single quotation marks, I emphasize *Roma as a category in which people are placed and as a concept* that embeds different meanings in different contexts. Throughout the text, the same is being applied to other categories and concepts, such as *vulnerability of Roma.*

2   An official estimate places Roma at just over 2 % of the population, while unofficial estimates suggest about 5 %. The Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia publishes the final results of the 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings on 'ethnicity' of the population of the Republic of Serbia, available from http://pod2.stat.gov.rs/ObjavljenePublikacije/Popis2011/ Nacionalna%20pripadnost-Ethnicity.pdf, last accessed March 27, 2015.

3   The *national anti-trafficking strategic policy documents I refer to are the National Strategy to Prevent and Suppress Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* and the accompanying *National Action Plan.* My research takes into account the status of the National Strategy and the National Action Plan as neither have been adopted by the Government, thus, neither are official nor final versions of the documents. For this study, the final draft version of the National Strategy is used, while only the first draft of the National Action Plan was available.

4   Serbia was granted the EU candidate country status in 2012.

Michel Van Eeten, diverse and conflicting narratives suggest "opposing implications for action" (Van Eeten, 2007). Therefore, the main aim was to determine the relevance of the anti-trafficking discourse on 'vulnerability of Roma' in regards to anti-trafficking policymaking and implementation.

In this paper, I will first present an explanation of the methods employed (Chapter 2) and contextualize the topic by giving an overview of the crucial international, legally binding and policy documents and by presenting the national anti-trafficking mechanism (Chapter 3). Following this, I briefly map the field by presenting sources relevant to the topic that justify the research question (Chapter 4). I will then focus on the analysis of interviews conducted with national policy actors as well as relevant policy documents that also construct the basis of my arguments (Chapter 5 and 6). Finally, the *Conclusions* will bring my major findings together and recommend further research in the field.

2. METHODOLOGY

Due to the specificity of the topic, the research design envisaged employing solely qualitative research methods. The research question itself – *what national anti-trafficking policy actors' discourses can tell us about 'vulnerability of Roma' to trafficking* – made me opt for desk research and interviews. I also ended up comparing the discourses of interviewed anti-trafficking policy actors against policy documents relevant to the research topic. This is why I paid attention especially to the *National Strategy to Prevent and Suppress Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* and the *Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia*. Additionally, I studied other strategic policy documents and policy reports from both the national and the international level. The analyzed texts are understood as parts of social events since this analysis considered *constructions* of meanings applied to 'vulnerability of Roma'. Therefore, critical discourse analysis has been used to identify the foundations of the concept 'vulnerability of Roma' (re)created in the national anti-trafficking policy discourse (Fairclough, 2003).

I conducted fifteen interviews in total. Out of these, nine are with policy actors who currently have the greatest and most direct impact on anti-trafficking policymaking and implementation; the tenth was top ranking until recently. Out of the abovementioned ten interviewed actors, four came from non-governmental organizations: Atina, Astra (the only two NGOs in Serbia that specialize in anti-trafficking), the Center for Youth Integration, and the Novi Sad Humanitarian Center. The latter two are also part of the anti-trafficking policy network, implementing projects aimed at countering trafficking. Their beneficiaries are considered at high risk of human trafficking. I also interviewed individuals at three state institutions: the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator at the Ministry of Interior, two representatives of the Bureau for Strategic Planning at the Ministry of Interior, and a representative of the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection. I also talked to employees at two intergovernmental organizations: the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE Mission to Serbia and the International Organization for Migration, IOM Serbia as well as a member of the national organization Red Cross Serbia. Additionally, I interviewed a researcher affiliated with a think tank organization called the Public Policy Research Center, an expert in social policies who is currently conducting a research project on human trafficking in Serbia.

As the topic of this research concerns 'Roma', it was not only of great importance to examine the perspectives of policy actors in the anti-trafficking network. However, since there is no Romani person present in the network at the national level, it felt even more relevant to represent in my findings what Roma themselves think about 'vulnerability of Roma' to human trafficking. I interviewed those who, to the best of my assessment, could be part of the national anti-trafficking network; because they were implementing anti-trafficking projects and cooperating with the anti-trafficking NGOs or because they are employees of state institutions which are officially part of the anti-trafficking policy mechanism.[5] I talked to a Romani activist who works at an NGO called the Roma Information Center, a Romani activist and a representative of the Romani women's NGO Bibija, and with two other Romani activists.

3. FRAMING ANTI–TRAFFICKING POLICIES

In this chapter, I will present a brief overview of the international, anti-trafficking legally binding and policy documents relevant to the Serbian context as well as the national anti-trafficking policy mechanism in order to contextualize the research.

There are four international, legally binding documents and policy tools central to the Serbian context. These are the documents that Serbian policy actors explicitly relied on during national policymaking processes. All existing Serbian anti-trafficking policies stem back to the ***Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime***. Known as the *Palermo Protocol*, this document is of great importance because it obliged the ratifying country to start the process of creating legislation and policies that fight trafficking in human beings.[6] Serbia ratified the Convention with its Protocols in September 2001. The second most important international, legally binding document in this context is the ***Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and its Explanatory Report***, adopted by the Council in Warsaw, Poland in 2005. This is yet another international treaty that obliges the ratifying country to create its own work plan for defeat trafficking. Serbia ratified the Convention in 2009. An independent monitoring mechanism provided by the Convention - *the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings* (GRETA) - evaluates, gives recommendations, and communicates with the anti-trafficking policy actors in Serbia. Further, replacing *the European Council Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA*, the European Parliament and the Council established ***the Directive on preventing and combatting trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims*** in April 2011. ***The EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012–2016*** intended to complement the Directive (still recognized as a major step made within the EU context). The EU counter-trafficking measures are important because they have influenced national-level institutional adoption of anti-trafficking policies since Serbia was granted a candidate country status in 2012.

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5   It is interesting to note that those Roma I interviewed from the governmental sector did not want to be presented as representatives of the state.

6   The name comes from the place where the Convention was adopted – Palermo, Italy, at the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2000.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia started the process of establishing *a national anti-trafficking mechanism* in 2001, the same year the Palermo Protocol was ratified.[7] The formal mechanism was imagined as a multisectoral body consisting of twenty-five strategic actors (*the Republican Team*).[8] However, the formal and operational mechanism currently consists of only two state bodies. Out of the many ministries formally associated with the mechanism, only the Ministry of Interior appears active in the anti-trafficking struggle because *the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator* holds a position within the Ministry. The other active state institution is *the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection*, which functions as the main state institution formed to coordinate the protection and reintegration of victims of human trafficking. Outside of the formal mechanism, there are several **NGOs** that are consistently visible in the fight against trafficking in Serbia (for instance, **Atina** and **Astra** - the two that specialize in anti-trafficking in Serbia, **Red Cross Serbia** and **the International Organization for Migration)**.

Besides the institutional bodies designed to build a framework for the national anti-trafficking struggle in Serbia, two strategies and their accompanying national action plans have since been created. The first national strategy, *the Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Serbia*, was drafted by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE Mission to Serbia) and adopted by the government in 2006. However, the first national action plan *(the National Action Plan for Combatting Human Trafficking 2009 – 2011)* was only adopted in 2009. In 2012, a second strategic policy response to human trafficking in Serbia was developed and a new action plan drawn up: *The National Strategy to Prevent and Suppress Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children* notably recommends changes to the existing national mechanism. Consequently, the "Republican Team" is now an almost officially abandoned structure, with two new institutions in the works: 1. *the Office for combatting human trafficking* within the Ministry of Interior, headed by the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator and 2. *the Implementation Team* comprised of a number of state bodies, five NGO sector representatives, and Red Cross Serbia (Anti-trafficking Strategy, 2013).

4. TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS: MAPPING THE FIELD

In order to start mapping the field, I would like to provide some global, European, and national-level sources on trafficking in human beings and present the reports that evaluate the Serbian state's efforts to combat trafficking. I will then briefly introduce several studies that focus on the same topic as I do and argue the relevance of exploring the same topic from a different perspective.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, trafficking in human beings affects every country in the world - as countries of destination, origin or/and transit. Bearing in mind the challenge of assessing how many victims of trafficking there are in the world (because not all victims

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7   The republics of Serbia and Montenegro established a federation in 1992 as the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 2003, the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was reconstituted, transitioning into two independent nations in 2006.

8   See the schemes: *Strategic actors in combatting trafficking in human beings* in the Republic of Serbia and Republican team to combat trafficking in human beings, Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings in the Republic of Serbia, 2006, available from http://www.mup.gov.rs/domino/zakoni.nsf/strategy.pdf (enclosures), last access February 2, 2015.

are accounted for and it is not possible to calculate the number of 'misidentifications'[9]), the UNODC estimates there are 2.5 million victims at any given time.[10] The UNODC *Global Report* from 2014, covering data from circa 2010 to 2012, estimates that these victims are 49% women, 21% girls, 18% men, and 12% boys. The UNODC also concludes that most the trafficking is for sexual exploitation (globally and in Europe and Central Asia), followed by forced labor, servitude, and "slavery like" practices (UNODC, p. 5).

Trafficking is not only a globalized phenomenon (both discursively and by political initiatives), it has also been made a European issue. For example, Serbia, as a candidate country, provided its statistical data to the Eurostat, the central statistical office of the EU. The Eurostat report analyzes trafficking data provided by all the member states and some candidate countries. For 2012, it calculated a total of 10,998 registered victims and presumed victims in the member states alone.[11] Between 2010 and 2012, the total number of victims was 30,146 and women accounted for 67%, men for 17%, girls for 13% and boys for 3% of the total number. The majority of them were trafficked for sexual (69%) and labor (19%) exploitation (Eurostat, 2014, pp. 10-11).

According to one report on human trafficking, until 2005 transnational trafficking and foreign victims have characterized trafficking in Serbia. It is said that Yugoslavia had a higher economic standard compared to other communist countries in the 1980s and was more open to "the West", what made Serbia and the other Yugoslav republics favorable places for trafficking, especially in regards to trafficking in women from "Eastern European" countries (Astra, 2011). The same source explains that Serbia was predominantly a country of destination during that period. Then, they argue, economic breakdown and armed conflicts in the 90s increased the number of victims trafficked to Serbia as a country of transit. Women from Bulgaria, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine were said to be trafficked either through Serbia to Italy, Spain and France, or through Serbia, to Kosovo and/or Macedonia, Greece, and on to the Middle East. The NGO Astra reports Serbia became a country of origin in that period, as well. In the last ten years, transnational trafficking was completely left out of the discourse until 2014 when there was a rise in the number of Serbian men identified as victims of work exploitation bound for foreign countries (mostly to the Russian Federation).[12] In addition, this data indicates that there have been very few foreigners identified as victims of trafficking in recent years. In 2012 and 2013, mostly women and girls were identified (as mentioned, 2014 was an exception). Trafficking for sexual exploitation was the most frequently identified form of trafficking, with labor exploitation coming in second. Other identified forms include forced begging, forced marriage, forced petty crime, and trafficking in children for adoption. In some cases, victims are said to be subject to a combination of forms of exploitation. Internal trafficking, with Serbian nationals as the victims, dominates the current anti-trafficking discourse in Serbia.

It is also important to mention several of the reports that evaluate the Serbian state's response to trafficking. Although limited by scope, the EU Progress Report on Serbia evaluates the national anti-

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9   Difficulties related to identification of trafficking victims are due to the complexity of the phenomenon of trafficking itself.

10   UNODC, available from http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html, last access January 20, 2015

11   Some countries, such as Serbia, identify and register *presumed victims* of human trafficking as well.

12   This comes from the information I gathered through the interviews, but it is reflected in the statistical data for 2014 where transnational trafficking totals 81% (98 men out of 125 identified victims were exploited for work in Russia). Available from http://www.centarzztlj.rs/eng/images/statistika/eng/Basic_stats_for_trafficking_victims_of_2014.pdf, last access February 20, 2015.

trafficking policies (European Commission, 2014). Most of the information on the evaluations can be found in the U.S. *Trafficking in Persons Report* (U.S. DOS, 2014) and the Council of Europe GRETA *Report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Serbia* (GRETA, 2013). It is especially interesting in regards to this research to note that both of these reports talk about Roma as a group vulnerable to human trafficking in Serbia. The U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report (the TIP Report) has dedicated a separate section to 'Roma' as one of a "topic of special interest" (U.S. DOS, 2014, p. 19).

Having pointed out some of the global, European and national level sources on trafficking in human beings and presented the key reports which evaluate Serbian anti-trafficking efforts, I would like to now introduce several studies which focus on 'vulnerability of Roma' as it applies to my research question. There are, anyhow, very few studies focusing on the topic. Nevertheless, these studies are very valuable and extensive sources of knowledge. For example, there is a study conducted by the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) on anti-trafficking policy mechanisms in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania and the inability of the currently existing policies to address the "high vulnerability" of Roma to trafficking (ERRC, 2011). The study report focuses on the challenges related to the anti-trafficking policies that would address vulnerability of Roma. This study has been important for my research because (although addressing the issue a different way) it treats directly some of the specific topics I engage with, such as singling out 'Roma' in the policy documents and representation of Romani victims in relation to different forms of trafficking.

Even though researchers are becoming increasingly interested in the relationship between the phenomenon of trafficking in human beings and 'Roma', there is still a great lack of research on the topic. So much so that one article written by two researchers, Sasha Poucki and Nicole Bryan, has taken the lead in this regard. Focusing on social exclusion and marginalization as vulnerability factors, the article, however, fills the gap when it comes to Serbian context. The article illustrates the complexity of revealing underlying conditions that perpetuate social injustice in the context of Roma in Serbia (Poucki & Bryan, 2014). The article is crucial for understanding why looking at the intersections of different factors in context is so important. The authors emphasize, "victimization is not one-size-fits-all and not evenly shared within each community" (Poucki & Bryan, 2014, p. 147). By challenging the common misconception of Roma as a homogenous group and by pointing out agency of "the vulnerable", they exhibit a heightened sensibility in their development of the topic. Yet, the authors do not examine anti-trafficking policy discourse in their work. Nor do they - also important to note - manage to analyze the relationship between the concepts 'culture' and 'vulnerability of Roma' to trafficking. Lastly, they sometimes fail to challenge stereotypes about Roma and occasionally even reproduce these stereotypes themselves.

Another primary source here is a thesis that focuses on 'vulnerability of Roma' to human trafficking in Bulgaria, with an emphasis on prevention measures. While my research does not assess the policies in terms of looking at prevention or protection measures, it is interested in looking at 'vulnerability of Roma' as a concept. Here, the author argues:

> [I]n order to create an effective response to human trafficking it is necessary to examine not only the factors which increase an individual's risk of trafficking but the idea of vulnerability itself. Preventive work that addresses individual factors without examining their larger context and relation to one another fails to address the true problems at hand and as a result greatly undermines trafficking prevention as a whole. (Helms, 2013, p. 29).

Only at one point does Helms' work question the concept 'vulnerability'. In fact, his research does not address 'Roma' or 'vulnerability of Roma' as discursively and/or socially constructed category/concept. None of the above-mentioned studies does. Nor do they aim at showing the relevance of meanings embedded in the concepts and categories reproduced by the policy actors.

As Dvora Yanow argues in her book *Constructing "race" and "ethnicity" in America: Category-making in public policy and administration*, lack of understanding of 'ethnicity' as a socially constructed category "undergird and sustain a public perception of [the categories] as 'scientifically' factual" (Yanow, 2003, p. vii). Though Yanow is looking specifically at ethnicization of policy documents, I feel I can apply the same perspective when looking at the national anti-trafficking policy discourse in general, since Serbian strategic anti-trafficking policy documents are not ethnicized. This perspective allows me to argue that the meanings embedded in the concept 'vulnerability of Roma' don not only shape and influence policy makers' perceptions, but also shape the actions of the anti-trafficking policy actors.

5. 'VULNERABILITY OF ROMA' IN THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING POLICY DISCOURSE IN SERBIA: NATIONAL POLICY ACTORS' PERSPECTIVES

This chapter presents analysis of the discourses on 'vulnerability of Roma' to trafficking in human beings in Serbia. Emphasis has been placed on the analysis of interviewed anti-trafficking policy actors' discourses. The first two subchapters are concerned with the following questions I asked my interviewees: 1. Are Roma vulnerable to trafficking in human beings in Serbia? 2. Are they more vulnerable than other people? 3. Are there any factors that specifically put Roma at risk of trafficking in human beings? The last subchapter is concerned with one question: is there a need for data disaggregated by 'ethnicity'? In the following subchapters, my main aim is not to provide a substantive answer to these questions, but rather to present and reflect on the answers of the interviewees while engaging with and exploring the categories and concepts that emerge from the discourses of the interviewees in order to understand the ideas their discourses are based upon.

5.1. Vulnerability factors: "What do you mean the state discriminates?"

Most of the national policy actors consider Roma vulnerable to trafficking. For example, a representative of the NGO Atina, an anti-trafficking organization that has been running a shelter for women and girls victims of trafficking for over ten years, assumes that there are more Romani victims than mentioned 50%. Similarly, an unofficial estimate from the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection comes to about 51% of Roma. The NGO Astra, which besides NGO Atina and the Center directly and officially provides assistance and protection to trafficking victims, would not give any estimations. Yet, its representative did state, "Roma are definitely more vulnerable". Almost all of my interviewees agreed that Roma are more vulnerable than other people are, even though few could not or did not want to make estimations. Some of them even argued that the percentage of Romani victims is probably much higher. Only one interviewee thought that the number of Romani victims is exaggerated. Although

official data on trafficking does not disaggregate by 'ethnicity', the Center bases their estimations on their work with *identified* victims. This suggests that the number could be higher because there might be more Romani victims, but the size, scope and makeup of the unidentified victims is a significant unknown.

An unavoidable topic that emerged constantly during the interviews was *vulnerability factors*. The vulnerability factors most frequently identified by the policy actors are the following: poverty, lack of education, experience of violence, social inequalities, social exclusion, lack of employment opportunities, experience as a social protection system beneficiary, and inaccessibility to health care and other state institutionalized protection services. Some of the policy actors emphasized that the list of factors is inexhaustible. They point out that anybody could be a victim of trafficking in human beings. The representative of the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection explains:

> *You practically make conclusions based only on a group of people that you recognize, that you have identified as victims of human trafficking. Then you see that the greater number of them are actually from very poor social strata or they are people who cannot find jobs or they are people with lower levels of education. However, I am personally very cautious here. If human trafficking exists in this group of citizens [], it has no reason not to exist in other social strata. I do not see any reason why someone from high social stratum would not fall into the story.*

I also questioned the interviewees about the specific factors that cause vulnerability of Roma to human trafficking. Most of the actors said they do not think there is a unique set of vulnerability factors that apply only to Roma, as opposed to non-Roma. However, their discourses embodied the meanings which lead me to argue that they implicitly suggested that there is indeed a difference. The discourses of the interviewed policy actors are diverse and conflicting. Conflicting discourses could be found sometimes even surfaced in the narratives of individual actors. For example, text on one NGO website states: "In Serbia, unfortunately, belonging to the Roma ethnic group represents a major risk factor for child begging".[13] Yet, my interviewees from their organization were quick to establish in our interview that one should not put any kind of emphasis on 'ethnicity' in regards to the anti-trafficking discourse. The NGO representatives later went on to further reflect on the subject:

> *Our experience has shown that [trafficking in human beings] has nothing to do with the fact that someone is from a Romani community. This has nothing to do with your culture, the customs, the tradition []. It is legitimate to observe the ethnic belonging if the actions of the authorities are questioned []. But the tendency will be greater in a Romani community because a Romani community is poorer, thus more exposed to institutional discrimination []. We could say that Roma are more at risk if we want to shorten the story.*

According to this statement, since most Roma are poorer, they are more likely to be exposed to institutional discrimination, as poor people are known to be exposed to institutional discrimination. However, the idea that 'ethnicity' only applies when "the actions of the authorities are questioned" is an extremely good introduction to the point I intend to make. While there is no denying the poor are exposed to institutional discrimination, many interviewed actors argued that institutional discrimination affects Roma "because they are Roma". The same interviewees continue:

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13   Child begging is not defined as human trafficking if it is not *forced*, but 'child begging' and 'forced child begging' are often used interchangeably in the anti-trafficking discourse, which was the case here.

If you had one hundred and fifty small white children on the street, Vučić [the Serbian Prime Minister] would go on foot and identify them (a colleague of her pipes in, "the city would stop") because it would be a scandal. But [because they are Roma], it does not matter, "they are less cold", "they have a thicker skin"... or we would rather look for criminals in the minority community.

Even though this narrative does not explicitly articulate that institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' is a vulnerability factor specific to Roma, it does imply that this is the case. Street-involved children are generally considered vulnerable to trafficking. We can even argue that the interviewees cited above imply that it is not only institutional discrimination, but it is also racism that makes the state ignore vulnerability of Roma to trafficking, when they demonstrate to us the social construction of the biological differences between Romani children and "white children".

Examples of institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' often come from schools as well. The anti-trafficking coordinator gave many examples. There was one case when a teacher reported possible human trafficking only after a child was missing from school for three months. "She hasn't been going to school since October. The teacher does not care: 'one Romani girl less'. Parents married her off to Sweden; the teacher's problem has been solved. I'm saying what happens in practice." After several examples, the coordinator concludes, "this means that the system must be changed". A social policy researcher who works on a project related to trafficking in human beings in Serbia says that this is a familiar story: "Schools do not report when Romani children do not attend classes. Roma are often an excuse for our teachers to do nothing. This is something that has to be worked on, because the schools do not identify cases of human trafficking".

One NGO describes the time they heard about a "boy collecting money for someone from [a district in Belgrade]" and it turned out that the school had heard the same. In addition, the child did not attend classes. However, the school did not do anything about it. On the other hand, the social care center for that should have handled the case claimed it did not have the authority because "the child was not registered in their jurisdiction". The representatives of the NGO said, "they do not deal with the problem because it is 'normal' with Roma (her colleague pipes in: because then, 'it is not trafficking, this is just the way Roma live'). She [the state social worker] thinks it is the custom. Then the other problem is that she does not act according to the law." Another one of my NGO interviewees recounts a similar situation:

> Two social care centers have been involved in a case that neither wanted to accept responsibility for. One center approved the child marriage of a fourteen years old Romani girl []. She was sent abroad. Then the mother came to them and asked, "where is my child?" The essence of the story is that none of the social care centers reacted because they believed that it is perfectly normal for a Romani girl of fourteen to get married. They were completely like, "But it is a Romani family, this is the way they live!" Oh, if it were not a Roma, you would surely react! I think that Roma are terribly discriminated against in the institutions, especially at social care centers.

What these stories tell us is that institutional discrimination against Roma prevents Serbian institutions from identifying cases of trafficking in Roma. What I intend to argue is that institutional discrimination based on one's 'ethnicity' seems not only to be a factor that exposes Roma to (and/or leaves them in) vulnerable situations. This form of discrimination is said also to prevent the authorities from identifying existing Romani victims of trafficking.

It seems that the national policy actors have never explicitly defined institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' as a factor that puts people at risk of trafficking. Consequently, it cannot be found listed alongside the other commonly featured factors in reports and other publications written on the topic of human trafficking in Serbia. On the website of the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection, "discrimination" is included as one of the risk factors. However, it is not clear to what it refers. Does it refer to institutional discrimination? Does it refer to discrimination based on one's 'ethnic belonging'? It is interesting that many of my interviewees at first assumed that there are no specific factors when it comes to Roma, but then suggested that institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' is a specific factor. This is, most arguably, an effect of a lack of discussion on the topic within the national anti-trafficking policy network. Moreover, the representative of the Center points out a lack of research on discrimination as a possible risk factor. She believes that discrimination could be understood as a risk factor "only theoretically and based on some speculations and experiences". Further, one of my interviewees stated that some state institutions' employees are not even aware of the phenomenon of institutional discrimination. She says they have asked, "What do you mean, the state discriminates?" These state employees understand *the state* as an institution of blind justice. (In and of itself, it would be very informative to do a study only on the extent to which employees of the state understand the concept of institutional discrimination.)

In this subchapter, analysis revealed that even though the interviewees did not explicitly define institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' and racism as vulnerability factors, many of them implied that this is indeed the case. According to them, anti-trafficking policy actors on the local level discriminate against people based on their 'ethnic belonging' which does not only put Roma at risk of trafficking or leaves them in vulnerable situations, but it also leaves them in presumed or actual situations of trafficking. This means that my interviewees argued that local anti-trafficking policy actors (the social care centers and schools) deprive Romani presumed victims and victims of assistance and protection measures. Therefore, they do not act in their defense when they experience victimization.

5.2. Vulnerability factors redefined: Reconstructing the 'Romani culture'

Almost all of the interviewees relate the concepts 'culture', 'customs', or/and 'tradition' with the concept 'Roma' when talking about 'vulnerability of Roma'. As already indicated in some of the narratives presented in the previous subchapter, "the way Roma live" and their "customs" are used by some of my interviewees to illustrate institutional discrimination towards Roma who could be subject to trafficking or who are already victims of trafficking. Another anti-trafficking policy actor had a different perspective on the effects of the relationship made between 'Romani culture' and trafficking:

> *Such cases can occur with forced marriage and, in the system of social protection. It is generally accepted: "come on, that is the culture, it is their tradition, we do not have the right to interfere" or "we won't interfere because, actually, we have no idea what to do". In many cases though, the people in social care centers are afraid of attacks from Romani organizations. You have many Romani organizations that advocate that this is customary law and that the system has nothing to do with it. If this is an organization that deals with human rights, [] then it can be very inconvenient when it comes to some higher levels.*

Demonstrating a recognition of the complexity of the issue, this interviewee asserted that "the story remains in circular rotation at a theoretical level" and it leaves people to make decisions based on their own "beliefs". Therefore, she does not consider the actors in these situations racists or as those who discriminate against Roma, but rather that the examples provided here reflect a problem regarding employees' lack of knowledge and concerns related to possible confrontations with Romani organizations. One might counter justification of this fear of Romani organizations by citing the numerous Romani, especially Romani women's and many other human rights organizations that actually advocate against forced marriages. One could further argue that the real problem relates to a habit of selective listening on the part of several national anti-trafficking actors.

The interviewee uses the argument that Romani organizations advocate recognition of "customary law" and then goes on to state that they never had cases of forced marriages involving non-Roma. Yet, an interviewee from an anti-trafficking organization argues that "there is no such a thing as customary law" and that "they had cases of both forced begging and marriages involving non-Roma." Many of my other interviewees rather said that cases of forced marriages occur involving other 'nationalities' (such as Vlachs in Serbia), too, and that such things can happen to non-Roma "all around the world". Interestingly, interviewed policy actors often concluded with the same rhetorical question: How can one say that this is 'Romani culture'?

Yet some of the interviewees implicitly blamed the 'culture' or 'Romani culture', therefore implicitly defining it as a vulnerability factor. One of the policy actors compared Roma with "blacks in America" who "have the problematic cultural tradition of taking their twelve or thirteen year old children out of school" and argued that, "we have to secure access to the schools for all our children". Another actor - while attempting to acknowledge that Roma are not a homogenous group by saying that one cannot relate forced marriages with all Roma - still has her personal take on the concept 'Romani culture':

> In Romani culture, you have an educational system that requires a lot more responsibility and independence from children compared to, for example, Serbian culture. When you, for instance, let a Serbian eight-year-old child on the street... a Romani child will be much more confident, it will know how to protect itself; it will be safer than a Serbian child will. These are some of the values of Romani culture, but of course, they should be somehow fit to some modern requirements related to what are the rights and interests of children. [] I am convinced that it is important [whether someone is Roma], so that you know what is the target group in focus and how to approach it. Every nation has some features, cultures and beliefs that are simply marking all of us, and it is very important to know how to approach people []. They are different cultures, different traditions, and from this you can find a specific way to approach people that they can accept you easier and understand you better.

The quote above informs us that one of the outcomes of 'Romani culture' is that Romani children are "safer" on the streets. The interviewee further believes that "the values of 'Romani culture' should be adapted to suit the modern requirements". She suggests 'Romani culture' to be in conflict with the "rights and interests of children". Therefore, it can be understood that she defines 'Romani culture' as oppressive to children. She is not alone in thinking this. One particular idea identified in the discourses of the national policy actors is the idea of *development*. Some of the other interviewed policy actors imply or, in case of one NGO, explicitly state that 'traditions' and 'customs' should be "changed" and

the "awareness" of Roma themselves should be "raised". Some of them express their belief that Roma should break free of their 'customs', 'traditions', 'attitudes' or 'consciousness' and be brought to the point when they respect the "rights and interests of children":

> Of course, that this is not in her interest, it is not in anyone's interest to get prepared for a life in order to depend on another person and perform only household activities. But, when you have someone who is so prepared for this role that she expects, it is hard to work to change these attitudes. [] [E]arly marriage [is] something that threatens both mental development and physical development, but it is also a violation of children's rights.

Some of the interviewees go on to imply their role is as a rescuer of "the other". They imply that one of their roles is to "fix" Roma through, for example, teaching them differences between "customary law" and "legislation". I would like to emphasize here that, a lot of the time, it is not clear from the narratives what interviewees mean by 'culture', 'tradition' and 'customs'. Furthermore, they frequently do not explicitly use the 'Romani culture'. Instead they frequently connect the concepts of 'Romani communities' or 'Romani population' or simply 'Roma' with the concepts of 'culture', 'customs' and 'traditions' in their narratives. This might imply that the 'culture', 'traditions' or 'customs' they talk about do not belong to all Roma. This means that they acknowledge that Roma are not a homogenous group. However, it is worth noting that the former narrative contrasts "Serbian culture" to "Romani culture" and, in the Serbian context, the concept 'culture' (as implied here) is synonymous with 'nationality' or 'belonging to a nation', which, in Serbian, is in turn synonymous with 'ethnic origin'.[14] By relating the mentioned concepts to each other and by using this relationship in the Serbian context, they still expropriate 'Romani culture' in the anti-trafficking discourse.

Nevertheless, not all of the interviewees engaged in this process. The policy actors' discourses on 'Roma' and 'culture' in the context of anti-trafficking policies are diverse and contrasting. One of the interviewees expressed hesitation regarding the question. Another one abruptly stated that she has no knowledge on the topic. Some others strongly argued that 'culture' cannot be applied to the story of Roma and trafficking in human beings. The response of one Romani woman activist is representative of these narratives:

> Sale of children, forced begging… this is neither culture nor tradition. It is constantly emphasized that this is part of the culture and tradition. I do not agree. These are prejudices coming from both Roma and non-Roma. The bride price is in some families higher because of poverty. Families, who are poor, beg.

Interestingly, we have a very different situation with the policy actors' discourses on *forced begging*. When it comes to forced begging, the discourses are uniform. It is important to emphasize that there was no actor that argued forced begging as part of 'Romani culture', 'traditions' or 'customs'. In addition, the narratives were more frequently about begging, not forced begging: "Begging… this is not traditional. It is about poverty. Why the boys are on the street? This whole story is about poverty, they feel the need to help the family, which, if they do not go outside, on the streets, [they] simply won't have [food]". Yet, there are recourses to argue that most of the cases of begging are suspected to be forced. The media also tends to represent begging as organized and forced. "The experiences of institutions

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14   In Serbian, as opposed to the meaning of these concepts in English, the terms 'nationality' and 'nation' do not refer to citizenship to a country or nation-state, but rather one's ethnic origin.

and organizations which come into contact with children beggars show that 90% of such children are forced to beg".[15] While one can find a variety of reflections on begging and forced begging in the media and other publications on the topic, my interviewees argued that *begging* is prevalent and *forced begging* (as a form of human trafficking) makes up only 20% - 30% of the cases (the estimate is from my interview with the anti-trafficking coordinator). One NGO reflects:

> *The fact is that they are all poor and they are all engaged in some way in the survival of the family. This is the everyday life of the majority of our users and their families, and then to report… you know… we're building the capacity of a family, to see what can be fixed from the available resources and how can we unburden the family and the child to be involved in some expected and regular social patterns.*

What is interesting is that the discourses on forced begging are exclusively associated with poverty, while the discourses on forced marriages frequently featured 'culture'. Some of my interviewees, as argued here, while employing the concept 'culture', implicitly defined the 'Romani culture' as oppressive. As Peter Vermeersch asserts, the *construction* of the 'Romani culture' as "an integral part of the 'Romani problem'" has been shown to characterize diverse discourses on 'Roma' (Vermeersch, 2003, p. 896).[16] I argue that the construction of the 'Romani culture' into a specific discourse (such as the discourse on combatting trafficking in human beings) has meant the co-opting of the process. Therefore, this process should be understood as reconstruction (or reinvention) of the concept. Following this line of thought and taking into account the discourses of my interviewees, I arrive at two conclusions. One is that some of the national policy actors reconstruct the concept 'Romani culture' and implicitly define it as a factor that puts Roma at risk of trafficking. Another one is that the reconstruction of the concept 'Romani culture' can be also defined as a factor to affect local anti-trafficking policy actors to leave Roma in presumed or actual situations of trafficking. As we could see from the narratives, the national policy actors often gave examples of the situations which showed that the understandings of the relation of the 'culture', 'customs', 'traditions' or 'a way of life' with the concept 'Roma' indeed affect local anti-trafficking policy actors' conduct.

The argument made in this subchapter could be framed in the following way: The national anti-trafficking policy actors implicitly suggest that the reconstruction of the concept 'Romani culture' leads to institutional discrimination towards Roma leaving them in presumed or actual exploitative situations. According to my interviewees, the anti-trafficking policy actors on the local level who should identify victims and report cases do relate human trafficking (both forced marriages and forced begging) with the 'Romani culture'. The process of reconstruction of the 'Romani culture' is thus shown to affect the anti-trafficking policy implementation. More specifically, it seems to deprive Romani victims of assistance and protection measures. Contrary to the interviewees' narratives on institutional discrimination and racism, reconstruction of the 'Romani culture' is as well a process to some extent supported by the national anti-trafficking policy actors. The analysis showed that they take part in the process.

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15   *Hiljadu dece prosjaka na ulicama Srbije, gotovo polovina mlada od deset godina* [One thousand children beggars on the Serbian streets, half of them younger than 10], available from http://www.blic.rs/Vesti/Drustvo/333190/Hiljadu-dece-prosjaka-na-ulicama-Srbije-gotovo-polovina-mladja-od-deset-godina, last access February 26, 2015

16   Even though Vermeersch uses *framing* the 'Romani culture', I insist on using *construction* of the 'Romani culture' to emphasise the process as a *social (human-made and discursive) construct.*

5.3. Data disaggregated by 'ethnicity': Counting 'Roma' or 'Roma' counting:

Research conducted by the European Roma Rights Center on trafficking in Romani communities reveals that data protection laws are often wrongly interpreted (ERRC, 2011, p. 31). During my own research, I have likewise detected cases of legislative misinterpretation regarding data collection and protection. Most of the interviewees stated that data disaggregated by 'ethnicity' cannot be collected because Serbian legislation says, "you cannot register another person's nationality if he or she does not state it", due to "human rights" or because "the Constitution does not allow it". However, no Serbian legislative act prohibits data collection disaggregated by 'ethnicity'. According to the Constitution, Article 42, "use of personal data beyond the purpose for which it was collected is prohibited and punishable".[17] Article 47 states that "[e]xpression of national affiliation is discretionary" and "[n]o one is obliged to declare their nationality". However, this still does not mean that one cannot ask other people to disclose their 'nationality' and record that information.[18]

When I asked the interviewees if we should know how many of the trafficking victims are Roma, one of them stated:

> *Would it be beneficial to know how many Roma are hungry and how many are not hungry?! [T]he [] view of the state [is] that they do not need [the data]. I don't mind knowing how many Romani victims there are, but it bothers the state. This is the trick…When they want to hide something, then it "is not in accordance with the law".*

Many of the interviewees thought that data disaggregated by 'ethnicity' would be useful for both policymaking and implementation, especially for identifying target groups, but also for monitoring and evaluating policies. One Romani activist (the only interviewee who thinks that the numbers of Romani victims are exaggerated) argued that it would be useful in terms of eliminating the assumption that the ratio of Romani to non-Romani victims is around 50:50. Another Romani activist also argued there is a need for disaggregated data and that "we should increase the number of self-identifications". On the other hand, the anti-trafficking coordinator argued that it would not be good to disaggregate data by 'ethnicity', if this would "hurt somebody". He gave this example from ten years back when he presented the numbers of the Romani victims to Romani "representatives": "I pointed out the numbers, but this bothered Roma and we have never disaggregated data again. [] They said it's not fair, it's discriminatory".

By confronting the policy actors' discourses to each other, I would like to bring the attention to the issue of selective listening again. While some of the interviewees argued that Roma find disaggregated data "discriminatory" and are against it, three out of my four Romani interviewees argued for the use of disaggregated data. In addition, in a Statement for the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Romani women activists called on states and NGOs "to implement policies addressing […] trafficking and prostitution in a manner both sensitive to socio-economic factors and careful not to reinforce stereotypes" while "collecting data disaggregated by 'race and gender'" (Quoted in Perić, 2005, p. 145).[19]

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17   Ustav Republike Srbije [The Constitution of the Republic of Serbia], available from http://www.sllistbeograd.rs/documents/ustav_republike_srbije_lat.pdf, last access February 23, 2015

18   Ibid.

19   Romani women's Statement for the 49th Session of the UN CSW 28th February 11th March 2005.

Others maintained that this is a very complex issue. Should data disaggregated by ethnicity be officially collected, the question remains just how reliable it would be. For one, many people who self-identify, or are identified as Roma, are either ashamed and/or afraid to volunteer this information. (Many of them would rather identify themselves, or let themselves be associated, with any other 'nationality' or 'ethnicity' to avoid yet another self-naming and shaming encounter.) The representative of the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection argues that even if they would be able to present such data, Roma would still represent "a small percentage because people identify themselves as Serbs". Indeed, also since the constitutional right of every person favors self-declaration of their 'national identity', or their association with it, given the socio-political positions of Roma in Serbia today, one simply cannot expect Roma to self-identify.

There were some of the policy actors that have attempted to collect data disaggregated by ethnicity. However, the ways they defined 'Roma' was questionable. In addition, their efforts focused on getting responses only from Roma. On one occasion, an anti-trafficking policy actor made a questionnaire to determine how many responders "belongs to the Romani culture" and whether "he or she practices some of the traditions and customs of the Romani culture []":

> [I]t [wa]s a couple of questions - what is your mother tongue, which culture do you like, what music do you listen to []. [O]f course, since it is usually [] about the kids, [] they say that their mother tongue is Romani []. [B]ut it is unofficial data, you cannot go out in public with these.

This quote, however, does not say that the data on 'ethnicity' were collected, but it rather says that the collected data concerned those who "belong to the Romani culture". Since the interview question was about the data on 'ethnicity', this might be a good example of a case in which the interviewee defines 'ethnicity' as belonging to a 'culture'. Therefore, 'Roma' means here 'a culturally specific group of people'. However, let us focus again on data collection as it applies to trafficking: Serbian anti-trafficking policy discourse is predominantly victim-centered. If data was to be disaggregated by 'ethnicity' based on data collectors' assumptions about who is Roma and who is not (their definitions of what it means 'to be a Roma' and what the 'Romani culture' means), this could prove counter-productive, for one, due to the victims' right to self-identification. So, what criteria one could use to identify a 'Romani victim' of trafficking in human beings? Only one interviewee responded to my question with an astute question: "How do they come up with a specific analysis to determine who is Roma and who is not? I think we make a mistake if we assume".

Interestingly, there were two interviewees explicitly against the understanding that 'Roma' should be somehow a specific topic to examine since they reject the idea of focusing on 'ethnicity' of victims in their work. One of the interviewees strongly argued that they do not target Roma, because "there is no research to show that there is a need to do so". Yet, they do focus on the "socially disadvantaged". She emphasized an overall lack of knowledge on the relationship of 'Roma' to trafficking and she defined this lack of knowledge as a problem. However, the fact that her organization is "not concerned with origin" does not mean that sometimes Roma might not be almost exclusively the target group of their programs. Yet, she pointed out that 'Roma' is listed as a target group on their website because "this is sometimes set as a demand related to certain projects". Another NGO says they work almost exclusively with Romani children but that they never pronounce these children 'Roma' because that would only "further stigmatize" them. They go on to say they do not see the relevance of talking about Roma in

the anti-trafficking discourse because "it is not true that *Roma* are vulnerable to trafficking, there are bunch of other factors that create a vulnerable situation (emphasis in original)."

In this subchapter, I attempted to emphasize three points. Firstly, even though the question regarding the usefulness of the disaggregated data remains unanswered, most of the interviewees believe that data disaggregated by 'ethnicity' would be useful for both policymaking and implementation. Secondly, when confronting the policy actors' narratives to each other, I once again detected selective listening. This means that some of the current policy actors based their narratives on the convictions of Roma, which did not matchup with the convictions of the Romani interviewees. Finally, there were attempts to collect data on how many Romani victims there are, but these were based on policy actors' assumptions related to who is Roma and who is not, what it is 'to be a Roma' and what 'Romani culture' means. Most arguably, these assumptions stem from lack of continuous dialogue between current policy actors and Roma and/or from the lack of communication with those Roma engaged in policies and critical of general discourses on 'Roma'. A discernible lack of knowledge, especially concerning 'Romani culture' and the actual positions maintained by Romani organizations, suggests that more information is needed. As argued by Jeremy Richardson, this could be addressed by enlarging the policy network to include "interest groups" and by assuming these groups as "rational actors". That said, there is a risk that such a move "may not necessarily reduce uncertainty". The new actors may even create a more complex policy environment and lead to other unpredictable outcomes (Richardson, 2000).

6. CATEGORY MAKING PROCESSES AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS: DISCOURSES OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGIES

In this chapter, I analyze two strategic policy documents, but I also map and reflect on the policy actors' perspectives on the issues. The national strategic policy documents I analyze are *the National strategy to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons, especially women and children* (the Anti-trafficking Strategy) and the *Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia* (the Roma Strategy). I chose these documents to see if policymaking processes reflect the discourses of the interviewed policy actors and what other implications might be identified when comparing these discourses. After discovering that the Anti-trafficking Strategy does not single out 'Roma' as a 'vulnerable group', I considered whether the text implies 'vulnerability of Roma'. The third step was to map national anti-trafficking policy makers' and Romani activists' discourses on the topic in order to determine the situatedness of 'Roma' in the discourses of the policy documents.

6.1. Conceptualizing 'trafficking in Roma' in anti-trafficking policymaking

The most apparent connection with 'Roma' can be found in the Anti-trafficking Strategy's *Strategic Framework* where the policy makers have listed other national strategic documents relevant to the anti-trafficking field. One of the strategies listed is the Roma Strategy. According to the national coordinator and a representative of the Bureau for Strategic Planning (an institution which drafted the anti-trafficking strategic documents and coordinated the policymaking process), the Strategic Framework was created

in order to "avoid double planning of the budget and repetition of the activities". Representatives of the Bureau argued that the Roma Strategy includes "prevention activities" and that this means that the Anti-trafficking Strategy, by mentioning the Roma Strategy, covers a concern for Roma. The Roma Strategy, however, does not list any prevention activities. It only suggests protection of Romani women victims through "training and sensitization of services and relevant civil associations to the specificity of Roma women – trafficking victims" and collecting data on women victims (Roma Strategy, 2010).

As one of my interviewees asserts, including the issue of trafficking in the Roma Strategy did not make any impact: even though the Roma Strategy addresses trafficking, the recommended activities are not implemented because of a lack of funding and 'too many other issues covered by the document". Moreover, one might ask, why the same 'pairing of documents' did not take place when it comes to 'children'. There is an entire objective dedicated to 'children' in the Anti-trafficking Strategy. Additionally, the *National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children from violence* (the Strategy for Children) calls for "development of services at the local level for the temporary and occasional urgent reception of the children victims of family violence and victims of human trafficking" and data collection on the "number of the children, victims of sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography and human trafficking" (the Strategy for Children, 2008, p. 27, 29). Why, for instance, is this not considered a budgetary double expenditure and repetition of the activities?

A representative of the Bureau argued that suggesting 'Romani vulnerability' to trafficking is not dealt with by the Anti-trafficking Strategy because it is mentioned in the Roma Strategy does not mean that Roma are ignored as a vulnerable group by policy makers. However, it is worth noting here that what academics and activists argued about the EU Roma Strategy could just as well be applied to the Decade of Roma Inclusion framework, under which the Roma Strategy was created:[20]

> *Whilst the creation of an EU Roma Strategy would signal a clearer commitment to Roma across Europe, there are a number of dilemmas. First, there is a danger that the creation of a transnational policy by the EU would indirectly absolve national governments of their responsibility to protect their Roma communities, with Roma becoming a 'European problem'. [] National governments across the EU have proven themselves unable to address the needs of their respective Roma communities and EU intervention could mean they shirk their responsibility even further. [] Roma require a policy intervention which simultaneously treats Roma the same as other EU citizens whilst also [recognizing] their difference (McGarry, 2011, p. 127-128).*

One national anti-trafficking policy actor I interviewed argued that "no one else could react better [] than those concerned with the problem", just as, for instance, "[n]one could solve a problem between [his] wife and [himself] better than [they] could do it [them]selves". This reflects the understanding that the state is not expected to deal with trafficking in Roma. Roma are expected to deal with it by themselves. The interviewee choose to also embed a 'family values' element into his narrative, reflecting his understanding of 'Roma' as an extended family. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, employment of 'family values' is featured in other interviewees' narratives, too. 'Family values' are often addressed in the discourses on 'ethnicity'. Discourses on 'Roma' that feature 'family values' reiterate the *us/them* dichotomy (in this case, Serbs/Roma), thus reinforcing nationalistic ideologies (Jovanović, 2014). Most

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20 Decade of Roma Inclusion, available from http://www.romadecade.org/about-the-decade-decade-in-brief, last accessed March 9, 2015.

the interviewees argued that Roma should deal with trafficking in Roma, but they did not perceive Roma to be the primarily responsible party, as the cited interviewee did. Yet they all created the concept 'trafficking in Roma' as a Romani problem.

In another argument for not singling out 'Roma' in the Anti-trafficking Strategy, the Bureau states the intention to develop the concept 'vulnerable groups' through the sectoral strategies. Additionally, they explain that the working group set up on anti-trafficking policymaking processes did not find singling out specific 'vulnerable groups' relevant because national strategies are "umbrella" documents. The Anti-trafficking Strategy, however, does explicitly define some groups as vulnerable: for instance, illegal migrants (especially "unaccompanied girls and children") and asylum seekers. (The document itself also suggests it considers 'returnees on the Readmission Agreement' a vulnerable group, too (Anti-trafficking Strategy, 2013).[21] Some of my interviewees say that 'migrants' were singled out as the result of lobbying processes. The lobbying could have possibly been carried out by the International Organization for Migration, as the organization has been a part of the national anti-trafficking mechanism from the very beginning and provides notable funds to anti-trafficking initiatives. Regarding the focus on 'children', lobbying was decisive in the decision making process. According to the representatives of the Bureau, the part of the Anti-trafficking Strategy concerning 'children' is actually taken directly from a document created previously by two organizations, the Child Rights Center and Save the Children, for other purposes and was included because the "Child Rights Center was involved in the policymaking process".

There was one other factor that affected the decision to single out 'children'. From a closer reading of the Anti-trafficking Strategy and a comparison of the Anti-trafficking Strategy with the EU strategic anti-trafficking policy documents (the EU Strategy and the EU Directive), it can be concluded that the explicit emphasis on 'children' represents the process of Europeanization of the anti-trafficking policies in Serbia. The EU Directive urges for "the child's best interest" as "a primary consideration, in accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the 1989 United Nation Convention of the Right of the Child" (EU Directive, 2011, p. 2). The Directive includes a total of four Articles dedicated specifically to 'child victims', while there is no Article concerning other 'vulnerable groups'. The EU Strategy also dedicates an Action to the "protection of child victims of trafficking" while there is no action point targeting any other assumed vulnerable group. The interviewees expressed the impact of the EU policies as highly relevant as well.

When asked why 'children', 'migrants' and 'asylum seekers' are singled out in the Anti-trafficking Strategy, NGOs Astra and Atina (the anti-trafficking NGOs I interviewed) strongly supported the emphasis on 'children'. They pointed said there is currently no mechanism to protect children victims of trafficking. For instance, there are no shelters for children, thus, they face peer violence when sheltered in a non-specialized institution. When children run away from these institutions, this creates a vulnerable situation, too. In regards to 'migrants' and 'asylum seekers', while both of the anti-trafficking NGOs argued 'migrants' are probably singled out as a result of a lobbying process, one of them went on to add that, in reality, few foreign victims are identified.

Regarding the singling out of 'Roma' in the Strategy, according to the Bureau for Strategic Planning, this question did emerge during the policymaking process, but everyone said "no... because... why not

21 "Agreement on readmission of persons residing without authorization" was signed in September 2007 in Brussels between the Republic of Serbia and the European Union, available from http://www.kirs.gov.rs/articles/aboutread.php?lang=ENG, last access February 28, 2015

others?!" This implies that the anti-trafficking policy makers believe Roma face no specific risks in becoming victims of human trafficking. However, my interviewees were generally unsure when asked if 'Roma' should be singled out in the Anti-trafficking Strategy (of note, some of them were personally involved in the anti-trafficking policymaking process). Only two of my interviewees answered the question affirmatively. They stated that by singling out 'Roma', NGOs would have something to refer to when asking for donations or the "recognition of the issue".

In contrast, one anti-trafficking NGO representative argued that it would not be incorrect to say that "Roma are at risk", but that it would be "horrible to mark an entire minority group as the victims". Reproduction of stereotypes towards Roma was also a concern for several interviewees. Taking this into account, one of them argued that it would be better to deal with trafficking in the Roma Strategy (in the "positive context of inclusion") rather than connecting Roma with criminal activities. Interestingly, I have interviewed two employees from the Ministry of Interior and these were the only interviewees that associated 'Roma' with 'criminality'. That said, they did not explicitly reproduced the concept 'Romani criminality', rather they expressed a concern for its reproduction within the anti-trafficking discourse.

Some of the actors said singling out 'Roma' might be important if there are specific vulnerability factors affecting Roma. One representative of an anti-trafficking NGO claimed that 'Roma' should not be singled out because there are no specific vulnerability factors tied to Roma. Interestingly, the same interviewee emphasized institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' as something that prevents the social workers from identifying Romani victims of trafficking. That said, the question remains; is singling out 'Roma' as a vulnerable group in the Anti-trafficking Strategy a productive way to point to the specificities of 'vulnerability of Roma'? A social policy researcher argued that if there were specific risks for Roma, it would be better to focus on contextualization, because this would be meaningful mainstreaming. He rather expresses a concern for capacity of the mechanism to serve Roma to the same extent it serves others:

> There are two components, which one needs to compare systematically - whether Roma are formally pointed out as a vulnerable group and whether there are mechanisms that will help Roma, as everyone else. It may happen that Roma are not singled out in the documents, but the mechanisms serve Roma as they serve other people. Or Roma may be mentioned, but excluded through the mechanisms.

An anti-trafficking NGO implied a similar understanding by suggesting that prevention activities for children should not be exclusively targeting schools because there are many Romani children outside of the school system. The representative of the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection further emphasizes the importance of the "conduct of the professionals" over singling out 'Roma' in the Anti-trafficking Strategy.

The results of my fieldwork suggest that the issue of singling out 'Roma' in the anti-trafficking Strategy has no relevance when compared to the consideration as to whether the anti-trafficking mechanism "serves Roma as it serves others". However, the arguments for *not* singling out 'Roma', as expressed by my interviewees, are unsupported. For example, the argument framed as the question *"why not the others"* reflects a lack of a discussion on the relationship between 'Roma' and trafficking in human beings and on the further specificities regarding this relationship. This again shows (as is discussed in Chapter 5) that the interviewees do not define institutional discrimination as a risk factor

that affects Roma because of their assumed 'ethnic origin'. In addition, power relations among the policy actors, evident in the emphasis placed on the lobbying processes, influence the discussion on singling out 'vulnerable groups'. Therefore, the question emerges: would it provoke a discussion on how to address vulnerability of Roma to human trafficking if a Romani organization got involved in the policymaking? Although I find all the problems highlighted here important, in this subchapter, my main aim was to point out how problematic the conceptualization of 'trafficking in Roma' as a Romani problem is, as it is born from most of the national policy actors' expectations that Roma are the ones responsible for dealing with problems affecting Roma.

6.2. 'Trafficking' in the Roma Strategy: A Romani women's issue?

In the previous subchapter, by looking at the Anti-trafficking Strategy and relating it to the discourses of my interviewees, I argued that it is problematic to conceptualize 'trafficking in Roma' as a Romani issue. In this subchapter, I am looking specifically at the Roma Strategy because, as mentioned, trafficking is one of the issues addressed by the document. Therefore, my next question is *what does 'trafficking' mean in the Roma Strategy*?

By simply acknowledging that 'trafficking' is included in the Roma Strategy, one could argue that, once again, it is created as a Romani issue and, just like that, the concept 'trafficking in Roma' is recreated in another context. Yet, what other meanings might be embedded in the concept 'trafficking in Roma' in the context of the Roma strategy? Firstly, the Roma Strategy does explicitly emphasize a lack of knowledge on trafficking in general and a lack of knowledge on trafficking in Roma in particular:

> *Certain indecision is felt in the public when it comes to the situations that are or may present trafficking in human beings, primarily women. This is particularly pronounced if a young Roma woman or a Roma child find themselves in such a situation. A series of prejudices and stereotypes towards the Roma community turn into open discrimination. On the other hand, the Roma community itself is very closed and its prevailing unwritten codes often violate fundamental human rights of the women from their community. Precisely for the abovementioned reasons, there is insufficient knowledge about this problem and there are only various estimates about its extent (Roma Strategy, 2010, p. 49).*

What 'indecision felt in the public' means here is unclear. What we can understand is that if a Romani woman or a Romani child is trafficked, the situation is somehow more complicated. When it comes to the second part of this quote, it is interesting to see how trafficking is associated with "prejudices and stereotypes", on the one hand, and with the "closeness" and "unwritten codes" of "the Roma community", on the other. In fact, this is a reflection of the general discourse on 'Romani women'. The Roma Strategy states that Romani women suffer "double discrimination", both "because they are Roma" and "because they are women". This discourse exists in other parts of the Roma Strategy, too: "The situation is much more complex with respect to the life and rights of Roma women, who are often victims of double and multiple discrimination, both as women and as Roma women" (Roma Strategy, 2010, p. 48).

Adding categories to each other, in this case 'gender' and 'ethnicity', is defined as *additive intersectional approach* or, as Sandra Harding puts it, the "add women and stir" approach (Harding, 1995). There are three main reasons to argue against the usage of additive intersectionality in anti-

trafficking discourses. Firstly, in the discourse on trafficking in human beings (as well as many other discourses), "other" women are often simply defined as those oppressed on multiple basis. By relating categories of difference, such as 'gender' and 'ethnicity' to each other, we can only remain on the theoretical level, and this has not proven highly informative. Secondly, by examining the discourse on 'Roma' and trafficking in Serbia, one can see that defining Romani women as vulnerable to trafficking, or as victims, homogenizes them because using the additive intersectional approach, as is often done, overlooks other dimensions of Romani women's identities, reflected in the diversity of their experiences. Thirdly, the discourse on the relationship between 'Roma' and trafficking in the Roma Strategy ignores the circumstances in which, for example, Romani boys are almost exceptionally vulnerable to trafficking.

It is important to note that Romani boys are also at risk of trafficking and that they are subject to trafficking for sexual exploitation, but they are not being identified.[22] According to the Center for Human Trafficking Victims Protection, there was one identified case when a Romani boy was subject to both forced begging and sexual exploitation. An anti-trafficking NGO explains:

> There have been no men identified as victims of [trafficking for] sexual exploitation, which does not mean they do not exist, but that the system did not recognize them. We have sent reports on sexual exploitation of boys, but there was no evidence. Serbian society is unprepared, it is a taboo topic.

The undocumented vulnerability of men and boys to trafficking is not presented here to in any way belittle or detract from the serious discrimination Romani women often face. One finds patriarchal values in many Romani communities. These are likely to be stronger the more segregated the settlement and often reflect the dynamics of power structures within. Rather, I have mentioned it as an example of the great lack of knowledge on how complex the relationship between 'Roma' and 'vulnerability to trafficking' is and to emphasize that "essentializing specific social identities" cannot compensate for this knowledge. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues:

> [A] field methodology should carefully separate, and examine separately, the different levels in which social divisions operate in the communities where they work [] i.e. institutionally, intersubjectively, representationally as well as in the subjective constructions of identities. Only when such a contextual analysis is carried out can there be an intersectional review of policy initiatives and systems of implementation. Such a review should involve, in addition to the policy-makers, as many people on the ground as possible. The differential positionings and perspectives of the participants in such a dialogue should be acknowledged without treating them as representatives of any fixed social grouping (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 205).

The general discourse on 'Romani women' is, therefore, only physically incorporated into the story about trafficking. The lack of field methodology is apparent. The policy makers did this both because of their lack of knowledge, which they explicitly expressed, and because of the context in which 'trafficking' is included. In the Roma Strategy, trafficking is part of the chapter "The status of women". Therefore, it can be argued that 'trafficking in Roma' has been made to a Romani women's problem. Moreover, 'trafficking in Roma' is conceptualized, in turn, as explicitly a women and girls' problem:

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22 More on trafficking in Romani boys in forthcoming project report: Vidra, Zsuzsana et al. (2015), *Countering new forms of Roma children trafficking: Participatory approach (CONFRONT)*, available from http://cps.ceu.edu/research/confront

> [M]ost of [the victims of trafficking] are children and women as the most helpless members of society. [] The Republic of Serbia is a country of origin, transit and destination of women and girls trafficked both at the local level and at the international level, mostly for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Roma Strategy, 2010, p. 50).

This is apparent in the previous subchapter as well where I mentioned that the Roma Strategy envisages only protection activities for Romani women victims. It is as well important to emphasize that even in the discourses of some of the interviewees, 'trafficking in Roma' is framed as a Romani women's problem. For example, when some of the interviewees suggested the organizations that could work on the issue, the *Romani Women's Network* came up on two occasions as the organization having the capacity to deal with trafficking. No other Romani organizations were mentioned in relation to the issue.

Furthermore, the Roma Strategy only mentions trafficking for sexual exploitation. There is no reference to forced begging in the Roma Strategy (neither to begging, even though my interviewees said most of street involved children are Roma). Therefore, we have a situation where 'trafficking in Roma' is defined as trafficking in Romani women for sexual exploitation. In this scenario, Romani boys are (who are, according to the national policy actors, the main victims of forced begging) completely dismissed as a group at risk.

In the last two subchapters, the analysis followed the processes of conceptualizing 'trafficking in Roma'. If we connect the discourses of some of the national policy actors with the discourses of the Anti-trafficking and the Roma Strategy, we can argue that, firstly, 'trafficking in Roma' is defined as a Romani problem and that, secondly, 'trafficking in Roma' is defined as a Romani women's problem. If we connect these two conceptualizations, this relationship leads us to conclude that the general discourse on 'trafficking in Roma' defines it as a Romani women's problem. In the last subchapter, I argued against this process. Firstly, attaching 'trafficking' to Romani women is shown to leave us on the theoretical level. Secondly, this conceptualization homogenizes Romani women. Finally, it leaves Romani boys and Romani men (who seem to be left out from the anti-trafficking discourse) completely overlooked, all these being the result of the lack of knowledge on trafficking in general and trafficking in Roma in particular.

7. CONCLUSIONS

It seems that the most important question concerning the relationship between 'Roma' and human trafficking is the following: Are there any specific factors affecting vulnerability of Roma to trafficking in human beings in Serbia? Even though my interviewee's discourses are diverse and contrasting, the analyses lead me to some important conclusions. Institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity', racism, and 'Romani culture' were implicitly pronounced as the specific risk factors. In this paper, I argued that *institutional discrimination based on one's assumed 'ethnicity'* and *racism* can be defined as factors that put Roma at risk of trafficking. This argument applies to the situations when the state's employees discriminate against people based on their 'ethnic belonging' which increase vulnerability of

Roma to trafficking or leaves them in vulnerable situations. Importantly, institutional discrimination based on 'ethnicity' also seems to leave Roma in presumed and actual situations of trafficking since this factor is said to prevent local anti-trafficking policy actors from providing assistance and protection to Romani victims.

I further argued that some of my interviewees, while employing the concept 'culture', implicitly defined *'Romani culture'* as oppressive and as a factor that puts Roma at risk of trafficking. The analysis showed that it is not 'Romani culture', but rather the reconstruction of the concept that leads to institutional discrimination towards Romani victims of trafficking, leaving them in presumed and actual exploitative situations, thus, depriving them of protection and assistance. It seems that anti-trafficking policy actors on the local level (who should be identifying victims and reporting cases) associate forced marriages and forced begging with 'Romani culture'. The process of reconstructing the 'Romani culture' has, therefore, proved relevant to anti-trafficking policy implementation. There are, thus, specificities of 'vulnerability of Roma' to human trafficking, yet there has been no research defining what these specificities are nor have there been discussion among the national anti-trafficking policy actors on the topic.

Several times when confronting the policy actors' discourses to each other, I detected *selective listening*. For example, some of the policy actors stated that Roma are bothered by disaggregated data, yet three out of four of my Romani interviewees argued in favor of disaggregated data. Some of the current policy actors based their discourses on the opinions of Roma, which simply did not matchup with the Romani interviewees' discourses. In this paper, moreover, being interested in the processes of category making and conceptualizations, I showed that the policy actors make *assumptions* related to who is Roma and who is not, what it is 'to be a Roma' and what 'Romani culture' means. I assert that these assumptions stem from a lack of dialogue between current national policy actors and Roma and/or, more specifically, from a lack of dialogue with those Roma engaged in policies and critical of general discourses on 'Roma'.

One of the aims of this paper is to bring into the spotlight the problematic conundrum that develops when the concept 'trafficking in Roma' is defined as a *Romani problem*, which comes as an effect of the convictions of some of my interviewees who strongly believe that Roma are the ones responsible for dealing with the problems affecting Roma. Further, the Roma Strategy defines 'trafficking in Roma' as a *Romani women's problem* and as trafficking for sexual exploitation, assessments both based on a very limited knowledge on trafficking in general and trafficking in Roma in particular. This is important because the anti-trafficking policies have to be created and implemented with victims and people at risk on mind. This is why, in conclusion, I would also like to emphasize the necessity for further research.

Consideration of the discourses on 'Roma' and trafficking has brought many questions to the surface that existing literature simply does not have answers. Since there was no research to frame the specificities of 'vulnerability of Roma' to human trafficking, there is a need for developing the research field. It seems that there is an urgent need to acquire knowledge on forms of trafficking which are said to affect Roma most frequently. Even though from the research, one could conclude that these are forced marriages and forced begging, the interviewees emphasized trafficking for petty crimes as a form of trafficking affecting mostly Roma as well. Interestingly, the interviewed national policy actors connected trafficking for sexual exploitation with Roma only when asked about it. The anti-trafficking coordinator answered that there may be around 50% of Roma (mostly women) in this form of trafficking. It is, for example, interesting that none of the interviewees mentioned the

connection of sexual exploitation of Romani women with "street prostitution", which is mainly a "form of prostitution" related to the most socially vulnerable categories of people where most of them are said to be Romani women (Nikolić Ristanović, 2004, p. 84). It could be informative to reflect on the fact that Romani women seem never to be mentioned in relation to some other "forms of prostitution", such as "hotel prostitution", "agency prostitution" or "elite prostitution". The anti-trafficking coordinator and both of the anti-trafficking NGOs argued that Roma are overrepresented in each and every form of trafficking, but besides forced begging and forced marriages, the discourses on 'Roma' relate only to forced petty crime. However, the discourses of the interviewees did not reflect the relation of 'Roma' to forced petty crime. This is why all forms of trafficking need to be studied. Future studies should not only take into account categories of difference (such as ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender), they should as well focus on the contexts in which these categories (and many other categories and factors) work together and create vulnerabilities.

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