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MŪHELYTANULMÁNYOK
A ROMÁNIAI KISEBBSÉGEKRŐL

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TOMA STEFÁNIA

ROMA/GYPSIES AND EDUCATION
IN A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY
IN ROMANIA



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ROMA/GYPSIES AND EDUCATION IN A MULTIETHNIC COMMUNITY IN ROMANIA

Introduction

■ The general situation of the Roma/Gypsy after 1989 in Romania represents a central issue of the political discourses, of the public debates and of course of the social sciences. This growing interest in the living condition of the Roma population was aroused by the negative consequences of the economic changes. In the context of general decreasing of the living standards it was necessary to pay more attention to the most marginalized and deprived groups of the society. The structural change of the economic life obviously affected the life of the Roma minority in Romania (see Revenga et alii 2002: 31; Emigh–Szelényi 2000; Ferge, Sik, Péter and Albert 1995). The numerous measures taken by governments or civil society in order to improve or at least to prevent the further decreasing of living standards hardly can be categorized as entirely successful. The integration of further states in the European Union set up new challenges for the authorities. The need for paying attention to this issue was emphasized in June 2003 in Hungary when nine prime ministers made a political commitment to close the gap in welfare and living conditions between the Roma and the non-Roma and to break the cycle of poverty and exclusion.¹

Before 1989 full employment – and the excess of demand for unskilled labour together with ideologically motivated assimilationist policies – substantially reduced poverty among the Roma population. The Roma could offer this unskilled labour, though they were hired usually at the bottom of the hierarchy. But they were to be found in that branch of the economy that was privileged by the socialist economy (industry, construction, mining and less agriculture). Besides being employed in the industry, they were often employed by the state for street cleaning, gardening, agriculture and entertainment. They received social insurance, monthly salary and enjoyed all the social advantages of being a state employee. When these sectors collapsed, they suddenly found themselves at the bottom of the least preferred sector, thus in sudden unemployment and poverty. The transition affected their economic and social conditions more severely than it had affected other segments of the population. The collapse of the state-owned industrial and agricultural enterprises has resulted in mass unemployment among Roma (see Kligman 2001; on Albania: de Soto–Gedeshi 2002)².

Recent World Bank country studies on poverty for Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia show that Roma are poorer than other population groups, and are more likely to fall into poverty and remain poor (see: Teşliuc et alii 2001; and about theories of new-poorer: Emigh-Szelényi 2001; Spéder 2002³).

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- 1 The Decade of Roma Inclusion grew out of the conference *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future* hosted by the Government of Hungary in June 2003. The Decade of Roma Inclusion will run from 2005 to 2015.
 - 2 It has to be mentioned that we have to differentiate between different groups of Roma ethnics. Different Roma groups have responded differently to similar conditions.
 - 3 According to these studies ethnicity is just one factor that contributes to the accumulation of deprivations. Other factors might be: living in rural areas, first-generation urban population, the population of mono-industrial towns, unemployed persons, children and so on.



The widespread unemployment has drastically reduced the incomes of Roma families, who are now forced to earn what they can through casual and part-time employment. The unsure character of these works forced the Roma families to develop new and strengthened traditional strategies to allow them to survive under difficult living conditions. These strategies include turning back to – or learning again – their traditional occupations, remittances, informal credit at stores (“the List”), small trade, casual work, begging, economic assistance and seasonal work abroad or in other regions of the country. In such conditions it is understandable that the Roma tried to find niches in the secondary economy. Though the efforts of the Roma to find additional resources for survival in the secondary economy are not peculiar for a single group, their presence in this segment of the economy was a convenient circumstance to enforce the already existing stereotypes of the Gadjo⁴ about the Roma. The emphasis is placed not on their presence in the secondary economy but on their absence in wage-work, as wage-work is important not only in securing a decent, secure life for a family, but this represents the framework for models of everyday behaviour and interactions (Wilson 1996: 73). Another, often circulated view of Roma in the post-socialist part of Europe is that the unemployed members of the Roma minority are welfare dependent abusers of the public-good. But, the analysis of pre- and post-transfers poverty in Romania reveals that between 1995-2002 the Roma did not benefit from more substantial social transfers than the non-Roma. Moreover, inequalities between the Roma and non-Roma households sharpened even more after social transfers. The law on the Minimum Income Guarantee and other means-tested transfers fail to offer enough financial resources to empower individuals to fight multiple deprivations (detailed analysis of social transfers for Roma see Raț: 2006). In the case of severely deprived Roma, access to courses of vocational qualification and other public services is restricted by problems of day-to-day subsistence.⁵

The present article aims at presenting shortly the results and preliminary conclusions of a research undertaken in an ethnically mixed locality in Romania.⁶ In the first chapters, we shortly present the community and their socio-economic position. Then we will try to describe and to analyse two of the survival strategies of the Roma. Finally we will focus our attention on the problem of trust which is the connecting element of all informal strategies and through which we will be able to understand better the characteristics of the relation between Roma and Gadjo.

As previously mentioned, the question of education is a crucial one, as the low presence of the Roma population on the formal job-market is partly due to their low educational level. The last chapters discuss the problem of school-attending of the Roma children in the studied community.

Presentation of the locality and the Roma of Nușfalău⁷

■ Nușfalău (Szilágynagyfalu) is situated in the north-western region of Romania. From an ethnic point of view, Nușfalău is a mixed locality. According to the 2002 National Census, there are about 4 174 Hungarians, 650 Roma, 647 Romanians, 36 Slovaks, 4 Germans, 1 Ukrainian. The 650 Roma represent 11.78% of the total population of the village. (Total population of Nușfalău is 5 515.)

The Gypsies of Nușfalău live at the margins of the locality in three, more or less compact neighborhoods. Brazilia neighborhood is the largest, comprising about 75 buildings, where 134 families live (circa

4 The term “Gadjo” denominates the non-Roma population.

5 Detailed analysis of access of Roma to education see: Stefánia Toma: *Research Report: Educational Measures for the Roma Minority in Romania. The Effectiveness of Integrated and Segregated Education. Case study: The case of Nușfalău, Salaj County*, 2005. This research was supported by a grant from the CERGE-EI Foundation under a program of the Global Development Network. Additional funds for grantees in the Balkan countries have been provided by the Austrian Government through WIIW, Vienna.

6 I am especially grateful to the financial and moral support of the VisegradFund during 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 (Grant S-019-2005 and Grant S-012-2006) and for the kind support of the Sociology Doctoral School of Corvinus University Budapest, Hungary

7 The fieldwork was done in August and September 2007. In the report I also used the experiences of my previous field visits in the framework of the research program financed by CERGE-EI, the Austrian Government through WIIW and Global Development Network in the period 2004 – 2006.

550 persons) according to the health mediator of the community. The Brazilia neighborhood was initially separated from the rest of the village by the river Barcău (Berettyó). The interviews revealed that local authorities had decided to move the Roma neighborhood to a certain distance from the village. Gradually, the neighborhood was surrounded by the houses of the newcomer Hungarians and Romanians, but there is still a clear delimitation (a street) between the Roma's community and the others⁷.

The other neighborhood is called Bakos. Bakos is a mixed neighborhood from an ethnic point of view. Hungarian and Romanian poor as well live there.

The last and smallest community includes approx. 26 persons. They live on the "Tóni telep" near the locality's railway station, but very far from the center of the village and from the other Roma communities.

There are approx. 20 persons living in the village who declare themselves as Hungarian, but through heteroidentification they are all considered of Roma ethnicity.

The Roma of Nuşfalău were first mentioned⁸ in the tax registers of the year 1820 (3 persons). In 1835 already 33 Roma were mentioned in the same document. During the 19th century, the number of the registered Roma did not show relevant growth (1840: 28; 1848: 36; 1848:33). In the 1880 Census there is no such category as "Roma", but we can infer that the Roma inhabitants were counted as "Hungarian speakers" or "unknown language speakers" (46 persons). According to a local historian, Major Miklós⁹, during the last decades of the 19th century, the number of the incoming Roma in Nuşfalău has increased. One and the most important factor of the growth of the number of the Roma inhabitants – and not only – is an economical one. Beginning with the 14th century, Nuşfalău is the most important trade center of the Barcău region due to the establishment of the Bánffy noble family in the village. Starting with 1471, the village wins the right to organize four national trades every year. At the end of 1899, was opened the railway between Şimleu and Marghita. The railway helped to the enlargement of the markets of the village, which attracted more and more participants. From 1899, the village has the right to organize six trades. The above-mentioned factors has contributed greatly to the creation of favourable economic conditions for the population of the region, therefore it became attractive also for the Roma.

The Roma of Nuşfalău used to be serfs of the local aristocrat, baron Bánffy, as brick-makers and as stable men at his horses. Some of them were employed as land-workers on his domain; a few persons were musicians. At the beginning of the 20th century, we can find in Nuşfalău two independent aluminium metalworkers, seven blacksmiths; they probably were also Roma. The Roma of Nuşfalău were not land-owners. They lived on the baron Bánffy's land, which situation has been maintained up to nowadays; the former properties of the baron now are in the property of the local council.

During the 19th century, the Roma community lived in the Western part of the village (we can still find there their cemetery). At the beginning of the 20th century they were moved on the Southern end of the village. After the nationalization of the baron's land, the communist authorities – declaring their intention as "hygienizing" and "civilizing" – decided to move again the Roma community on the other side of the river Barcău to a considerable distance to the village centre (Eastern part of the locality). This is now the community known as Brazilia (the "tanya"). During the decades, the area between the village and Brazilia community was populated by the "newcomer" Hungarians and Romanians. This separation between the old villagers and the newcomers still exists on the cognitive map of the village. The Barcău river symbolizes the borderline.

After the war, during the land reform, the baron had to allocate to the "poorest people" parcel of lands for house building. Among some Hungarian and Romanian families, six Roma families received a parcel in the place called "Bakos".

At the beginning of the 20th century, the region of Nuşfalău met a formerly unknown economic expansion. Due to this, the Roma found a lot of opportunities for employment around the Hungarian's activities. In 1900 a brick factory (Papp-Sweiger) was opened by the Jewish community, where many

8 Using the tax registers we can approximate the number of the Roma living in the village in that period. But we found an earlier source about the presence of the Roma in Nuşfalău in the Archive of the Reformed Church. In this it is said on 4th of January 1808 that "Czigány Muntyán István ifjú legényt Farkas Miklós bé-panaszolta, hogy az ő hajdon Leányát Farkas Erzsébetet teherbe ejtette." All over the documents there are mentioned names like: "Czigány Muntyán István", "Czigány Kali Juliska", "Czigány Ponta Péter", "Czigány Barna Terézia". The "Czigány" used as last name can be used as denomination of ethnicity.

9 Interview; Major Miklós: *Szilágynagyfalú*. Budapest, Száz Magyar Falu könyvesháza KHT, 2005.



Roma were employed. In 1930, the factory enlarged its activity and started to produce mainly for export (outside the closest vicinity of the county: to Hungary). The Roma who were not employed at the brick-factory, continued to produce bricks for local needs. The agriculture was also in expansion. The landlords replaced the previous crops cultures with vegetable and fruit which were more profitable in the new context. Again, most of the Roma found chances to work on the farms. Some of the Roma women were employed for domestic works, around the households of the Hungarians being paid only in food and clothes. Because the Roma historically were not landowners, they were constrained to do whatever the local Hungarians offered them.

The socialist period

In 1950, the basis of Agricultural Cooperative – CAP¹⁰, called “Új Élet” (“New life”) was set up. In the first year, 98 poor families had joined the cooperative. All the properties of the local baron (who was forced to leave the village¹¹) were nationalized. Thus, the Agricultural Cooperative began its activity with a total of 300 ha of agricultural land. The process of collectivization lasted more than 10 years, until 1962. At the beginning of the 80’s, a socialist farm for cattle breeding was set up taking almost half of the collective land. A socialist enterprise (SMA¹²) of agricultural machines was also built in order to serve the CAP. During this period, other private properties were also nationalized: the Darvas industry, the brick-industry, and so on. Due to the new regime’s rural development strategy, new houses for the new residents of the locality were constructed on the local baron’s former properties. In 1962 the village was connected to the electric system (but not the Brazilia Roma community), the main road (from Șimleu to Oradea) was paved. This was the occasion for some Roma families to move out of Brazilia. In these years, we can observe a strong migratory tendency from Nușfalău to the region’s new industrial towns: Oradea, Zalău, and Timișoara. This tendency was lower in the ‘60s and the early ‘70s, when we can observe an inverse tendency due to the new administrative changes in the region. Nușfalău became a commune, and the population of the nearby villages tended to migrate to Nușfalău in hope of finding better living conditions. After that, in the late ‘70s and ‘80s, the migratory tendencies became again more marked, in this case towards foreign countries: Hungary and USA at first. At the beginning of the ‘80s, the communist regime’s politics became more severe: the social, political, and economic control became more rigorous, the industrialization and urbanizing process more marked, and thus a strong rural-urban migratory process began.

This process led to a lack of labor-market in the locality. The shortage was balanced by cheap Roma labor-force being integrated in the agricultural work. In addition, the Roma themselves participated in this migratory process. Some of them were looking for brick orders in different regions of Romania. Others worked in industry and constructions in the region, or they participated in seasonal agricultural jobs in other regions of the country. For several months a year, they were granted accommodation and meals, thus they had the chance to set aside money for the winter. This amount of money was just enough for the households’ bare necessities. The Roma of Nușfalău had to look for other sources of income in the locality to supplement their income. These practices were transmitted from generation to generation, as the Roma children participated as well. Due to their low educational level and the lack of proper qualification, they never had the possibility to find ways out from this precarious situation in order to improve their living conditions.

The above is characteristic of the majority of Roma from Brazilia community.

The Roma community of Bakos shows different characteristics. The spatial segregation of the Bakos community is not as marked as that of Brazilia, which is strictly separated from the rest of the village. Bakos, although likewise situated on the outskirts of the village, is near to the main national road, and more visible. Furthermore, Bakos is more a mixed neighborhood, as the Roma families live next to Hungarians and Romanians, who are poor too. This proximity of Roma with other ethnic groups has somewhat influenced the mental images of the villagers about their way of life. Even though they are poor, poorer than their Hungarian and Romanian neighbors, we can observe major differences between the Brazilia and Bakos communities. Their houses are larger, they have kitchen gardens near their

10 Cooperativă Agricolă de Producție

11 A descendant of baron Bánffy (Bánffy Mária) lives now in Hungary. She used to visit every year Nusfalău, but unfortunately I have never had the chance to meet her.

12 SMA – Stațiuni de Mașini Agricole

houses, and sometimes they plant flowers in front of their houses. This is not common in the Brazilia settlement.

This difference was characteristic in the socialist period as well. Due to the higher level of education and their more positive image among the Gadje, the Roma of Bakos had more steady jobs in the industry. Those working in the Cooperative have received land, perhaps the most unproductive, but this helped them enough to produce their daily necessities. Due to this relative stability displayed by the Roma from Bakos, their image became more positive in the narratives of the Hungarians than that of the Brazilians, and this difference still exists.

The period of transition in Nuşfalău and current situation

The beginning of the transition period in Nuşfalău is strongly connected with the abolition of Agricultural Cooperatives, the CAP's. The CAP represented the main source of income for the poorest of the village. On one hand, it assured a relatively regular, but low income. On the other hand, as the land was "no man's land", stealing did not represent a moral problem.

...from here, from there, from everywhere they (the Roma) stole something. For them, it was obvious that the Cooperative is a place where they can take away anything from. But not only for them, others, too... The Hungarians, the Romanians did this. And this cannot be considered theft. (L.J., Hungarian man, aged 56)

Though there are no empirical investigations that deal with the question of quality of life before 1989, we can approximate the differences via the interviews taken in the village. This could not be an objective evaluation as we lack any related information; it is rather a subjective reconstruction of the life-quality evaluation via the viewpoint of those who experienced life under the communist life-style. If we reconstruct the strategies from the narrated life-stories, we must take into consideration two methodological problems: stories of the past are presented as facts, though these are opinions and subjective interpretations of the past; the strategies became products, while in fact they are processes.

Almost all interviewed persons declared that their life was easier before 1989, although they gave different explanations.

We ate better under Ceausescu's regime... it was better then... now... it [the money] isn't enough even for two days... we have chickens, ducks. (Roma woman, aged 40, Brazilia)

So, there was enough work for everybody. Nobody had real reasons to cry. If a Gypsy was sitting in the ditch, he was picked up... Go to work! And they had to work, but they didn't receive food, no... they were paid in money. (Roma man, aged 63, Brazilia)

Before '89 their life was better. In the summer they went to Salonta, Arad, Timisoara to work there on the state farms, and they earned enough... (...) There they had accommodation, food, they didn't have to deal with these problems. When they came back to the village in the autumn, they came with a lot of money saved from their work, but it is true that they spent it very quickly. (Hungarian women aged 64)

After 1989, in the first wave of restructuration of the economic units, the majority of the Roma families lost all the certain income sources, while other possibilities in the new structures did not occur.

After the implementation of the Law 18/1991 concerning the land-reprivatization, the Roma have not received land. According to the Law, one could receive land if he or his forefathers used to hold land prior to 1949. But they have never been landowners. Another prescription of the Law stipulates that one could receive land if he/she was employed at the CAP for minimum three years, if there is enough land at the disposal of the local redistribution commissions. The Roma were consequently ignored by these committees, though a number of them had worked at the CAP's farms.

The Roma who worked in the extractive industry were the first who lost their jobs; the cattle breeding farm was closed; the brick factory was privatized, but soon collapsed and it was closed for several years – after that there were some initiatives (private or non-governmental) to re-open, but it failed. The IAS (a kind



of CAP) was not closed right after 1989, thus it represented a chance for some of the Roma, but through the years it narrowed its activity and in 1993 it was closed, too. Therefore, the Roma had to find alternative ways in order to survive: for them one possible way was to return to their traditional crafts. During the '90s, there was a certain demand for "Gypsy-bricks" in the village and in the near-by villages. The Roma of Brazilia – taking advantage that the property-relations were still not clarified – started to exploit the land surrounding their neighborhood. Until 1995, the process of land-allocation has been finalized; the Roma were forced to ask the local council to permit them to continue their work, but the authorities – arguing that the exploitations in the vicinity of their living place is not hygienic and endanger the life of children (there were cases that unwatched children fell into the holes) – refused the request of the Roma. Instead, the council offered them some parcels from the communal property, very far away from the village on the top of the hills. Although the Roma were all complaining about how unreasonable was this offer (the place lacked water-source, one of the important components in the brick-making process; it was situated to a considerable distance from the village, mainly for the Roma, who did not own cars or even carts), some of them had no other possibility to survive, thus accepted this offer. The others continued to exploit the nearby land, transforming the vicinity in a swamp. Nowadays, the brick-demand is so low that it is not worth to work with bricks (only for the needs of the household). The product offer of a factory from Zalău slowly diminished the opportunities of the Roma to make a living out of bricks.

Besides making and selling bricks, another activity through which the Roma could find resources to survive, was to work as day-labourer for the Hungarian and Romanian landowners. During the land privatization, many of the former landowners received back their agricultural lands. Some of them also had an opportunity to buy on relatively low prices the mechanized means for land cultivation. Some of them have started small enterprises for cattle and poultry breeding. These initiatives nevertheless don't need a large and permanently employed working force. For them the solution was represented by the Roma. Thus, most of the Roma (both from Brazilia and Bakos) are working as day-labourers, by which they receive some income, but they are not entitled to different social services. In the last few years – from 2000 on – some new factories were opened in Nuşfalău or in the vicinity of the village: an Italian shoe-maker, a paper-box-maker, a phone-box producer, the newest one is the "SC. Hanna Instruments SRL – Scientific Park Nuşfalău" and the highway builder company. But these were a chance for employment for the Roma from the Bakos community (most of the working age persons from Bakos are employed, the elder are pensioned). In the Brazilia community there are only 6 officially employed persons (according to the health mediator). For the unemployed Roma the only regular income is the child-support, the children-allowance and the social aid.

Poverty. Sources of income. Survival strategies

■ From the previous paragraphs we can infer that the Roma of Nuşfalău have limited possibilities to apply for a workplace in the formal economy of the village or the nearby localities. The number of those Roma who are full-right employees is very low and irrelevant. Most of Roma are unemployed. For most of the families, the only regular source of money is the CAP-pension of the elderly, the children's allowance and the social aid. The Roma have developed a large scale of economic activities in order to "survive", and some of these activities could be labelled as regular informal economic activities, nevertheless none of these activities can guarantee a regular income for the families.

The local families employ the Roma. The system of employing Roma is a complex one. Almost every Hungarian or Romanian family has employed a Roma person (or family) to carry out domestic work around the household. Among other strategies of the Roma to cope with their situation I would mention the making of bricks (the traditional workcraft of the Roma in Nuşfalău), the illegal commerce of chemical substances (during the early 90's), the commercialization of non-financial aids, entertainment, gathering wild fruits, mushrooms, fruits, processing wall-nuts for the neighboring wealthy Roma community of Boghiş.

In the following paragraphs, we will try to describe and to analyse two of the survival strategies of the Roma. At first sight the presence of the institution of godfathership among the Roma and Gadjo of Nuşfalău seemed to be just an "innate" characteristics of this historically peaceful multiethnic community, but later this proved to be just the surface. The second strategy, called "the List", is also a constitutive element of the survival strategies of the Roma, though in this case not the Roma are the initiators of it.

Finally we will focus our attention on the problem of trust which is the connecting element of all informal strategies and through which we will be able to understand better the characteristics of the relation between Roma and Gadjó.

Godfathers

In Nuşfalău there is a tradition by which the Roma seem to cross the ethnic border and reduce the social distance between Roma and Gadjó. It is not unusual for a resident of Nuşfalău to become the godparent of a Gypsy child. The reasons that lead a non-Gypsy citizen to become engaged in such a relationship are either due to human feelings or a transitional mood: a not at all rare phenomenon (see Tarrow 1967; Legg 1969; Marantzidis–Mavrommatis 1999).

According to Blau, a real godfather relationship can exist only between two equal persons or families and the extent of this relationship is that the child may have a spiritual father. If the persons belong to different social categories, then the quality and the essence of the relationship is different (Blau 1964: 22). The main difference can be observed in the power-relations between the actors.

Roma prefer seeking a godfather outside their community because through this their aim is to link their family to a strong clientele relationship, in which, via the security that this relationship with the godfather brings, they can feel confident about asking favours – always paying the favour back, either through work on the agricultural land or with other services. Actually, this probably forms the Roma's strongest communication link to the society at large in Nuşfalău. The institution of godfatherness can be understood as a strategy of a well-defined social group to survive. One determining factor of survival is that a person or a household should have all the possible social ties they could need in their economic or social ascent. This institution is based on reciprocity. The core issue of this relationship is neither the economic action itself, nor the reciprocity of gifts, but the reduction of social distances. Still, we should not lessen the importance of the economic aspect. The existence of a Gadjó godfather represents a relatively stable factor in the lives of the Roma. If the relationship is stable, it is more likely that the godfather should hire his godson's family for work.

The institution of godfatherness has been interiorized in such way that the interviewed persons could not give answers to the direct questions regarding how they choose the godfather. In case of "real godfatherness", choosing the godfathers depends on the quality of the relation between the actors: this relation must be friendship, must be characterized by mutual trust or by the reciprocity of possible advantages earned through these relationships.

In a fundamental article, Gouldner defined the concept of reciprocity as a "mutually contingent exchange of benefits between two or more units" (Gouldner 1960: 164). He also stressed that in relations which can be described as reciprocal the involved parties had rights and duties which went beyond merely "complementary" ones. In this view, reciprocity constituted a general principle of mutual dependence and recognition of a shared moral norm: "You should give benefits to those who give you benefits" (*ibidem*: 170). Nevertheless, the most interesting point of Gouldner's analysis is from the point of view of our study is his emphasis on the "disruptive potentialities of power". According to his observations he concluded that the manifest presence of power relations between the parties concerned determines the nature and quantity of the benefits exchanged. Thus, he proposes a continuum which begins with exchanges involving equal benefits and ends with those in which one party receives nothing in return. This last case was associated by Gouldner with exploitation which is a strongly disruptive practice in society since it violates commonly shared and universal moral values. In other order of ideas, in social relations where reciprocity is the defining pattern the idea of social cohesion is reproduced.

In Nuşfalău, none of these conditions are fulfilled. Roma are not friends of the Gadjó; as we can see, the Gadjó do not trust the Roma, and their relationship can be described only in terms of client-patron. However, almost every Roma child has a Hungarian godfather (and of course, the "real godfather" is Roma). During our fieldwork we met a Hungarian woman, who live in the nearest vicinity of the Bakos community. She has eight Roma godchildren: five from the Bakos community and three from Brazilia community. She said that she does not have continuous contact with all her godchildren, it would be too much for her (as time- and money investment), but she tries to take care and help the two or three children whom she considers that are serious (including their family).¹³

13 During the fieldwork this Hungarian woman made short visits every second day of the family of one of her godchildren from Bakos community.



I worked here in the village in the pub and... at that time many Gypsies were coming there. Because what they earn today, they drink it till night... and so... so we met, we talked. If they helped me, I paid them, because I had to pay them for the work. After that they asked me if I would like to be the godmother of their child. And I asked myself, why not?... We still keep in touch. That family (from Brazilia) is very decent. For example, if I need help for a work, I call them, so it is worthwhile for me and for them also. (Hungarian woman, aged 35, village)

We are neighbors, we understand each other very well, I liked her very much. They called us, we liked them, so... I liked the way they behaved, how they looked, everything... She is educated, cultured. (Hungarian woman, aged 38, Bakos)

This practice can be interpreted on three dimensions. First, it might be an economic action through which the Roma gain access to more financial resources. Second, the fact that the Hungarians usually interpret the institution of godfathers in traditional terms (see Blau on real godfathers) this relationship allows the Roma to make use of it gaining little material advantages, such as some gifts.¹⁴ Thirdly, this kind of relationship has a latent function: that of transgressing the social distance. Yet, this does not mean that the social distance between the Roma family and the Gadjo is reduced. This relationship is displayed in the face of other people. The fact that the child of a Roma family has a Gadjo godfather means that this family is not like other Roma; they are honorable.

As we have seen before, the Gadjo have no informal relations with the Roma. Their interactions are limited to economic relations. The institution of godfathers, the only one that can be interpreted as informal, gained a new interpretation among the residents. Even if initially the Gadjo accept this relationship by virtue of an ethic and religious consciousness, this relationship is gradually redefined in terms of informal economy. This way, the institution of godfathers became a more subtle form of economic relation between Gadjo and Roma, or, in some cases, a consequence or condition of the same.

Informal credit

In the previous section we have seen how the Roma use the institution of godfathers to gain access to work, income and material resources for surviving. Respectively, these relations also represent a reference in establishing contacts with other persons whom the Roma will be able to make up an additional client-patron relation.

In this section we will focus our attention to another survival strategy of the Roma population of Nuşfalău which neither can be categorized as singular nor representative only for the rural Roma population as it was documented also in poor urban areas.

Poverty and lack of money forces many Roma to buy food and other products on credit. This interest-free informal credit system is called "the List" because shop-keepers write down all the products they sell mentioning also the exact data of payments. The fixing of the data is let on the behalf of the buyers as they know exactly the data of receiving money. At the beginning of this practice, the shopkeeper was the one who settled the data of payments, but this proved to be ineffective as it gave occasions for misunderstandings, which led to distrust on behalf of the shopkeeper. Being forced to continue his familial business – as the single source of income – he had changed the policy of his business and decided to go by his customers. His clientele is formed mainly by Roma.¹⁵ Contrary to the expectations, his business is one of the most developing among the others in the village. One of the explanations could be that he has a stabile circle of customers. The Roma buyers are faithful to him and make their payments in time because if they lose his trust they lose almost any access to basic necessities.

14 The above mentioned Hungarian woman, asked about why she agreed to be the godmother of so many Roma children, said that if somebody asks you to be Godparents, you have to accept it. It is a very rude gesture to say "no" to such a request, this is the "tradition". A Hungarian man (32 years old, single), also from the Bakos community said the same thing.

15 The business is set up the family's house. This building is situated between the neighborhood of Brazilia and Bakos, on the main road. Although the store has customers from the majority population also, mainly Roma forms its clientele. This could be also interpreted as a latent form of discrimination, as the interviews revealed clearly that the Hungarians and Romanians do not prefer to attend the same public places as the Roma. Thus, the shopkeeper has to build his business on the poor population.

For some of the inhabitants the existence of this list is the ultimate sign of poverty. But – as we have seen – this was the sign of trust beneath poverty. Even if the written forms of contracts are considered as a sign of missing trust and the informal monitoring, in this case we have to remark the risk that these entrepreneurs assume. Trust is the only way they can minimize the risk they take.

Patricia Landolt and Aljandro Portes gives example of the controversial relation between social capital and entrepreneurial spirit: “Tight social networks can also undermine business initiatives. Often, family and friends beseech initially successful entrepreneurs for support. The social capital of the petitioners consists precisely in their right to demand and receive assistance from fellow group members. But in the process, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz has shown in his studies of Bali, promising economic initiatives fail to accumulate capital and turn into welfare hotels.” (Portes–Landolt 1996).

This is not the case of this small shop in the village. The unwritten rules of “the List” make this business flourishing for the patron and a real “God’s present” for the two poor Roma communities. Two years ago, the shop was in fact formed by two rooms. One room was the Gypsy bar. This place was attended in the afternoon mainly by Roma man. It was a modest room where Roma man can drink some alcohol and smoke while they were discussing businesses. In fact it had the function of a communication knot (there are more in the village). The first room was the grocery. This was the women’s and children’s place of meeting. They are not really “allowed” to enter the pub.

The power of List could be felt in both rooms. One who wanted to enter the Pub had to pass first the grocery where is “the List”. Only those who were accredited to be creditable could drink or smoke on credit. In the grocery, they can buy on the list only the basic necessities of the household: potatoes, flour, margarine, bread, soap, cigarettes, alcohol, sugar, pasta. The shopkeeper will sell products on the list basis only he or she has faith in the buyer – thus a permanent clientele can be secured. Now, as a prove of the prosperous business, the shop has changed its outfit: the two rooms were transformed in one single bigger shop, it also diversified its products; the pub was extended in two other rooms with separated entrance. There is no direct connection between the shop and the pub.

Trust

Continuing Niklas Luhmann’s work many social scientists agreed on “the clear and simple fact, that without trust, the everyday social life which we take for granted is simply not possible” (Luhmann 1979).

In terms of economic relations, too, trust is the basis of every relationship. In case of formal relations, trust is also formalized. It is legalized by contracts and underwriting. In case of informal relations, the formality was replaced by verbal formulas, which are considered a part of cultural expressions. Those who are unable to conform to these norms are declared potentially suspect. This is what happens in the relation between Roma and Gadjó in Nuşfalău. The Gadjó legitimize their distant attitudes towards Roma as a group referring to the lack of trust.

The social distance between Roma and Gadjó depends on the level of trust. A Gadjó has no trust in a Roma from Brazilia, except if a Roma is a day laborer at his/her family. However, credit goes to the Gadjó if the Roma becomes trustworthy, as “you have to know how to talk to them, if you respect them as persons, if you help them, they will return this to you”.

Every relationship between Roma and Gadjó functions on the basis of a set of non-written rules. Living and acting according these rules the trust between them is guaranteed. But if happens that a Roma break the commonly accepted rules he/she will be severely sanctioned. Thus one can lose the only source of income: for example working as day-labourer for a Hungarian family. The subject of the sanctions is not only that person who has lost the trust; moreover, the sanctions are extended to the whole Roma family stigmatizing each and every member of the family irrespective of their previous relation.

The Roma of Bakos are represented in a positive way and the Gadjó show a higher level of trust towards them, at least on a discursive level. However, this discourse materializes in positive attitudes or in reduced social distance only in a few cases.

Another aspect worth mentioning is the different dimensions of the representation of the “other”.

We could identify three dimensions in Nuşfalău: the image of Roma from Romania in general, the Roma of Nuşfalău in general, and in relation with persons of Roma identity.

The Hungarians, comparing the ethnic situation in their village with that of Romania, consider that their village has a model-value. The people of Nuşfalău have not experienced interaction with other Roma groups from other regions of Romania. They know about Roma in general from the presentation of mass media - which is never neutral and presents the Roma of Romania mostly in negative terms. Their



experiences with Roma however are different and this is the second dimension. The minor swindles of the Roma from Nuşfalău cannot be compared to the criminality of other Roma groups. Nevertheless, in the local context, these swindles became the community's biggest problem. The third dimension is that of interpersonal relations. It is interesting that the existing stereotypes applied in the context of the whole community are not applied in interpersonal relations.

Finally, "my Gypsy" is trustworthy, hard-working, civilized. Yet, the social distances and the behavioural intentions exhibited in interpersonal relations correspond to those of the entire community (the second level). The Gadjo avoid close interactions with Roma. Of course, there are exceptions; in case of economic relations, the number of interactions is very high. The presence of Roma in a formal institution also increases the number of interactions (e.g. teacher in the local school, the health mediator in the sanitary center, etc.).

Data on education in Nuşfalău. History of education in Nuşfalău

■ The documents of the Reformed Church's archive show that the first educational institute in Nuşfalău began its activity in 1600 with one teacher in two classes. This was named the "village school". The local church maintained another school until its closure in 1878.

In 1868 the law prescripts that for the 6-12 old children attendance is compulsory. Besides that, every commune had to set up the bases of "people's education institutes". The ratio of this law was that the initiators of the schools have to take into account the specificities of the village and to include into the educational program those professions which are characteristic for that region. This usually was agriculture.

From year 1897 the "state people's school" begins its activity with four teachers and 207 enrolled children at the beginning of the school year. In 1899 it was established the agricultural school. According to the 1910 census, the total population of Nuşfalău was 2 501 out of which 310 children were of age 6-11. The school register of the same year shows that 265 children were enrolled in school, and 222 graduated the year. The National Statistical Office in 1910 recorded 240 general schools on county level. 133 were Romanian schools, 103 were Hungarian schools and 1 German. There were 340 teachers in the county, 19 325 pupils enrolled, and 5 588 pupils who did not attended regularly the classes. We can only make speculations on the data of the registers as they differ from year to year. In the censuses there are no ethnic categories. Sometimes appears the mother tongue as differentiating people, but we did not find data on Roma at all. We can only guess that they represent a part of the "other" category, but these "others" could be Slovaks or Jewish as well. Accordingly, the schools registers are not as much help as well. Until the 20's, children were registered after their family provenience.

School year 1876/1877

	Boys	Girls	Total	Agriculturer	Manufacturer	Administrative	Others
I. grade	23	2	25	17	5	1	2
II. grade	18	6	24	18	2	-	4

The main structure of the taking in evidence has not changed during the following years.

School year 1910/1911

Grades	Total	Agriculturer	Serf	Daily worker	Manufacturer	Shop-keepers	Bar-keepers	Others	Administration
I.	53	33	7	-	7	2	3	1	-
II.	67	40	11	6	4	1	3	1	1
III.	49	24	10	7	4	2	-	2	-
IV.	46	32	4	-	3	2	-	3	2
V.	30	22	2	-	1	1	3	-	1
VI.	20	6	4	-	5	3	2	-	-
Total	265	157	38	13	24	11	11	7	4

In the agricultural school there were three classes. There were supposed to be enrolled 123 children (69 boys, 54 girls), but only 99 were enrolled.

During the 1st World War, the schools were closed. Most of the documents were destroyed, only a few registers remained untouched.

In 1920, the population of the locality is 2 810. The “village school” becomes state general school following the Trianon Treaty. Beginning with school year 1919/1920 Romanian children are also allowed to attend school. This year there are already two schools in the village. The state school had begun its teaching activity for the Romanian children with three classes with 32 children. The other school was entirely Hungarian and it functioned within the Reformed Church.

During the 20's, the number of the enrolled children is continuously growing, fact that made clear that the school – which functioned in an old building – needs a new building. In 1936, after years of construction, is finished the new school building. It was a difficult task for the people of the village to support the construction of a new building as at the beginning of the 30's the village faced a severe economic crises which is also reflected in the school registers. In school year 1933/1934 out of 274 enrolled children only 188 attended the classes more or less regularly.

In 1937-1938 two new factories started its activity in Nușfalău thus more than 200 persons gain the possibility to get employed. This year the number of the enrolled children grew to 491, out of which 372 attended the courses of the state general school, 81 children attended the reformed religious school and 24 were already enrolled in a high-school or professional school. It was documented that this year 60-62% of the children enrolled in the 6th or 7th grade has graduated school.

In 1940 – as the direct consequence of the Vienna treaty – the Romanian classes were dissolved and the children who wanted to continue their studies were redistributed in the Hungarian classes.

The school reform in 1948 has brought drastic changes in the organization of education as a whole with deep consequences. The religious schools were closed and pupils were redirected to the state based schools. The attendance of classes became compulsory, although even the basic necessities were not provided. The most important was that out of the eight teachers only one had graduated university. During the 50's, the different schools were unified. It was elected one school director. During the 60's, the number of the specialized teachers grew significantly, it reached 65%. In 1964 it was finished the new school building.

Nowadays the schools are functioning in these two buildings.

One of the envisaged tasks of the school reform was to reach the 100% enrolment of the school-aged children. By declaring education as compulsory, the school administration could not reach this dream-percentage – partially due to the growing number of the Roma children in the village. Thus they developed a differentiated program special created for the Roma children. In 1949 was established a Roma school in Brazilia community with four grades. One teacher was employed to teach the Roma pupils. There did not remain any document about the 17 years of activity of this school. We could only rebuild from interviews the story of this school. It was mostly considered as a “black point” in the eyes of the officialdom, thus the local organizations tried to better the situation of this school. The local women's association organized charity events to gather clothes for the Roma children. They also cooked. The Roma school was closed in 1966.

During socialism, many of the Roma had no permanent residence in the locality. Children attended different schools (when they did) in different years and were very often in the situation of changing the teaching language, depending on the majority population in the locality where their parents worked.

Educational institutions in Nușfalău

Nușfalău, as a commune (Romanian administrative unit compassing a center village and two or three other villages in its vicinity), has all level of educational institutions, less theoretical high school and university level education. These are: one unit state nursery school, one elementary school, one secondary school and one professional high-school. The closest theoretical high school is in Simleul Silvaniei, a small town which is 9 km far from Nușfalău. All four institutions are mixed from ethnic point of view. In every institution there are separate classes for the ethnic Hungarians and Romanians, but no classes for the ethnic Roma. The Roma children are enrolled either in the Hungarian classes, either in the Romanian. The only segregated educational institution was a “nursery school” (in fact a day-center for children) for the Roma children in Brazilia community but this was not a state institution.



The nursery school

In 2005-2006 there were 5 groups of children in the nursery school. Only one of these groups represents the Romanian section. 29 3-7 years old children were enrolled in this group, out of which 13 were of Roma ethnicity. The Hungarian section compass four groups as follows: 3 years old children, 4 years old children, 5 years old children and 6 years old or older children.

The building of the nursery school is right in the historical centre of the village, in one of the buildings of the Bánffy baron. The building was restored recently and three years ago was built a hygienic unit as well near the old building. The nursery school has a courtyard also. The interior seems well-equipped and adequate for the purposes. The supplies are pretty old and used. The nursery school does not receive funding to re-new the supplies, toys for the children. All they have was donated by different Foundations and Churches. Currently, the nursery school, elementary school and the secondary school participate in a PHARE programme which aims at developing the educational methods, of educational equipment and tries to involve more the parents into the educational process. One sub-programme of this project targets the Roma pupils and parents. The director of the nursery school though expressed her concern what regards the participation of the Roma parents in this programme, as one pre-condition is to be able to read and write, and many of the parents are not able to fulfill this condition, even if they are open to be more active.

The elementary school

The building of the elementary school is also situated in the centre of the village in an old, restored building, with a big courtyard. The hygienic unit is outside of the building on the farthest corner of the courtyard. The building and the interior seems arranged, but the furniture is old. The arrangement of the benches reminds the old, socialist structure which enforces hierarchy. The table of the teacher in is the front of the class, the benches of the pupils are arranged one after other in lines. During our visits to classes we could see, that the Roma children seats are always on the back of the class.

The walls of the classes and corridors are decorated with pictures, photos and paintings of the children.

The elementary school has 12 classes: 4 at the Romanian section (I-IV grades), and 8 classes at the Hungarian section (two classes by grade). The rooms are not enough for parallel program, thus several classes has program in the afternoon (from 12 o'clock to 16 o'clock).

The secondary school

The secondary school is again in the centre of the village. The structure of the classes is the same as in the elementary school: two Hungarian classes per grade and one Romanian class per grade. The building is new – as compared to the other educational buildings. The number of rooms are less than the number of groups, thus children have also afternoon programs. The school is well-managed. They have several brother-schools in different countries, especially in Netherlands. Clubs, contests, exhibitions are organized in every period of the year. The library and the laboratories are well equipped especially if we take into considerations the scarce resources of the school. The head of the school considers that the only possibility for the school and the children to survive and to be able to show up some results is to find additional financial resources. Thus, in 2005, in collaboration with the Local Council and the mayor of the village they applied for an educational PHARE program in which are implied all educational institutions, less the Roma nursery school which is not a state-financed institution (as mentioned before this program will run beginning with this school-year).

The professional high-school (SMA)

The professional school is 3 km far from the village on the former land of the state farm. It is far the poorest institution in Nuşfalău. They have 8 classes of IX-XII grade, one Hungarian and one Romanian class for each grade. The Romanian compulsory education lasts until the Xth grade when those who want to continue their studies have to pass an exam. Those who graduate the Xth grade receive a qualified worker diploma, those who graduate the XIIth grade and have the baccalaureate receive a professional high-school diploma. The school put a great emphasis on the practice of different professions: for boys for example electricians, for girls dressmaking.

Pupils are allowed to practice in different workshops.

The school has a dormitory under its administration. The financial support was given by a Dutch Foundation.

Enrolment in Hungarian or Romanian classes

Though generally speaking there weren't and aren't any conflicts in Nuşfalău that we could call as interethnic conflicts, we could identify a subtle conflict even when we are speaking about the enrolment of children in Romanian or Hungarian language classes.

It is the parent's decision to choose the language of education for their child. Hungarians could choose the Romanian language education if they consider that it is for the best of their children to manage better the official language of the country.

The Roma of Nuşfalău speak three languages: Romani, Hungarian and Romanian with small qualitative differences. People learn simultaneously all three languages in their childhood as they realize this need in the everyday communicative situations with the majority.

The conflict is generated by the number of the children enrolled in a class which is prescribed by the Law. The number of school-age children in the village is decreasing year after year, thus a number of educators and teachers have to face the problem of unemployment in case the number of children is lower than the legally established. In order to maintain at least the number of children enrolled in school, the teachers have to "fight" for pupils. The decisive factor is the enrolment of Roma children. For the Romanian language classes is extremely important to convince the Roma parents to enrol their children in the Romanian language classes, although during the interviews they did not mention this aspect.

This is the decision of the parents. We cannot influence them. Every parent decides where to enrol his child. We don't have a word to say in this issue. Generally speaking, they enrol their children in the Romanian language classes. And less in the Hungarian language classes. (teacher at the Romanian language class, II. grade)

There are more Roma children on the Romanian section... because the nursery school teachers have this propaganda. She, the Romanian nursery school teacher. To have their job, because if they don't... they won't have the four classes, they lose their jobs. These are the problems. When we have problems, we also fight for them. We have to fight for them... So, to have the four classes. When I came here, there were two teachers. After a while have come one more, now we have four. This in 15 years, let's say. So... and because of the Roma children they have their jobs. And to be honest, we as well. Next year we will have two first grades, but after that only one. The number of children is decreasing, so for years now on we will have only one first grade... if we won't be able to gather the Roma children... and we can't... (teacher at the Hungarian language class, III. Grade)

The enrolment of the majority of Roma children in Romanian language classes can save the jobs of the Romanian teachers, but it gives them another basic problem: that of the quality of education.

Yes, less parents enrol their children in the Hungarian classes, although there would be better for them. They could learn more easily, because the Romanian language classes are generally smaller, speaking about the Romanian children, and thus the Roma children represents the majority in these classes, and the poor teacher hardly can maintain the discipline among them, because they are not attentive. They have to do a hard work, because they have 9 Roma children and three or four Romanian children. And they have to practice separately with each of them, on different levels, because the Romanian parent maybe expects a higher level from his child... (Teacher at the Hungarian secondary school, VII. Grade)

Nursery school – as a pre-condition of a successful school integration

Every interviewed teacher underlined the importance for the Roma children to attend the nursery school. They consider that nursery school education is of highly importance for the children for at least three reasons:

1. they can learn the basic behavioural patterns and can socialize with other children;
2. during nursery school education are developed the basic skills for the learning process;
3. children learn how to concentrate on a single problem for an established period of time (discipline).



It counts enormously if they attend nursery school. They began to socialize with other children, this is very important, and anyway, they will have the basic vocabulary. Their vocabulary is very poor... thus for them school is very difficult. But graduating the nursery school is far easier. Because they already have a set of knowledge, you also have where to begin from. And at the nursery school is much more easier the learning process, you learn by playing, by imagines, so... you can see the difference (Romanian teacher, elementary school)

The number of Roma children who are enrolled in the state nursery school is not significant as compared to the number of children who should be enrolled. The educators receive the data on the 3-7 years old Roma children from the medical dispensary at the end of every school-year in order to prepare the educational program for the next year. According to the estimation of the director of nursery school, maximum 10% of the Roma children enrol every year. Parents – as in the case of the elementary school – prefer to enrol their children to the Romanian groups. Besides the low levels of enrolment, the attendance is another striking problem of the educators. During my last visit in the nursery school only two of the Roma children were attending the classes.

The educators gave two explanations:

1. the backward mentality of the parents and their hostile attitude toward nursery school;
2. the so called "Gypsy nursery school" in the Brazilia community/ and the Baptist day-center.

It would be great if first the parent could make a step forward. They would have a base for comparison, because now, that he goes or does not go to work, they once have something to eat, the other day they don't have anything, this not a solution. The one who has a stabile job or at least would look for it, would see the difference, that yes, I can apply for the job, I have 8 grades... they could have the opportunity to see what means not to have some education... (Director of the nursery school)

The "Gypsy nursery school"

The "Gypsy nursery school" is coordinated by the local Roma Foundation and it was totally funded by the "Împreună" Foundation from Bucharest.

The building of the nursery school is situated in Brazilia community in one of the 10 buildings which were constructed several years ago by the same Foundation.

Only Roma children from the Brazilia community were enrolled there, though it was envisaged for all the Roma children from Nușfalău. Nevertheless, the spatial position of the nursery school determined who attended it. It is far away from the other two Roma communities. We can also say that the spatial factors were not the only one which influenced the decision of the parents to enrol their children in this center. During our fieldwork we could observe a strong classificatory struggle between the different Roma communities. Those living in Bakos in relatively better financial situation identify themselves as the true, hard-working, clean Gypsies in contrast with those living in Brazilia who are dirty, lazy and thieves, thus parents from Bakos would not like that their children mix with those in Brazilia all day long.

There was one Romanian educator working in the nursery school. The program should have been daily of four hours, but there was no regularity in the program. Sometimes children received a couple of week vacation, or even more, depending on the finance of the Association or the spare time of the educator. Courses were held also irregular in the morning or in the afternoon, but there were initiatives on the behalf of the teachers and representatives of the Ministry of Education to move the program totally in the afternoon. This initiative came from the local teachers and the representatives of the state-funded nursery school, as it was considered that the overlapping of the program in the two institutions negatively affect the number of Roma children enrolled in the state nursery school.

The initiative of setting up a Roma nursery school was strongly welcomed on both sides. Teachers and also parents considered that by according special attention to the Roma children of Brazilia the parents as well could be educated in a way.

The conflict between the state and the Roma nursery school came from the program of the later. While it functioned in the morning parallel with the state institution, the problem was that they "steal" the children from the state institution, although the statistics on enrolment did not change significantly. After the visit of the representative of the school inspectorate from the county center, the program of the Gypsy nursery school was changed. The program was moved from the morning in the afternoon, and parents were asked to send their children to the central nursery school because there the enrolment

is compulsory. Those who wished had the possibility that after the official program send their children to the Gypsy nursery school. Unfortunately, these changes did not bring significant changes as parents from Brazilia choose to send their children only to the Gypsy nursery school.

The number of the children enrolled in the Gypsy nursery school was changing. The pedagogue on her way to the building of the nursery school had to pass through all the community, thus she could pass by those families who have young children. After the program she went home with every child one by one.

The truth is that they do everything there, from washing, eating, absolutely everything... from mother, father..., but it counts a lot... yes, I know her... She walks from family to family, she gets the children on their hand, takes them and wash them, put their clothes on them, and... but for them it counts a lot... (Elementary school teacher, Romanian section)

The program of the Gypsy nursery school was changed, but the conflict remained. The representatives of state education contested the effectiveness of this form of education and the professionalism of the pedagogue.

...it's not about that she doesn't care about them, or something... I have no idea what can she do there when she has children of different age... but the biggest problem is that they doesn't let their children to the state nursery school, they don't socialize with other children, and when the child come to school he comes from the wood. Because they get used only with their kind... And they aren't used with the program. The nursery school has also a kind of program; even it is shorter than in school... (Elementary school teacher, Hungarian section)

According to the law they are not allowed to do this, it should function only in the vacation period, and only with little children... no, no way, she has no specialization, she wouldn't have the right to work with them. (nursery school educator, Hungarian)

The Gypsy day-center for children was closed after a year, as the financial support from the "Împreună" Association was spent, and the program was not sustainable for further activities. The president of the Association of the Roma from Brazilia said that she did not received any kind (financial or moral) support from the authorities or from the other educational centers of the village. But she is convinced that this would have been one of the most efficient methods to prepare the Roma children to integrate into the mainstream educational system. She wonders why in Nușfalău was not possible to sustain such a programe, when in other localities the project was succesful and still working.

Extra-curricular activities. Involvement of the Roma children

The elementary and secondary school is well prepared to organize extra-curricular activities for pupils. Teachers organize clubs, theatre, dance events, sport events, painting exhibitions. The courtyard of the school is arranged, teachers together with the children are taking care of the vegetables and flowers, organize trips in the region.

Teachers try to involve most of the children – including the Roma children – in these activities, but these activities are not compulsory. It depends on the children's field of interest which activity or club does he/she participate.

Most of the Roma children participate at sport events – boys play football – and different theatre or musical events. In these activities the Roma children are very good, and like it very much.

We went to "colindat" and the Roma children also came, and we went also to their house... they invited us inside, and they were very glad. They like it. But not everybody. Those from Bakos mostly, because they were there... we received some money it is enough to organize a trip. And what remains... it depends... (Elementary school, Romanian teacher)

They put a great emphasis on the importance of including Roma children in different extra-curricular activities. These activities can work as a motivating factor in attending the regular courses.



They are integrated in the community, from the very beginning we had this policy... you can also present a poem, you can also sing a song, definitely we work with them, otherwise the strangers does not accept them, and we have to handle this problem. To socialize them. We have to appreciate what they are doing to convince them to come to school. To give them some importance. (professional school, Romanian teacher)

On the Children's Day, or in winter on Saint Nicholas, we used to buy some little things to our children, and on 8th of March is a very good feeling to receive from our Roma children some flowers. They always buy flowers for us. (...) For example, when we organize something, they also come... or in the Church, they come, and present a poem... no... (secondary school teacher, Hungarian section)

Relation with the parents.

The importance of involving parents in the educational process

On the school level, the parents are actively involved in the extra-curricular activities of the school. In specific cases, parents can decide together with the collectivity of the teachers in issues concerning the administration of the school. Parents elect representatives in the *Association of the Parents*. The Roma community does not have representative in this Association.

Heads of classes have to organize regular meetings with the parents. When the data of the meeting is established, the teacher writes a notice in the card of the pupil, and the parents have to sign it, showing that they know about the meeting and that they will participate.

The Roma parents used not to participate at these meetings. The head of the school recognized the importance of communication with the Roma parents, but had to find alternative ways to maintain contact with them. Teachers are asked to talk with the Roma parents if they meet them on the street, or at work. In special cases, when children miss two or three days of courses, teachers have to visit that family. It is a specific rule of the school that every day during the long break (20 minutes) teachers meet the head of the school in the teachers room to discuss the "problems of the day", including the problem of the missing children.

Our overall conclusion is that Roma parents do not participate in the formal structure of the school, but on informal level the contact is maintained continuously. This is not as difficult to realize due to the fact that – as presented in the previous chapters – the Roma are daily workers at the Hungarians or Romanians, they sell goods in the village, they are visible in the center of the village (here are the buildings of the schools). It is not rare at all that do the teachers visit the Roma family at home.

...because I am in very good relations with the parents, I don't want to brag, but I know every house, I know where every child lives. I went there to see where to start with them. To see what should be my expectancies. After that I know how to put the question, how to approach a child, what to ask from them, how to ask them, and... And I tell you, I have never imagined that it is possible. It is true that I consider them man. For me everybody is a human being. (elementary school teacher, Romanian section)

We can observe a difference again between the Roma of Bakos and Brazilia. Those living in Bakos are more aware that it is their 'duty' to contribute to the education of their children. They are paying the school taxes; they participate sometimes at the parents meeting. The teachers are also aware of these differences.

...on the street, because you meet the parents usually on the street, or they are looking for a job, and they ask: "Was my daughter today at school?" "Yes – I say – yes she was – but she left after the third class." "Ok, I'll go home, I give her then". And they were reprimanded. They really do that, because the day after I ask the girl what happened at home. And she ask me: "Did you told my parents?" Yes, I met them, and I told them, because if they send you to school they have to know where you are, if you leave, I don't know where you are, they don't know where you are... it is pretty dangerous because we are right on the national road. (secondary school teacher, Hungarian section, about Roma parents in Bakos)

No, then won't come... it's a pity, because for example this is a very clever child, but his parents are not interested, so we don't receive help on behalf of them. Their only problem is to receive the child aid. When it's due, they come and they apologize that they could not come earlier, they can't send the child to the school, because they don't have proper clothes, don't have I don't know what... then... (...) I think that we should start first with the parents. To socialize them. (elementary school teacher, Romanian section, about parents in Brazilia)

These differences seem to correlate with the level of poverty of the family. More the family falls deeper into poverty the more school and education becomes a secondary issue for them. Children from Nuşfalău are less represented in the high-school. The majority of the children graduate 8 grades, some of them take the final examinations, but they do not continue their studies.

For comparison, children from Nuşfalău hardly continue their studies in high school. It's not possible. As compared to the Roma children from Ipp. They are much socialized. Last year I had very good students who participated in a contest, they are very good, you can let your car reparation on their hand, they can do that. But they are more socialized, I think because the Gypsies in Ipp have jobs. In Nuşfalău the Gypsies does not have jobs, they are used to work as day workers, they participate in the black market, and they don't feel the need of continuing studies. (professional high school teacher, Romanian language school)

Interpersonal and interethnic relations in school

Discussions with Roma parents revealed that their children don't like to go to school because they are not accepted by other children, during breaks they play separately, they fight, and they don't have meals to prepare sandwiches like for the Hungarian children.

According to the interviews, these are those children whose families are in a deeper poverty, who don't send them to nursery school and to school, thus the children are under-socialized and because of the irregular attendance don't even have the chance to know each other.

Those children who attend more or less regularly are integrated better in the community of the pupils.

It happens that they are missing one day or two, but they have adapted to our conditions, they made friendships, they are accepted by the other children, it is true that I have one or two who are more shy, but anyway, they are accepted by the others. We don't make a difference that you are a Gypsy or not, they are clean, so...it is normal, like in a family. (...)The truth is that we have never had big problems...no, so they can integrate. If they want... Because the others accept them. It depends also on how to speak with them, this is the truth. We are at home here. We are a family. You are the brothers, I am the mother. This is our policy... And I am very glad that I see already the result. (elementary school teacher, Romanian section)

The parents are tolerant, so we don't have... in this respect we don't have problems. No. The children are less tolerant. They speak more, or do I know?... they don't fight, because I can't really tell that they fight, or that they are aggressive... no, it's just that they don't want to work, and even if they want, they can't... because if they don't attend how could they do anything?... But every children fight. Hungarian with the Hungarian, with the Romanian, with the Gypsy... But this is normal, they are children... No, when they play, they play together, there is such differentiation that you are Gypsy... no, no... (elementary school teacher, Hungarian section)

We didn't have any special problems. Before 89 we definitely had more problems. Small issues, yes, but nothing serious. No, no, in this school we really have a lot of nationalities: Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Gypsies... But nobody makes a difference. I think that if they are tidy, don't have that specific smell, then it doesn't appear that aversion towards them. And they are integrated in the collectivity... (professional school teacher, head of school)



The relation between Hungarian, Romanians and Gypsies in classes where the Roma represents the majority shows different characteristics. The Roma are always together in breaks and it rarely happens to mix with the Romanians.

Experiments of segregation and desegregation

At the beginning of the 90's, the board of directors of the school decided that it worth trying segregated education for the Roma children. They prepared a four-year program, but the overall conclusion at the end of the program was that it is not efficient from the point of view neither of the pupils nor for the teachers. They did not have any special curricula. The classes were held in Romanian or Hungarian language. Only one teacher was of Roma ethnicity, the others were Romanians or Hungarians without any specialization on teaching Roma children.

Even the Roma parents were suspicious about the organization of the school in this way. They tried to enrol their children in the Hungarian classes, because "they said that they do not like that Gypsy teacher. He is not like them anymore, plus in that classes are a lot of Gypsy, what can my children learn among the Gypsies? This is what they say..." (Secondary school teacher, Hungarian section)

The teachers had to accept the situation because if the parents declared themselves as Hungarians, they had the right to enrol the child in the Hungarian classes.

This is much better, desegregated, together with other children. They must not be separated, no, that would be discrimination. When they are people just like us, or the Romanians, or the Hungarians, and in this way we can teach them, on the contrary, segregated ...they teach themselves, this is my opinion. More than that, they could integrate more in the society if their community wouldn't have been separated from the rest of the village... It would have been more difficult for the neighbors, but it would be a help for the Gypsies. They should have a little goodwill, not just to stay at home, and this way... that they stay together, they become a catastrophe. (secondary school teacher, Hungarian section)

After this failed experiment, the director's board has decided to try another way to better the efficiency of teaching. Another four years the children were choose to continue their studies in the secondary school in accordance of their previous level. The children with better learning results were enrolled in one class, and the "weaker" pupils were enrolled in another class. According to the head of school it wasn't specified that one class is the 'elite' class, but in the imaginary of the parents and later in the pupils' this separation meant that some of the pupils are elites and the others are the worst. After a generation of pupils, the project was dropped because there were more conflicts than results.

There were quarrels among the children.

"In the first weeks, right at the beginning of the school year, there was a fight on the corridor of the school, and I've heard that one children from the 'elite' class said to the other that "you shut up, you are anyway among the stupid."

The parents also interiorized this differentiation.

I've organized a parents' meeting, and one of the parents came later than the others. I asked him from which class is he, and he said that "o, I don't know, I only know that I am from the best". And I said that look, here are only children's, there does not exist such as good children or stupid child, the program is the same. And if now do we have this experiment, please don't use these words that 'elite' and "stupid", and you will see at the end of the year that there will be good results on both sides.(...) everybody was very frustrated, beginning with the children, the parents, and ending with the teachers themselves. (secondary school teacher, Hungarian section)

The conclusion was that in a normal rural school there is no need to separate classes in elite and non-elite classes, especially because the number of children is to low to be possible a selection of really more talented pupils.

Definition of the problem. The view of the teachers

The everyday experiences of the teachers with the Roma children in school and with the parents in their everyday interactions define the way they approach the problem of education of the Roma children. They had failed experiences of segregation before 1989 and after and also they have positive examples of successful integration in the community. These few examples (eg. a Roma ethnicity teacher in the school, but he does not declare himself as Roma) serves as starting point in their expectations towards the children and parents. The structure of thinking and action is given, and it is very difficult to put the problem in another structure. It was clear that the present way of teaching in classes where the Roma pupils are in majority is extremely difficult because the teacher has to take into consideration different levels of previous knowledge of the pupils. In this context is very difficult to maintain an acceptable level of the teaching process.

The models are given, the differences between Roma children and the others are clear, thus the desirable explanations and solutions are also given.

Teachers whom we talked to identified the following issues:

1. Cultural differences. The socialization of the Roma children is completely different from those of the Hungarians or Romanians. This difference becomes clear in 6th or 7th grade. This is the period when most of the Roma children drop-out from school. The boys start to work for helping their family. The girls get married and will focus upon setting up their own family, although the Law allows married persons to continue studies.

These were children of 13, 14, 15 years, and it is extremely difficult to work with these children. They don't think on schooling anymore... they think only on extra... extra-school activities. In fact they... The girls are already mature. They already build their own family. This is it. (elementary school teacher, Romanian section)

2. Poverty. The cost of education is relatively high especially for those who are living in extreme poverty. They can not afford to buy even the daily necessities for the family.

There are many poor families... they don't have even – how to say – to put on the table during the day. I have a child, he is very weak, thin, they have a cottage, and God help them, not to fall on the family. I can't ask from them anything. When the child comes to school, I give him what I brought with me from home, I give him, he needs it... and I am glad that sometimes he is coming... (Elementary school teacher, Romanian section)

3. Passive mentality. As we will see later, the fact that neither the educational system nor the teachers found those dimensions of schooling which would motivate Roma children to attend courses regularly, led to that commonly accepted image of the Roma of Brazilia that they live passively their life.

(...) they don't attend regularly. It is useless to come one or two days and after that he/she is missing a month... because that's nothing. And the worst thing is that they don't want. And I am angry with them because of that. They simply don't want to break that situation in which they are. Although they could do that, now they really could do that. Because they receive social aids, they receive anything, still they don't want... I don't know... (...) and they are satisfied, children learn this way of life, so... they see this... (elementary school teacher, Hungarian section)

4. Historical determination. It is also commonly accepted in the village that a century old tradition cannot be changed in a short time. The Roma of Nuşfalău (Brazilia) are historically daily workers in the village, or they were and are temporary migrants. The period of socialism had changed in better their situation, but during the period of transition they find themselves again in the position where they were to be found at the beginning of the century. The situation even worsened as they lost their traditional skills of brick-making.



They have begun. (...) I think that the society is responsible for this, because if there were to be found jobs for them, to work, and to get used with the program of a regular job, he automatically would educate his children that way, but as in Nuşfalău it is a strong tradition to use Gypsies in sporadic work, when there is something to do... this affect children, too. But... I see some positive change, yes..." (Professional school teacher, Romanian section)

Achievements and its impediments

In the previous chapters we briefly presented some aspects of the Roma children's education in Nuşfalău. In all four educational institutions (nursery school, elementary school, secondary school, and professional school) the Roma children are integrated into the mainstream educational system. Formally speaking, the education in Nuşfalău is a mixed one irrespective of ethnicity, gender, religion, social status (after a few failed initiatives to separate classes on different variables). If we take a closer look though of this integrated form of the education, the picture would become more nuanced and definitely not a positive one.

Most of the Roma children do not attend nursery school courses. Those who are enrolled to the state-based nursery school are definitely better evaluated by the elementary- and secondary school teachers. The ones who are enrolled in the so-called "Gypsy nursery school" have no regular program. The educational program of the "Gypsy nursery school" is different than in the state nursery school, but it is declared as satisfactory to begin the elementary school. The Roma children are enrolled mostly in the Romanian classes. The ones enrolled in Hungarian classes are again better evaluated than their colleagues in the Romanian section. In both cases, the Roma pupils don't learn in their native language. We have to mention that Roma in Nuşfalău speaks Romani in their family and in informal situation, but in formal situations and when contacting their "landlords" they use mostly Hungarian. Thus – even if they are considered to have excellent language-skills – they begin their school-life with a considerable disadvantage: to communicate and to learn in a foreign language.

And then you have Gypsy children who attend classes rarely, and who hardly can differentiate the graphic forms of the letters... or you have children who don't know anything, but anything, those who speak only Romani. And I have to use translator to communicate with them, because there are a few among the others, who are twicers who has learned already some Romanian, and they help me and translate... And it is very difficult, to understand them, to learn some words in Romani... But they learn the language very quickly, if they would attend regularly, they could learn very fast... (elementary school teacher, Romanian teacher)

The most striking problem in Nuşfalău of the education of Roma children is the attendance. According to the approximation of the head of the school, only 30% of the Roma children attend regularly the courses, the majority more or less frequent, but there are some who are only enrolled in school officially, but they don't attend the courses.

Those who attend regularly the courses have a secure family and economical background. Some of them don't even want to identify themselves as Roma. They and their family declare themselves as Hungarians, only by the hetero-identification of the teachers are considered Roma. Those who attend more or less regularly have different vindications: illness, have to help the parents at work, they didn't have money, they have to take care of their younger brothers/sisters or the older members of the family, or simply they got married or build their own families. Some of them also participate in the temporary migration of their family. Most of these families live in Brazilia, their houses have only one room in which live three or even four generations (the extended family), the parents are unemployed, the only regular income is the child allowance and in special cases the elder's retired pays.

Among these children come those who could not fulfill the requirements of the curricula, the twicers. Teachers unanimously declared that is for the best of the Roma child to attend at least once the grades (especially in the elementary school), thus they have the chance to recover what they have lost due to their irregular attendance. The problem of non-graduation is again more complex than it would seem at first sight.

The dilemma of the teachers is two-folded:

1. if they let the pupil to fail whenever it is necessary, the chances of drop-out increases before the graduation of the 8th grade. Moreover, and this is a very present problem of the Romanian classes, if the number of the pupils is lower than the legally prescribed, the classes could be dissolved and the teachers would lose their jobs.

2. if they let the pupil to graduate even if his level of knowledge is lower than his Hungarian or Romanian colleagues', the discrepancies between them would increase from year to year.

If they attend just sometimes, I can't do anything with them... I can say them to sit down, and write, ...but, because those who failed once or twice, I have a child who already have failed twice, and he is still in the third grade... but he can write, ha \ can already copy the text from the blackboard, from the textbook, he can count, but the one who does not attend from the beginning of the first grade... and is allowed to graduate... because this is the true... there are fewer pupils as necessary... we have to let them to graduate. If I let him to fail, I will remain without my class. These are the constraints. It might happen that I would let him to fail, because I would have all the rights to do that. Because he doesn't learn enough to pass the grades. But we will lose the classes... this is the problem. (elementary school teacher, Hungarian section)

The level of knowledge and the efficiency of education is the direct consequence of the above mentioned factors.

On the level of the intellect we still have some problems. I still teach them the alphabet. We are already approaching the end of it. I think that they can already read some simple texts, with difficulties, but they can. The can already count and to compute. We have already reached the hundreds. The conversation is more difficult for them... but we understand each other without problems... (elementary school teacher, Romanian section, II. Grade¹⁶)

I simply don't have enough time at disposal to give attention to every child separately. It rarely happens that a Roma child will learn to read and write till the end of the first year. Normally I should give attention to every child in part, but effectively, I don't have enough time. And if I am not able to teach them these basic things, after a year, in the second grade it will be too late... (elementary school teacher, Hungarian section, III. Grade)

Most of the Roma pupils stop attending school after the 8th grade at the age of 14 (if he/she was not a twicer). Only a few of them pass the capacity exam. Those who pass the exam usually want to continue their studies in the professional school in Nuşfalău (one or two per year) or in the nearby city's professional school (one or two per year, those who are coming from a well-situated family).

Pull factors

Why should the Roma children attend school? In the view of the teachers:

- because they (the Roma) receive anything;
- they receive the school supplies, they don't have to pay it;
- some of them receive warm meals twice a day (from the Neo-Baptist Church);
- they receive money (the child allowance);
- they receive clothes, different social aids;
- they are also part of the "milk and bread" Governmental program;
- because if they enrol in the Hungarian classes, they could receive a stipend from the Hungarian Government.

And why don't attend, then? The wide-spread opinion is simply that they are not interested in education. Not the children are blamed for this irresponsible attitude towards education, but the parents. The parents – at their turn – did not graduate school.

16 We have to mention that this should be the curricula of the first grade, and that most of the Roma children were attending more or less nursery school.



The Roma of Nuşfalău used to be Reformed, but in the last decade they started to change their religious allegiance. A great number of the Roma from Brazilia chose the Neo-Protestant Church. This Church – like the Reformed Church as well – have social programs for its members in need. One of the programs is to provide twice a day warm meal for young pupils who attend the courses. Moreover there were hired two Roma women who graduated high school to offer help for the children to learn and to make their homework (if they receive any). These children are enrolled in the Romanian classes.

Programs of the Hungarian Government provide small financial help for every pupil who is enrolled in the Hungarian educational structure from grade 1 to grade 12. Previous to this academic year (2004/2005) one of the conditions of eligibility was to have the “Hungarian identity card”. Even some of the Roma applied for this card. From this year though this not anymore a condition to receive this 20 000 Hungarian Forints the Roma showed no interest in applying for that. One of the hidden rationales of promoting this program among the Roma was to grow the number of Roma students enrolled in the Hungarian classes.

The Romanian Government provides by Law school supplies for every enrolled child. The package contains textbooks, note books, exercise books, pens, pencils, drawing books, maps and so on. The only condition is that the family has to prove with documents that the total income of the family is lower than the third part of the national average salary. Theoretically, almost every family falls into this category, but practically they are not eligible to apply for the school supplies, because they don’t have any documents to prove the level of the income. Few of them can prove that he/she receives the unemployment aid. The teachers tried to find a middle-way to overcome this situation, and in case a Hungarian or Romanian family doesn’t need the supplies offered by the Ministry of Education, it will be redistributed among the Roma pupils. In this case, teachers have to face another problem. If they give all supplies to the children, it might happen that even that very day the parents will walk through the village, from house to house, and sell it.

If I give them all, they immediately sell it in the village. Thus, I don’t give them all. I give them only five note books with lines, five note books for maths, to take home. And the remaining amount of supplies will be locked here in the school. If they don’t use it during this year, it is better, we will have for the next year as well... and usually they don’t need all... because if I don’t give them, they won’t break the pages, and they won’t light the fire, and they won’t sell it. (...) They sell absolutely everything, but absolutely everything. (elementary school teacher, Hungarian section)

The children’s allowance is 24 RON (approx. 8 USD) per month.¹⁷ Every child receives a check book at the beginning of the school-year. The allowance represented one the “forcing” factors for Roma children to attend courses, as to be able to receive the money one should have the signature of the head of the school or the teacher on the check. If a pupil had more then 40 missing classes in a month, they lose their allowance. Roma children used to attend courses mostly on the week of the payments.

If I put them as missing every day, I should invalidate the current page of the check. If the child has more than 40 missing hours that month. But if I take that check from them, what will they do without that money? (...) And these check-books, again, are always can to be found in the shops, they pay with the files. It’s not a problem that they pay with that file, the problem is that they usually buy more than that 240.000 lei. And they are in loss again. (elementary school teacher, Hungarian section)

The “milk and bread” program of the Ministry of Education does not represent again a motivating factor for Roma children to attend school.

17 The Government ratified the new Ordinance according to which beginning with October 2007 this allowance is raised to 32 RON (320.000 ROL).

The professional school in Nuşfalău is in the luckiest situation, as they have the possibility to offer 180 RON (approx. 55\$) social scholarship per month. This is a social aid of the Government and most of the Roma pupils from the professional school benefit from it, those who are not resident in the locality and can prove that the income of their family is lower than the one third of the national average salary. There is another kind of social aid – not only for the Roma pupils: the eligibility criterion is also a social one. By Law every pupil should receive an amount of money whose family's income is lower than the sum defined by the Law, but this does not represent a big help for the children and their family, because in under-developed regions the number of children coming from poor families is much more bigger than in other schools (in Cluj county for example) and the amount of aid given to a school is a fixed one. This sum must be distributed among those in needs. Thus, poorer the school, less is the amount of the social aid.

Conclusions

■ In our article we tried first to draw a picture of the situation of the Roma in the village, particularly how can their social situation be characterized, what are those problems they have to confront in their everyday lives, what is the relationship between the Roma and the other ethnic groups in the village, are there any possibilities to overcome the social and economic distances that separates them from the Gadjo.

The research findings showed that the Roma of Nuşfalău are very poor, they are spatially segregated from the majority inhabitants of the village. This spatial segregation is also reflected in the social and economical relations between the Roma and Gadjo.

The interactions of Roma with Gadjo can be best described in economic terms, even in cases in which the type of interaction would imply friendship or deep trust. Consequently, the institution of godfatherness became a strategy of Roma to transcend the ethnic boundaries imposed by the Gadjo for sheer economic purposes.

Regarding economic relations, we can say that it is one of double-fold cooperation. On the one hand, Gadjo feel to be forced to accept the presence of the Roma in the locality for functional reasons. On the other hand, they need the presence of Roma. For the Roma population, coexistence and interaction with the Gadjo population is crucial in terms of survival.

Although the services offered to the Gadjo by the Roma represent a necessity for the Gadjo, their activities are considered unimportant. Moreover, the Gadjo sanction the Roma for doing these activities. This materializes in the continuous reproduction of stereotypes and the maintaining of social distance on a constant level.

Although on a cognitive level the representation of different Roma groups may differ from each other, this is not present in the daily interaction between Roma and Gadjo. The proximity may constitute a possibility to de-construct the stereotypes circulating about the Roma, but these relations are not strong enough. Besides which, since needy Gadjo practicing the Roma's same marginalized activities live close-by to Roma, they risk being considered inferior to the rest of the population. In view of all these aspect, we can conclude that the Roma are integrated in the village's economic structures and social structures as well, but this means making different ways of life compatible, and the complementarities of economic actions; therefore, this integration is a functional one. Its rules and norms are defined by the Gadjo, at best after a negotiation process.

The direct contacts with a Roma person reduce the social distance in a way: "our Gypsy is more decent than other Gypsies". Thus, tolerance is just an instrument, and not an interiorized moral norm, by which the control of the local resources can be achieved.

The above presented aspects are also reflected when we speak about education in Nuşfalău. The Roma children's educational process is an integrative one. The Roma children are supposed to attend school as every other child in Nuşfalău. While the Romanians are granted with Romanian language section in the school, as well as the Hungarians on their turn have the possibility to learn in Hungarian classes, the Roma – we could ironically say – have the possibility to choose between Romanian or Hungarian language classes, although their mother tongue is Romani. There are no teachers who are



specialized in minority teaching; the curriculum is not specialized as well. (A teacher said that they could not even use the Romani language mathbooks for at least two reasons: the Roma of Nuşfalău does not know the standardized Romani language; the Romani textbooks follow the logic of the Romanian textbooks, which is strange for the Roma. It was reported that Roma children count differently than they are taught according to the national curricula.)

We could easily recognize a strong agreement among the teachers that the segregated form of education is not efficient at all. Less strong – but still significant – was the agreement of the parents – Roma and Hungarians – that is for the best of the Roma child and the community itself if the children are taught together with the Hungarians and Romanians. We could not identify signs of intolerance or segregationist tendencies when speaking with parents, moreover they strongly support the integration of the Roma children in the majority school. The discourses of the Hungarians and Romanians are still based on negative stereotypes: it is a widespread opinion that the Roma has to be civilized, first of all the Roma parents, because those who has already succeeded to get out from their poverty and dust cannot be called as “Gypsies” anymore.

One of the most striking problems that the teachers have to fight is the high missing- and drop-out rate of the Roma children, moreover the low learning results.

Although, the majority of the teachers mentioned the cultural differences between Roma and other ethnic groups, they did not mention that maybe it would be a possibility to change the curricula for the Roma children in accordance with their cultural traits or to introduce facultative courses of Romania language for example. The emphasized cultural differences were used as explanatory factors for the poverty gap existing between different communities.

Although the educational policy and strategies for the Roma are well defined and granted by national and international law, there is a long and hard way towards their effective implementation. It became clear after our fieldwork that the most important difficulty is not necessarily the lack of financial resources for organizing an efficient educational system for the Roma.

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Abstract

■ The present article aims at presenting shortly the results and preliminary conclusions of a research undertaken in an ethnically mixed locality in the North-Western region of Romania. The research questions were focused mainly on interethnic relations and on socio-economic topics. The economic activities of the Roma represent the extension of the principal activities of the majority. To see what exactly the activities of the Roma are, we will focus on the relation between Roma and other ethnic groups. We will try to understand what the main characteristics of these relationships are and what the rules of these relationships are, if there are any. Afterwards, we will try to describe and to analyse two of survival strategies of the Roma. At first sight the presence of the institution of godfathership among the Roma and Gadjo seemed to be just an "innate" characteristics of the historically peaceful multiethnic community, but later this proved to be just the surface. The second strategy, called "*the List*", is also a constitutive element of the survival strategies of the Roma, although in this case not the Roma are the initiators of it. Finally, we will focus our attention on the problem of trust which is the connecting element of all informal strategies and through which we will be able to understand better the characteristics of the relation between Roma and non-Roma. The question of education is a crucial one, as the low presence of the Roma population on the formal job-market is partly due to their low educational level. The last chapters discuss the problem of school-attending of the Roma children in the studied community.

DESPRE INSTITUTUL PENTRU STUDIAREA PROBLEMELOR MINORITĂȚILOR NAȚIONALE

ABOUT THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON NATIONAL MINORITIES

A NEMZETI KISEBBSÉKGUTATÓ INTÉZETRŐL

INSTITUTUL PENTRU STUDIAREA PROBLEMELOR MINORITĂȚILOR NAȚIONALE (ISPMN) funcționează ca instituție publică și ca personalitate juridică în subordinea Guvernului și în coordonarea Departamentului pentru Relații Interetnice. Sediul Institutului este în municipiul Cluj-Napoca.

■ Scop și activități de bază

studierea și cercetarea inter- și pluridisciplinară a păstrării, dezvoltării și exprimării identității etnice, studiarea aspectelor sociologice, istorice, culturale, lingvistice, religioase sau de altă natură ale minorităților naționale și ale altor comunități etnice din România.

■ Direcții principale de cercetare

Schimbare de abordare în România, în domeniul politicilor față de minoritățile naționale: analiza politico instituțională a istoriei recente;
Dinamica etno-demografică a minorităților din România;
Revitalizare etnică sau asimilare? Identități în tranziție, analiza transformărilor identitare la minoritățile etnice din România;
Analiza rolului jucat de etnicitate în dinamica stratificării sociale din România;
Patrimoniul cultural instituțional a minorităților din România;
Patternuri ale segregării etnice;
Bilingvismul: modalități de producere, atitudini și politici publice;
Noi imigranți în România: modele de incorporare și integrare;

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■ Aim

The inter- and multidisciplinary study and research of the preservation, development and expression of ethnic identity, as well as social, historic, cultural, linguistic, religious or other aspects of national minorities and of other ethnic communities in Romania.

■ Major research areas

Changing policies regarding national minorities in Romania: political and institutional analyses of recent history;
Ethno-demographic dynamics of minorities in Romania;
Identities in transition – ethnic enlivening or assimilation? (analysis of transformations in the identity of national minorities from Romania);
Analysis of the role of ethnicity in the social stratification dynamics in Romania;
The institutional cultural heritage of minorities in Romania;
Ethnic segregation patterns;
Bilingualism: ways of generating bilingualism, public attitudes and policies;
Recent immigrants to Romania: patterns of social and economic integration.



A kolozsvári székhelyű, jogi személyként működő NEMZETI KISEBBSÉGKUTATÓ INTÉZET (NKI) a Román Kormány hatáskörébe tartozó közintézmény.

■ **Célok**

A romániai nemzeti kisebbségek és más etnikai közösségek etnikai identitásmegőrzésének, -változásainak, -kifejeződésének, valamint ezek szociológiai, történelmi, kulturális, nyelvészeti, vallásos és más jellegű aspektusainak kutatása, tanulmányozása.

■ **Főbb kutatási irányvonalak**

A romániai kisebbségpolitikában történő változások elemzése: jelenkortörténetre vonatkozó intézménypolitikai elemzések;

A romániai kisebbségek népességdemográfiai jellemzői;

Átmeneti identitások – etnikai revitalizálás vagy asszimiláció? (a romániai kisebbségek identitásában végbemenő változások elemzése);

Az etnicitás szerepe a társadalmi rétegződésben;

A romániai nemzeti kisebbségek kulturális öröksége;

Az etnikai szegregáció modelljei;

A kétnyelvűség módozatai, az ehhez kapcsolódó attitűdök és közpolitikák;

Új bevándorlók Romániában: társadalmi és gazdasági beilleszkedési modellek.

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