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# Diaspora and Nationalism: an Anthropological Approach to the International Romani Movement<sup>\*</sup>

## 1. Introduction

Dispersed communities all over the world lumped together by mainstream societies under the label ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Tzigan’ (Cigány), which often called Rom/Roma by themselves, were rarely characterized by insiders or outsiders as a nation. Indeed the diversity of these populations prevents their inclusion into any traditional taxonomy of nations. Common territory, language, history and religion are elements of a definition that could not be forced on Roma communities without excluding large parts of them. A segment of the Roma elite, however, still plans the unification of their people following the model of the nation. For elite leaders the *nation*, as social formation, seems a viable solution on the one hand to fight against stigmatization and marginalization of their people and on the other hand a way to handle social and cultural problems they face. Beyond the self-perceived interest of the Roma states where Roma live, they also expect solutions to domestic problems by considering Roma as *national minorities*. At the supra-state level, international bodies, Roma and non-Roma NGOs, are looking forward to solutions to problems of human rights, refugees and migration within the classification of national minorities.

In addition to the endorsement of *nationalism* and *national minorities*, alternative political projects are promoted by a variety of Roma and non-Roma actors. Proposals like *pan-European minority* or *transnationalism* imagine the fu-

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\* The first version of this study was written as part of my MA thesis at the Nationalism Studies Program, Central European University during 1999–2000. I owe thanks to my supervisor Michael Stewart for help and encouragement.

ture of the Roma without the implication of nation-building elements. These political enterprises are more sensible to the resources offered by supranational structures and to the process of European integration, although proponents of more traditional projects often contest them.

In this study I would like to present a sketch of international Roma politics, concentrating on recent developments and suggest an anthropological interpretation of the emergence and maintenance of the social formation called "Romani movement". The example of the Romani movement can offer some theoretical and methodological conclusions that could contribute to better understanding of relations between diaspora and nationalism and could direct the attention of analysts to the role of the institutions at the supra-state level in building and maintaining collective identities.

Although there has been increased attention on Roma related issues in the recent years by social scientists, few studies have been conducted on the international, political tendencies among Romanians. If I could build up a linear account of Roma politics, I would say that in less than 50 years time, the Romani movement passed through a variety of experimental, political projects which took centuries for other political movements all over the world. But the eclecticism of the Roma movement resists any attempt to capture it into such a linear narrative. Different models for political action are often present at the same time in various places, with actors taking and implementing various elements in their strategies from divergent political projects. Nevertheless, I hope to show that there is a tendency towards a more clearly delineated system of political principles and practices responding to the realities of the globalizing world.

I would like to clarify the terms used to speak about this group of people. 'Gypsy' is a term used by outsiders, gathering under the same label all Romanians, and is often considered by insiders as offensive, much like the term Tzigan. I will use both, although I use the term 'Gypsy' to refer to outsiders' representation of various groups. To include all groups with a single name, I use the label Romanians, as they prefer to call themselves.

As a means of introduction, I would like to note that I am aware of my position as a Gadjó (non-Roma) but I do not see it as a handicap in this enterprise. In many aspects I am sympathetic with the goals of international Roma politics and I believe this movement has the strength to accept critiques and a variety of differing opinions.

To outline the structure of this study: first I will present my theoretical presuppositions and methodological framework introducing the key con-

cepts. Next, a historical overview of the second half of the twentieth century, followed by various orientations of the movement with emphasis on the developments I consider most important for interpretation of Romani politics. A concluding section closes the study.

## 2. *Theoretical considerations*

First, I would like to outline my basic theoretical presuppositions with their methodological implications, and to propose preliminary definitions for the basic concepts that will be instrumental during the analysis. The search for an adequate theoretical context for the Romani movement is difficult due to the diversity and diffuse nature of the phenomena included under the heading of Romani politics. I found few studies that have attempted to analyze the topic, and most are focused on particular areas, therefore, leaving little to base generalizations and the elaboration of a more comprehensive framework upon. Both promoters and critics of the movement have dubbed it 'nationalism', yet the adaptation of classical theories of nationalism have seemed unfit, primarily, but not exclusively because of the lack of state or territorial claims.

As an initial term of reference I chose the *international nature* of the movement. By this internationalism I mean that the Romani movement not only extended internationally as early as the 1970s but also, I would argue, that it should be viewed and understood as an international phenomena, not as something particular to one state or a single group. The different groups are indeed embedded in the realities of the countries they live in, but the institutions and actors involved are spread worldwide and their projects often transgress state borders or continents. In order to follow the phenomena both in local, social and political contexts and on the international scene the theoretical frame and the methodological procedures should encompass sub-national, national and supra-national levels.

### 2.1. *Multi-sited ethnography*

My previous studies drove me in the direction of an ethnographically informed understanding of social life. Anthropological theorization has recently turned more towards the study of groups in the context of world history or world system. Following the general, social scientific project of Wallerstein on world-systems Eric Wolf's work<sup>1</sup> provided an explicitly

<sup>1</sup> Wolf, Eric: *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.

anthropological version of a world system analysis. In a seminal essay,<sup>2</sup> George Marcus was arguing for a kind of social research practice, which he calls *multi-sited ethnography*. In the most succinct form the definition of this methodology is an emerging ethnography of the world system. If compared with the concept of ethnography in the world system, the ethnography of the world system or multi-sited ethnography displays several distinctive characteristics. Following his distinctions I will summarize some of these characteristics in order to outline the essence of multi-sited ethnography in comparison to the ethnography in the world system.

The ethnography in the world system usually continues the tradition of classical, anthropological fieldwork focused intensively on a single place. Ethnographic data is then supplemented by other methods such as archival research and adaptation of the work of macrotheorists in order to develop a world system context. In this way the single, on-site observation is interpreted in the framework of a general context. Authors following this model of ethnography built up a valuable part of the anthropological literature. The most adequate terrain for this kind of analysis can be found in colonial and more recent incorporation of peoples into the economic and political macroprocesses.

“This mode has shown that the heart of contemporary ethnographic analysis is not in the reclamation of some previous cultural state or subtle preservation despite changes, but rather in the new cultural forms to which changes in colonial subaltern situations have given rise.”<sup>3</sup>

An important distinction for the *ethnography in the world system* is the opposition between *subaltern* and *hegemonic* culture. While hegemonic culture is the expression of the dominant social forces, such as colonial powers or world market, the subaltern culture is the ‘voice under domination’, the multiple ways of responses to the process of incorporation from ‘below’. Encounters between these two forces produce encapsulation, resistance, cultural mixture and finally (in the postcolonial discourse) contesting the hegemonic order. In this perspective the emergence of postcolonial discourse is in itself a sign of declining hegemony.

Another opposition in this paradigm is the distinction between the *system* and *lifeworld*. The study of the ‘system’ belongs to social sciences engaged in an explanation of economic and political processes with global impact, or

<sup>2</sup> Marcus, George E.: *Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography*. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 24, 1995. 95–117.

<sup>3</sup> Marcus, 96.

at least building up models with purposed explanatory power on the macro level. The ethnographer focuses on the human dimensions of these processes using methods of participation and close observation of everyday life. His observations are informed by knowledge about the 'system', but his terrain is more the practice of the everyday life and the 'lifeworld' of the actors.

These distinctions in the *ethnography of the world system*, or multi-sited ethnography, are challenged or at least brought under scrutiny. Instead of utilizing them as instruments of analysis or frame for interpretation, they become the objects, of study and the practice of their construction, part of the ethnographical investigation.

"For ethnography this means that the world system is not the theoretically constituted holistic frame which gives context to the contemporary study of peoples or local subjects closely observed by ethnographers, but it becomes, in a piecemeal way, integral to and embedded in discontinuous, multi-sited objects of study."<sup>4</sup>

This investigation implies new types of involvement and observation for the ethnographer too. Multi-sited ethnography is not a comparative analysis of different, on-site, ethnographic studies but the ethnography of the relationships between these sites. This relationship should not be studied from a 'bird's eye view' perspective, but from the point of view of the actors located on the different research sites. Therefore, the ethnographer is not a faraway observer who tries to verify his hypotheses with the 'gathered data', but he, himself is constructing the object of study following the relationships, interactions and exchanges of the actors.

Among the different modes of construction of research Marcus lists<sup>5</sup> a series of strategies for research design; following the people, following the thing, following the metaphor, the conflict and other dynamic objects of study. Some of these are not entirely unused in previous ethnographies, but in the multi-sited ethnography they form the base of the construction for the object of the study.

## 2.2. *Globalization and Diaspora*

From a methodological perspective, as I mentioned above the study of connections between sites develops the vision of the international dimensions of the Roma movement. This procedure requires a reconsideration of

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<sup>4</sup> Marcus, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Marcus, 105–110.

the traditional, local-global opposition. From the perspective that starts the investigation from the locally embedded pillars, the endings of the global connections of the global dissolved into the different perspectives of the globalized actors and is then reconstructed as Marcus puts: “[t]he global is an emergent dimension of arguing about the connection among sites in a multi-sited ethnography.”<sup>6</sup>

This approach to global phenomena produces a rather particular perception of globalization and its economical, political and human consequences. Interaction becomes the core of analysis, and consequently the importance of interconnectedness and agency increases. Although this perspective is refreshing and crucial in its methodological implications I would like to supplement the analysis in two respects. The *historical dimension* of the connections and the *economical processes* in the background of previous and present stages could enhance the sensitivity of my interpretation.

The works<sup>7</sup> of another anthropologist, Jonathan Friedman are concerned with the problems of the recent decline in global hegemony, which according to his interpretation, can be identified in two major processes: the contraction of hegemonic centers and the rise of new geographical areas accompanied by political fragmentation, and increasing economic competition.<sup>8</sup> Friedman includes these processes in a complex global process model of hegemonic expansion and contradiction developed in his earlier book.<sup>9</sup> For the purpose of this study I use only a few elements of his model without challenging his economically based interpretation. I would also like to avoid identifying the problems dealt with here as automatic outcomes of the macroprocesses he discusses. Moreover, some of my findings could serve as basis for refining his suggestions.

In fact his interpretation of the cultural impact of the globalization is rather similar to that implied by Marcus. An additional element that Fried-

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<sup>6</sup> Marcus, 99.

<sup>7</sup> Friedman, Jonathan: Transnationalization, Socio-political Disorder, and Ethnification as Expressions of Declining Global Hegemony. *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1998. 233–250; Friedman, Jonathan: Indigenous Struggles and the Discret Charm of the Burgeosie. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, Vol 5, No. 2, 1999. 391–411. <http://csf.colorado.edu/jwsr>

<sup>8</sup> Friedman, Transnationalization ..., 234.

<sup>9</sup> I will not present, in detail, his model worked out in Friedman, Jonathan: *Cultural Identity and Global Process*. London: Sage, 1994; for a summary see Friedman, Transnationalization ...

man emphasizes is the problem of cosmopolitanism, more precisely its elite-bound nature.

“Globalization is, in fact a process of local transformation, the packing in of global events, products and frameworks into the local. It is not about de-localizing the local but about changing its content, not least in identity terms. A cosmopolitan is not primarily one who constantly travels the world, but one who identifies with it in opposition to his own locality. (...) The true cosmopolitans are as always, members of a privileged elite, and they are not so in objectively cultural terms, if such terms make any sense, but in terms of their practices of identity.”<sup>10</sup>

Elsewhere he develops his critique addressed to the discourse of cultural hybridity in length.<sup>11</sup> I do not want to enter this debate, but to introduce the concept of *diaspora*, and connect it with the problem of cosmopolitanism. Following the suggestion of James Clifford as regards diasporas I will investigate whether the emerging Roma movement could recover something regarding a particular case of ‘non-Western model of cosmopolitan life’.<sup>12</sup>

Defining diaspora is not an easy task; Clifford dedicates a good part of his study to definitional efforts. I shall review some possible opposition against which diasporas could be defined. According to Clifford “[d]iasporas are caught up and defined against (1) the norms of nation states and (2) indigenous and especially autochthonous claims of “tribal” peoples”.<sup>13</sup> Another distinction which describes the process of diaspora identity formation is from ‘outside’ negatively, by the discrimination of the social environment and from ‘inside’ by the positive identification with world-historical forces, such as ‘Africa’ or ‘China’<sup>14</sup> or religions like the ‘Judaism’ or ‘Islam’.

Diasporas are usually related to the (im)migration process but in this perspective it is more important that the immigrant communities do not choose to assimilate but rather define themselves in contrast to the nations or ethnic groups they live with. Moreover, in some cases even the assimilated mem-

<sup>10</sup> Friedman, *Indigenous Struggles ...*, 397.

<sup>11</sup> Friedman, Jonathan: *Global Crisis, the Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarrelling: Cosmopolitans versus Locals, Ethnic and Nationals in an Era of De-Hegemonization*. In Werbner, Prina & Modood Tariq (eds.): *Debating Cultural Hybridity. Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*. London: Zed Books, 1997. 70–89.

<sup>12</sup> Clifford, James: *Diasporas*. In *Routes. Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997. 277.

<sup>13</sup> Clifford, 250.

<sup>14</sup> Clifford, 256.

bers of the diaspora may dissimilate as an effect of the ethnification of the diaspora; even established national minorities may choose to foster international or transnational connections instead of reinforcing the loyalty to the nation state where they live. In this respect, diasporization is more dependent on the decline of national hegemonies than on the process of migration.

In spite of its evident subaltern or counter-hegemonic nature the ideologies promoted by diaspora populations inside national hegemonies are not free of ethnicist or even nationalist orientation, though I accept Clifford's note that the distinction is necessary between "nationalist critical longing, and nostalgic or eschatological visions, from actual nation building – with the help of armies, schools, police, and mass media".<sup>15</sup> In order to make this distinction, the identification of political and economical forces and the social embeddedness of these ideologies are indispensable. While James Clifford speaks of the need for "awareness of the constant pressures of transnational capital and national hegemonies"<sup>16</sup> Jonathan Friedman formulates his opinion in more deterministic terms:

"The question of the diasporization process is simply the ethnification of transnational connections, so that communication, social relations, and economics become organized across boundaries rather than immigrant groups becoming transformed into separate minorities. Diasporization is simply the ethnification of the immigration process. It is unlike other processes of fragmentation because it structures itself in global terms, being both subnational and transnational."<sup>17</sup>

Friedman sees in the emergence and consolidation of diaspora identities the sign of declining global hegemony and includes it into his typology of cultural politics and political fragmentation.<sup>18</sup> I take his powerful model as the source of useful distinctions, but I do not see my analysis as an application of his theory. Moreover, I hope to give a more detailed interpretation where as his model would suggest straightforward explanations.

I sought out a variety of sources for the investigation, and attempted to select those approaches that utilize the interpretation of the actors. My sources range from different, self-representations of Roma leaders (interviews, decla-

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<sup>15</sup> Clifford, 251.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford, 277.

<sup>17</sup> Friedman, *Transnationalization ...*, 244.

<sup>18</sup> His main categories are: (1) indigenization, (2) nationalization, (3) regionalization and (4) immigrant ethnification. See Friedman, *Transnationalization ...*, 243–244.



rations), and political or quasi-political publications (reports, programs, policy papers) of various organizations engaged in Romani issues, to scientific approaches to Roma with analytical or normative purposes. In my analysis I will try to give a contextual, if possible ethnographic, interpretation of these positions and interpret their differences. The ethnographic approach to written texts means not only comparing various documents, the ethnographer must always be aware of the socially embedded nature of the discourses. An analysis of the processes through social reality is constructed through communicational acts is definitely a field for ethnographic investigation. In the meantime, the universe of discourses must be seen as existing somewhere in the foreground and in interaction with political and economical processes.

I see my study of international Roma politics as part of a broader anthropological enterprise. The analysis of political projects prepares the groundwork for a more comprehensive understanding of Roma and the societies in which they live. Therefore, the multi-sited approach should be seen as a larger project to be pursued. I hope this analysis contributes not only to my studies, but studies of others aimed at a better understanding of the problems encountered here, which I believe are not only the problems of the Roma.

### 3. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Here I will present an overview of the second half of the twentieth century from the perspective of the Romani movement. Major historical events such as the Nazi genocide of WW II, the Cold War and the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe provide the initial frames of the movement. The Romani movement is influenced both from 'inside' and 'outside': charismatic leaders and cultural or political organizations articulate their projects and visions, mobilizing Roma towards the fulfillment of these political tasks. The societies in which Roma live often treat Roma with discrimination, or pursue persecutive or assimilative policies. The interplay of these forces have and continue to shape the development of the Romani movement.

Developments in particular states such as France, Germany, India and Britain played an important role in the incipient articulation of the political will of the Roma, and therefore, before turning to an analysis of the emergence of the international cooperation of the Romani organizations, their national contexts must be considered. Moreover, the various political projects (national minority rights, Romani civil rights movement, European Minor-

ity, nationalism and transnationalism) are embedded in a particular social and political environment, and the ideological and political divergences should thus be viewed within these contexts. Although, I am more interested in the recent developments of the Romani movement – those of the end of the 1990s – it can hardly be understood without investigating the recent history of emerging political mobilization of the Roma. A short listing of the main events and protagonists of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is important in order to exemplify the magnitude and importance of the changes that have been going on since the 1970s, and which accelerated in the last decade. In my review of the early history of Romani movements I rely on historical accounts, but I am aware that the historiography of the movement is part of the debate and contest between different positions.

### 3.1. *The early organizations*

Descriptions of the interwar period trace the roots of Romani activism in some Eastern European states as Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia.<sup>19</sup> In Romania, in the 1930s local and national organizations were founded and several journals were published by and for Roma; *Neamul Țigănesc* (1930–34), *Glasul Romilor* (1933) *O Rom*. In Poland, Michael Kwiek II, a prominent member of the Polish Roma dynasty, announced in 1934 his idea of creating a Romani state on the banks of the Ganges in India. Later, Janusz Kwiek, crowned on July 4, 1937 as Janos I. King of the Gypsies, before thousands of people, announced his intention to approach Mussolini's fascist government to allocate for an area between Somalia and Abyssinia for Roma settlement.

The unity imagined and represented from 'above', and the call to gather under collective representation, is a long lasting motive of Romani politics. The appealing power of such representation does not depend solely upon the leader, but on the social and political contexts that reinforce or diminish his influence. The role of charismatic persons in the incipient stage of the movement, however, should not be underestimated.<sup>20</sup>

Tragically, the outsider "unified" representation appeared in the most extreme of Nazi racism. As early as 1937 racial scientists like Robert Ritter and

<sup>19</sup> Liegeois, Jean-Pierre: *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*. London: Al Saqi Books, 1986, especially 143–171; Hancock, Ian: The East European Roots of Romani Nationalism. In Crowe D. & Kolsti J. (eds.): *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*. M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1991. 133–149.

<sup>20</sup> Such as Ionel Rotariu. More recently perhaps the activity of Rudko Kawczynsky in Germany is worth mentioning, although he began as a grass-root mobilizer.

Eva Justin proposed decrees against ‘asocials’ which were passed by Himmler. The measures were applauded by professional social and welfare workers.<sup>21</sup> Measures taken against the Roma ranged from sterilization to eradication. About a half a million<sup>22</sup> Roma were killed in the so-called euthanasia programs and concentration camps of WWII. The history of the Gypsy Holocaust or *porajmos* is still a topic that has been inadequately researched.

After the war in 1959, Ionel Rotariu (a Romanian Gypsy) was acknowledged in France as ‘Vaida Voievod’ the Supreme Chief of the Romani People. Rotariu founded the World Romani Community, and planned Romanestan in Somalia. He also began to print passports for Roma, but in 1965 Charles De Gaulle dissolved the World Romani Community, bringing the idealistic project of the World Romani Community to a halt. In the same year (1965), Vanko Rouda (a Hungarian Lovari Rom) established the International Gypsy Committee, a more pragmatic association. The Committee organized the *first World Romani Congress* (WRC), near London between 8–12 April 1971.

### 3.2. *The World Romani Congresses and the International Romani Union*

World Council of Churches and the Indian government funded the WRC 1. The International Gypsy Committee was renamed to International Rom Committee (*Komiteto Lumniako Romano*) because outsider labels such as Gypsy or Tzigan were rejected. Vanko Rouda was reconfirmed as president. Delegates from twenty countries including India attended the Congress. A national flag and anthem were adopted, commissions for social affairs, war crimes, language standardization and culture were established. Present at the conference was Padmashri Weer Rajendra Rishi, an Indian linguist who soon after founded the Indian Institute of Romani Studies, and published, in Punjab, the journal *Roma*.

The *second World Romani Congress* was organized in Geneva between 8–11 April 1978. It was marked by the reinforcement of relations and mutual recognition between the Roma and India. Besides symbolic attachment, India expressed its support for the demands of the Roma at the United Nations.

<sup>21</sup> Peukert, Detlev J. K.: Racialism as Social Policy. In Peukert, Detlev J. K: *Inside Nazi Germany. Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Every Life*. Penguin Books, 1987. 211–212; Kenrick, Donald and Puxon, Grattan: *Gypsies under the Swastika*. Hartfield: University of Herfordshire Press (reprint of *The Destiny of Europe’s Gypsies*. London: Sussex University Press, 1972), 1995.

<sup>22</sup> see Kenrick and Puxon, 150.

The International Rom Committee was renamed International Romani Union (*Romano Internationalno Jekhethanibe* or *Romano Ekhipe*) through which it granted consultative status in the person of Jan Cibula, at the UN Social and Economic Commission in 1979.<sup>23</sup> Rishi was elected honorary president of the IRU. He developed a theory about Rajput (warrior caste in the medieval India) origins of the Roma.<sup>24</sup>

Evaluating the decade following the first WRC, Grattan Puxon a non-Roma, member of the IRU presidium writes:

“Indian commitment has now become a vital factor in our struggle for emancipation. Some mystery continues to surround the caste or tribal origins of Roma within India. In my opinion, while a proper subject for research, it is of no great consequence today whether the ancient ancestors of European Roma were Rajputs or low-caste musicians. As Prof. Jusuf iterates, by language and culture Roma are Indians and that is what matters. But whereas India has long emerged from the tribal level to nationhood, Roma dispersed outside India are only presently overcoming handicaps and seeking national minority recognition.”<sup>25</sup>

This might well summarize the main aspiration of the period. Identification with the ‘mother country’ and fostering ties with it appeared to be the way to unification, or ‘reunification’, as some Roma leaders preferred to say. Unity or *jekhipe* (oneness) was understood in terms of common origins, language and culture.

In 1981 the *German Sinti League in Göttingen organized the third World Romani Congress*, with the support of the Association for Threatened Peoples. Sait Bali was elected president, Rajko Djuri secretary (both from Yugoslavia), and Romani Rose from West Germany as vice-president. The main topic for discussion was the fate of the Roma under the Nazi regime, and the problems related with reparation demands. Organizations from Germany shared their experiences with the German government and administration. New presidium was elected and the committee was enlarged to include representatives from the twenty-two national states present at the congress.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Liegeois, 160.

<sup>24</sup> Rishi, Weer Rajendra: *Descendants of Warrior Classes of India. Roma*, No. 42–43, 1995.

<sup>25</sup> Puxon, Grattan: *Decade of Progress 1971–1981. Roma*, Vol 6, No. 1, 1981. 10–11.

<sup>26</sup> Liegeois, 160.

The fourth, WRC (1990), was symbolically placed in Eastern Europe.<sup>27</sup> It was held in Serock, near Warsaw and was sponsored partially by UNESCO. Participation was even greater than the previous congress, the presidium of national representatives was enlarged again to include members from twenty-eight countries. The new presidium elected showed Eastern European domination: Rajko Djuri (Yugoslavia) president, Emil uka (Czechoslovakia) general secretary, Sait Bali (Yugoslavia), Stanislaw Stankiewicz (Poland), and Viktor Famulsen (Sweden) as vice presidents.<sup>28</sup> Ian Hancock succeeded Jan Cibula in the UN consultative status. In 1997 Hancock also was appointed by Bill Clinton, replacing William Duna<sup>29</sup> in the Holocaust Memorial Council.

Projects such as language standardization and the compilation of an exhaustive Romani encyclopedia remained high priorities on the IRU agenda. The preservation of culture and the unity of the Roma people appeared to go hand by hand. The movement inspired intellectuals, both Roma and non-Roma, with an interest in history, culture and language of Roma. The processes should be viewed in the context of world-wide decolonialization, and hence, the emergence of new nations. The case of Roma in Europe is even more particular because of the 'reverse colonialism' in the sense that a decolonializing state, India, was chosen as the mother country for the diaspora by Roma intelligentsia.

During the period of the later two WRC, the IRU expanded and became the umbrella organization for more than forty associations in almost thirty countries, with large number of representatives from national organizations. What was initially Western European based movement became centered in Eastern Europe, where most Roma live. In the meantime, in western countries an alternative way of political mobilization emerged. The Romani civil rights movement, with its roots in the social and historical realities of Western Germany, signals the dawn of new problems and the need for the new responses.

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<sup>27</sup> The fifth World Romani Congress (Prague, July 2000) was also held in Central-Eastern Europe. In this study I will not examine this event. For a discussion see Acton, Thomas & Klímová, Ilona: *The International Romani Union: An East European answer to West European Questions? Shifts in the focus of World Romani Congresses 1971–2000*. In Guy, Will (ed.): *Between Past and Future. The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*. University of Herforshire Press, 2001. 157–219.

<sup>28</sup> Hancock, 148.

<sup>29</sup> Ronald Regan as the first member of the Holocaust Memorial Council representing the Roma had appointed William Duna in 1987.

Nicolae Gheorghie and Ian Hancock, two prominent Roma leaders and members of the IRU presidium, were suspended from their functions (almost excluded) due to lobbying activities in 1993 April, at a meeting in Brno.<sup>30</sup> In 1999, Ian Hancock published a declaration on the RomNews in which he severed all contacts with the IRU, and his support for the Roma National Congress, a Germany based umbrella organization.<sup>31</sup>

### 3.3. *The emergence of the Romani civil rights movement*

The case of Germany is paradigmatic for the emergence of the Romani civil rights movement. The civil rights movement did not emerge from an intellectual interest in the Roma nation or reunification, but was rather based on a grass-root mobilization in Germany after WW II among Roma and Sinti. The turning point for the movement came in the 80s when institutional and ideological divergences appeared among diverse groups of Roma in Germany.

As Yaron Matras<sup>32</sup> pointed out, controversies, which began in the 1980s, polarized over the attitude assumed towards Romani immigrants and refugees. Divergences have their roots in the social history of the Romani movement in Germany. The tension emerged between the position of the established and recognized national minority groups, represented by the 'Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma' led by Romani Rose and non-German citizens, new immigrants and asylum seekers embraced by the 'Rom und Sinti Union' (later renamed as Roma National Congress) linked with the activity of Rudko Kawczynski.

In Germany, following WW II Roma concentration camp survivors appeared, raising awareness of the extent of the Holocaust and the responsibility of the government to re-integrate and make reparations for the past. Although gaining recognition as victims of Nazi racism and genocide, however, was not an easy process. The claim, that Romanies were persecuted for criminal and vagrant behavior, not because of their ethnicity or race, survived the Nazi regime. In the early 1950s the Bavarian local parliament passed a law

<sup>30</sup> See the Introduction in Acton, Thomas (ed.): *Gypsy Politics and Traveller Identity*. Hartfield: University of Herfordshire Press, 1997.

<sup>31</sup> Hancock, RNN Exclusive: Statement Regarding my Position in the International Romani Union, 1999, <http://www.romnews.com>

<sup>32</sup> Matras, Yaron: The Development of the Romani Civil Right Movement in Germany 1945–1996. In Tebutt, Susan (ed.): *Sinti and Roma. Gypsies in German-Speaking Society and Literature*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1998. 49–63.

in order to restrict the movement of the vagrants directed against Romanies.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore:

“The postwar German public also shared the authorities’ judgment, considering the Nazi persecution of the Romanies to be part of the war on crime – an aspect regarded as one of the ‘good sides’ of Nazism in wide circles of the German public; 44% of the Germans today do believe that Nazism also had its ‘good side.’”<sup>34</sup>

Despite these attitudes, claims for Roma recognition and reparation were developed. The ‘Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma’ (Central Council of German Sinti and Roma) was modeled after the ‘Zentralrat der Juden in Deutschland’ and the Association for Endangered Peoples played an important role in the institutional establishment of the movement. The Sinti and Roma challenged the German state and administration with an emphasis on elements of continuity with the Nazi past,<sup>35</sup> but chose integration into the German society based upon the principle of citizenship. The two elements composed the essence of the national minority approach outlined and enforced during the decades of the Cold War.

In the period of international polarization and the closure of the communist block, Yugoslavia and Poland were two relatively open countries allowing Roma to travel and work abroad. After 1973, however, the immigration for work was restricted in Germany and the possibility for Roma to settle in the country was reduced to asylum seeking procedures. Roma were rarely regarded in Germany as persecuted persons.

In this context the new form of Romani civil rights movements emerged. And, using the argument of Germany’s responsibility for the Holocaust, demanded the right for Roma group right for settlement rather than individual reparation and financial compensation. Campaigns in Hamburg in the late 1980s resembled earlier civic disobedience actions. And, as result, special regulations were adopted and thousands of people who were threatened with deportation to Yugoslavia and Poland were granted resident status.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Margalit, Gilad: *Antigypsyism in the Political Culture of the Federal Republic of Germany: A Parallel with Antisemitism?* Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism, Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1996. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Margalit, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Matras, 55. gives the example of the hunger-strike in Dachau in 1980.

<sup>36</sup> see Roma National Congress, 1998.

As opposed to national minority claims, the Roma civil rights approach gained terrain by advocating universal human and civic rights, as well as the transnational community of Romanies. From work with refugees emerged the idea of a pan-European minority. The Hamburg based Roma National Congress became the promoter of a militant Roma nationalism understood in these terms. The more traditional leadership, engaged in the national minority approach around the 'Zentralrat Deutscher Sinti und Roma', was challenged to demonstrate their support for Eastern European Roma.<sup>37</sup>

### *3.4. The role of Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism*

1989 meant not only the fall of communism in the eastern part of Europe but the end of the Cold War and the beginning of a major reconfiguration of the two-poled world system. The Roma movement faced the new situation with institutional establishments, mostly in Western Europe, a history of political mobilization, and a set of traditions in political projects and visions. Eastern Europe played a role in the majority of these projects; a region where most of the world's Roma population live, it has both symbolical and practical importance in the development of political ideas and projects. The success of these projects could also be measured by their impact on future of the Eastern European Roma.

On the other hand, the opportunities and limitations of Roma politics are framed by the general political transition of the region. The problems of democratization or nationalization of Eastern European states, and the process of European Union enlargement raise problems that seek solutions for both majorities and minorities (including the Roma) of these states. In addition to reconfiguring political hegemonies, transformation and development impose problems on the welfare and social systems of the region. Roma are among the most disadvantaged groups struck by unemployment and poverty. The fear of a possible mass migration from Eastern Europe to western countries is again and again raised in political forums. In this way the eastern part of the continent is perceived as a source of treat.

The increased awareness of such problems is signaled by important papers published in the second half of the 1990s; in 1995 the Minority Rights

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<sup>37</sup> Matras, 59.



Group Report,<sup>38</sup> and in 1997, a policy paper<sup>39</sup> by the Project on Ethnic Relations. These later developments signal the changing dynamic of Roma political projects and the reshaping of international policies regarding the Roma.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In this study I proposed to give a description of the international Romani politics and to interpret the social and political formation of Romani movement. My theoretical framework and methodology was based on the works of anthropologists such as George Marcus, James Clifford and Jonathan Friedman. Multi-sited ethnography, as outlined by Marcus, aims at developing the ethnography of the world system by analyzing the emerging relationships between different localities. Therefore, the global dimensions of social and political phenomena are brought under scrutiny from the perspective of the locally embedded actors. In this way the world system does not provide a holistic frame for ethnographical research but is in itself the object of study.

Economical macroprocesses, such as the emergence of globalized capitalism, and historical political events, such as the collapse of the two poled political world hegemony give the background for the analysis. They are interpreted from the point of view of the perceptions and effects that can be identified in the discourses and practices of the international Romani movement. The alternative strategies for Romani politics, such as the quest for recognition a national minority, Romani civil rights movement, pan-European minority and transnationalism need to be seen in correlation and interaction of these developments.

I identified two, broadly defined periods of the Romani movement in the 90s. The early years of the decade are marked by a crisis stemming from previous political projects, leading to new problems emerging with the fall of the communism in Eastern Europe. During the first period, issues like language standardization, Romani encyclopedia and reunification' by an emerging high culture were high priorities on the political agenda. Somehow, in contrast yet without rupture, the end of the 1990s can be characterized by a more technical orientation of Romani politics. The role of new elites in the

<sup>38</sup> Liegeois, Jean-Pierre & Gheorghe, Nicolae: *Roma/Gypsies: A European Minority*. Minority Rights Group International Report, No. 4, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Gheorghe, Nicolae & Mirga, Andrzej: *The Roma in the Twenty-First Century: A Policy Paper*. Project on Ethnic Relations, Princeton N.J.: PER, May 1997.

economically polarizing world presented problems brought under scrutiny on the stage of Romani politics.

Following Jonathan Friedman's categories, the Roma elite's position could be partially described as 'global elite' or 'elite diaspora'.<sup>40</sup> Friedman assumes that the cosmopolitan elite, that communicates easier among his/her fellows, and identifies more with elite members of similar position, tends to use the discourse of cultural hybridity.<sup>41</sup> On the other end of society can be found the low class essentialization, or the ethnicization of poverty. So, according to Friedman the differences in social position appear in the "the contrast between hybrid/creole identifications and essentialisation that is common to lower-class and marginalized populations, as well as what are referred to as 'redneck' leaders of ethnic mobilizations."<sup>42</sup>

Perhaps this holds true, as when members of different social strata articulate their interests in opposition or competition with each other, but in the debates of the Roma elite there are no signs of normative use of hybridity. Moreover, the emphasis on common identity in the case of the Roma is a strategy of inclusion and integration; the Roma elite search to bridge the gap in social position via discourse. The elite does not stigmatize the strategy of ethnic mobilization, moreover, it is integrated into political projects. A trend in recent efforts, activities and discourses of the new elite can be identified in the endeavor to bridge the economic and social distance by fostering common Romani identity. Consensus, or at least compromise and collaboration between elites with mobilizing potential and the 'globalized' but not 'hybridized' new elite could be a crucial element of the future of the Romani movement. Both parts have something to offer: the mobilized Roma population can give legitimacy to the new elite, while the elite can transmit local problems and claims to the more general public. This aspect of the Romani movement is characteristic in comparison with other cosmopolitan elite practices that often invest more effort in the discourse of hybridity as opposed to low-class ethnicism as described by Jonathan Friedman.<sup>43</sup>

The Roma elite is promoting cooperation among the elite and collaboration with international institutions but does not contrast this activity with

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<sup>40</sup> As Kelly labels the same category. Kelly, John D.: *Time and the Global: Against the Homogeneous, Empty Communities in Contemporary Social Theory*. In Meyer, Brigit and Geschiere, Peter (eds.): *Globalization and Identity: Dialectics of Flow and Closure*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999. 239–270.

<sup>41</sup> Friedman, *Global Crisis ...*

<sup>42</sup> Friedman, *Global Crisis ...*, 88.

<sup>43</sup> Friedman, *Global Crisis ...*

the project of ethnic mobilization in Roma communities. Seeking compromise and consensus with locally effective leaders shows the direction of diaspora ethnicization and a kind of cosmopolitan project. In the new diaspora project the centre of the community has moved from the symbolic homeland of India to European based operational projects. The Indian origin thesis is not abandoned, only balanced by the awareness of centuries in Europe that could make Roma European.