

7 Antiminority prejudice in Hungary

Gypsy business – Roma politics

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Introduction

"I have christened Hungary as Orbánana Republic, while some refer to it simply as Absurdistan. For today, my native county is a dilapidated, corrupt, and worthless banana republic." This whimsical statement by Aladár Horváth, president of the independent civil rights association, the Roma Parliament, aptly summarizes how embittered some Roma civil leaders are at the moment. This is especially true for those, who have not, as Horváth, kowtowed to the illiberal ideology of the ruling government filled, as it is, with ethnonational promises and misguided policies. "Some" needs to be emphasized for those who have for most of the post-collapse period, between 1990 and 2023, accommodated and conceded the majority government's Gypsy/Roma policy. In my chapter, I will peel back the onion by investigating how minority policies in the past decades have altered the situation of the Roma and their civic engagement in Hungary. I am especially interested in delving into those political and popular values that have created the sorry state of Orbánana Republic.¹ Here I examine and dismantle some of the underlying causes of systemic oppression faced by the Roma/Gypsy community by addressing the roots of exploitation. It is my hope that my analysis works toward, if not a resolution, at least a better understanding of where we are at the moment and what should be done to get out of this quagmire.

Political antigypsyism

Broadly speaking, I argue that to address antigypsyism, we must first understand it as a phenomenon that is not a one-time occurrence, but a continuously transmitted and constantly rejuvenated belief system. It is a form of ethnic prejudice, similar to anti-Semitism, although those who adhere to it may harbor hatred toward Gypsies as well as other groups. I believe that the foundation of popular antigypsyism lies in a systemic deep-rooted racism, which perpetuates the belief in genetic differences and the inferiority of the Roma. The rejection of the marginalized, poor, and destitute Roma by the majority in society is specifically tied to the rejection of Roma as a whole. The survey conducted in 2016 by the Pew Research Center reveals a disconcerting level of disdain toward minorities, Hungarians are "much more likely

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than other Europeans to hold negative views of various minority groups. Nearly three-quarters hold an unfavorable view of Muslims in their country, and more than six-in-ten see Roma in a negative light. About a third express an unfavorable opinion of Jews – double the European median.”²

Such antigypsyism is a racialized discourse nurtured by historical and political discrimination and stigmatization against the Roma.³ In politics, it prevents Roma from obtaining autonomy and access to positions of power, both national and local; in the economy, it creates a hierarchical mode of production in which non-Roma (gadjo) workers and producers are advantaged while the Roma are exploited. In public life, Roma also have to fight antigypsyism as they are prevented, both economically and symbolically, from practising their civic and citizenship duties. In all, antigypsyism is built into the very socio-political framework of the Hungarian state that creates and widens the gap between those who are in and those who remain outside mainstream society, the majority and the Roma minority. This means that volumes can be written, as have been in the past 40–50 years, about the disadvantages Roma face every day in the labor market, educational, health, media, and cultural institutions.

The political career of Horváth speaks volumes about the complete disarray plaguing Roma politics since the collapse of the socialist state. In 1990, he was one of the first Roma elected as an MP on the left-liberal ticket representing the Free Democrats party. However, this symbiotic relationship was short-lived as Horváth declined to support the new minority law of 1993. For the next two parliamentary elections, he ran, unsuccessfully, as an independent candidate. In the 2014 election, he organized the ethnic-based Gypsy Party (Magyarországi Cigánypárt) but only managed to gather a few thousand votes. This surprising lack of interest was repeated in 2018. Additionally, Horváth made the decision not to join forces with another independent Roma movement, the Roma Coalition of Hungarian Gypsy Organizations (Magyarországi Cigányszervezetek Fóruma Roma Összefogás Párt), led by Kolompár Orbán, which participated in the 2006 and 2010 parliamentary elections. In retrospect, it is clear that the divided and fractionalized Roma politics were doomed to fail. None of the candidates from these organizations were able to secure enough votes to gain parliamentary seats.

After a dismal failure, partly due to governmental mismanaged minority policy, which further polarized the already divided Roma organizations, there seemed to be a positive change in the campaign to alter the course of majority anti-Roma politics for good. This change came in the form of a new ethnic-based Roma political group called Phralipe (Independent and National Phralipe Association), which emerged in the early 2000s. In its program, autonomy and independence were the main criteria with the obvious goal of entering both local and national politics. Phralipe’s debut aimed to unite Roma people regardless of linguistic, regional, and gender divisions. This was a novel departure from mainstream political culture that emerged after 1990. Traditionally, political parties would select a token Roma individual to campaign with them during elections, using this as a smokescreen to hide the hierarchical division within Roma elites. In 2019, the National Election Commission allowed Phralipe to participate in the parliamentary election with 32

candidates nationwide.⁴ Despite campaigning vigorously for the ruling party, the alternative Roma party encountered insurmountable challenges, primarily due to the racialized approach to Roma politics adopted by the majority. As a result, rural Roma did not budge and the national elections were an utter failure for Phralipe.⁵ This outcome has devastated most of Roma civil society. Furthermore, not conforming to state directives, Roma elites launched a last-ditch effort during the 2022 national elections through the alternative unified ethnic-based One Hungary movement. However, since most Roma were affiliated with the party *Lungo Drom*, or its opposition, the ORÖ (National Roma Self-Government), and the more radical civil groups kept a distance, the One Hungary movement collapsed similarly to Phralipe earlier. With individual Roma coopted into mainstream parliamentary parties as token Gypsy or Roma representatives most Gypsies see this as the only avenue for entering mainstream politics. As the Roma writer Ágnes Daróczy expresses it:

We still lack institutions, leaving us virtually no influence over our affairs. The minority self-government system has resulted in the creation of a Roma social class that is carefully selected, easily manipulated, and even susceptible to blackmail. This group can be quickly mobilized during an election, serving as a manipulated privileged group upon which major political parties, not just Fidesz, rely for support. At the same time, these minority self-governments are operating without any viable options. The problem is that we are still considered a national security issue. Meanwhile, the extremists are allowed to stir up hatred without any obstacles. On the one hand, the so-called Roma issue serves as a way to release social tensions, on the other hand, the extremists exploit this hatred to gain money, power, and votes.⁶

Blunt as it may be, Daróczy's statement reveals that Roma intellectuals are aware of a somber truth: since the collapse of state socialism in 1989, the Roma in Hungary have never been able to establish major political representation aside from a few institutions. They have not even been able to elect a single Roma member of Parliament on a minority ticket, a privilege that has been granted to a candidate from the German minority. According to Freedom House, the Roma "have long been underrepresented in politics and government and have been the target of derogatory rhetoric from Fidesz members in recent years."⁷ Facing enormous obstacles, most Roma are content with the existence of the nationality governing bodies (Országos Nemzetiségi Önkormányzat, National Minority Governments). There are currently 1,139 of these bodies operating locally, although they are closely monitored by mayoral offices or the leaders of the ruling local coalitions of the Fidesz and Christian Democratic parties.⁸ However, it is important to note that local Roma governments are not fully autonomous bodies and do not act solely on behalf of the Roma community.

It needs to be emphasized that, since the introduction of the 2011 law on nationalities (Law CLXXIX on the Rights of Nationalities) and the establishment of the minority self-governments, the Roma have entered a new age of anxiety. Roma

politics have remained in limbo oscillating between the Scylla of extreme majority nationalism and the Charybdis of segregated ethnolinguistic culturalism. Yet, despite the elevation of individual Roma into the national popular culture limelight, nobody can turn a blind eye to the destruction and suffering of Roma. If the scale of the crisis and economic deprivation is not enough, in mainstream and local politics, Roma are doubly if not triply disadvantaged. First, most Roma are appointed from above by the party leadership to support minority rights, either to have a token Roma/Gypsy or because they are committed to ethnic quotas. Secondly, appreciation of civic values, that is feelings and attitudes of political culture and citizenship in addition to contributing to the common good, has not, I have to admit, been inculcated into the majority of Roma people – a matter that undermines the trust and comradeship of these token individuals as gold diggers. Party affiliation, in general, causes friction and low civic engagement among the Roma population as Roma attach negative connotations to both majority and minority politics, a situation evident even among a large part of Hungarian citizens.⁹ This is understandable for the past 100 years of state policies have been for the most part a complete disaster for Roma communities and families. But there is an equally strong countervailing force opposing Roma's political activity as no politicians in mainstream Hungarian politics will be keen to have this elephant in the room. Thirdly, charismatic and strong-willed Roma activists are simply not welcomed by major political parties, right or left. The past 25 years of Roma politics underlie this: almost all radical Roma activists have left or were sidetracked by mainstream political life as many of them have faced complete marginalization, or even outright silencing (Ágnes Osztolykán, Jenő Zsigó or Jenő Setét [1972–2022]), while others decided to emigrate (Jakab László Orsós, Viktória Mohácsi, József Kamarás). Alternative voices of Roma activists outside mainstream discourse are few and far between, relegated to academic ivory towers (Angéle Kóczé), partisan media (Aladár Horváth), and foreign jobs. In tandem with such intellectual endeavors, there have been in the past several programs organized by non-Roma outsiders attempting to defuse social tensions or create viable alternative economic and educational alternatives in rural Gypsy communities. Most of these interventionist programs, however, soon faced insurmountable difficulties and failed.¹⁰

So one of the fundamental questions concerning Roma issues is who can represent various Roma communities, or, in the words of Aidan McGarry, who are their legitimate representatives?¹¹ Today there are indeed four Roma MPs in the Hungarian Parliament, facing the extreme right Our Home Party (Mi Hazánk), a party that organized a demonstration in August 2023 calling for an end to “Gypsy criminality.”¹² The ruling Fidesz has its own selected Roma in the parliament and even sent one to the EU Parliament (Livia Járóka). Born in 1974, Járóka is the first female Roma politician in the EUP, elected in 2004. Trained in sociology and social anthropology, Járóka was “discovered” in 2003 by a Fidesz MP, actually by the disgraced József Szájer, and has been promoted to become a female representative on Roma issues on behalf of Fidesz. Despite having a Ph.D. from a British University and a liberal social science program, Járóka is quite capable of representing Viktor Orbán's illiberal program in the EU, furthering the deep

division within majority and minority communities. As a half-hearted window-dressing program, the government also initiated a Thematic Study Group for Roma Issues (Romaügykért Felelős Tematikus Munkacsoport), an umbrella of two dozen Roma civic groups that meet occasionally but without real results aside from organizing some cultural programs.¹³ If the past few years are any indication, such groups will serve to legitimize governmental policies but are a far cry from addressing and promulgating the real issues of Roma societal problems.

The killing field: Criminality and the Roma

The late 1990s and early 2000s were tumultuous times for the Roma. During this period, there was a significant increase in both real and symbolic atrocities against this minority group. With the complete collapse of the industrial and agricultural sectors, tens of thousands of Roma lost their jobs and found themselves, once again, marginalized in society. Some Roma had to find ways to survive by any means necessary, while others chose to migrate or emigrate. One of the most enduring stereotypes of Gypsies is that they are averse to work and instead, engage in deviant lifestyles and criminal activities.¹⁴ Since the 1990s, the most politically charged phrase in Hungarian politics has been “*cigánybűnözés*” or, Gypsy crime, which not only refers to those individuals who commit crimes but also stigmatizes the entire Roma population.¹⁵ Discrimination and ethnic profiling are deeply ingrained in Hungarian prejudice against the Roma, within both society at large and the police force.¹⁶ Hate crimes against Roma individuals and families escalated following the sensationalized murder in Tiszavasvári of Lajos Szögi, a teacher who drove his car into a Roma girl in October 2006 while traveling in a Roma community. From 2008 to 2012, over 60 acts of violence were perpetrated.¹⁷

In 2008 and 2009, a four-man death squad carried out a series of attacks on the Roma community in various locations across Hungary.¹⁸ The burning down of houses, and shooting at helpless victims resulted in six deaths, including that of a four-year-old boy.¹⁹ The low-skilled offenders working as bouncers were known for subscribing to neo-Nazi ideology as members of the skinhead movement in Debrecen. The botched police investigation finally came to fruition after a year and a half when the four men were identified, arrested, and charged with the homicides. In August 2013, the Budapest District Court handed down sentences for the murders, with three of the perpetrators receiving life in jail with no possibility of parole. The fourth person, who had served as the driver, was sentenced to 13 years and has already been released.

This atrocious crime and the brutal attack on Lajos Szögi highlight the social divide between the majority and the minority. It also exposes the deep-seated animosity toward the Roma community, and the government's failure to effectively address the vigilante actions against the Roma population. The discrimination on the part of the police also illustrates that hidden racism has been at the root of the problem. There have been some small advances in addressing this burning issue, particularly in the communication between regional authorities and leaders of the Roma community.²⁰ However, the antagonism has been exacerbated by years of

mismanagement by the government in dealing with Roma-related matters. What is incomprehensible, and should be addressed, is why the government allows and promotes organizations and media that incite hatred and extreme nationalistic ideas to exist. For instance, the Hungarian Self-Defense Movement (Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom), The Outlaw Arms (Betyársereg), and Our Homeland (Mi Hazánk) are the most widely recognized extreme right organizations with anti-Roma agendas.²¹ Surpassing the five percent threshold, Our Homeland secured six seats in the Parliament on the compensatory list. Antisemitism, nationalist populism, pro-Russian views, and antigypsyism are the common factors that unite these organizations. Our Homeland identifies itself as a “third road” movement and a direct successor of the extremist far-right party of MIÉP which was led by the writer István Csurka in the 1990s. According to Our Homeland’s leader, MP László Toroczkai, “We are carrying on the legacy of MIÉP, despite the changing world. In the past, there was no COVID, and the number of Gypsies was much lower than it is today. Additionally, the dominant influence in the world, particularly in the Western world, is not held by Jews but rather by the LGBTQ lobby. It is worth noting, of course, that these two often overlap.”²² Our Homeland openly argues that, “With the increasing population of the Roma, there is also a rise in Gypsy ethnic and subcultural criminality. Several characteristic crimes are exclusively committed by Gypsies.”²³

The Outlaw Army, known for organizing large-scale demonstrations in the early 2000s, has now refrained from such activity and instead renamed its actions as “district improvement walks” (*körzetjavító séta*). The group does not hide its militant ideology. One of the walks in downtown Budapest last Christmas aimed to clear the Blaha Lujza square from “Gypsies conducting their usual business,” which referred to the widespread drug and prostitution issues in the capital’s downtown area.²⁴

These are not the only organizations propagating images of Gypsy criminality, the far-right media also do the same, describing some of these crimes as atrocious acts committed against Magyars.²⁵ Since collecting police statistics on crimes committed by Roma is illegal, it is only conjecture as to which crimes are committed by this group. The only possibility is to analyze the regional distribution of crime and the residency of the Roma population. According to most surveys, and sociological fieldwork, the concentration of Roma in specific regions suggests a potential correlation between these factors.²⁶

Facing such difficulties, fearing for their life, and escaping from poverty, the late 1990s saw an unprecedented flow of Roma families traveling to France and Canada seeking refugee status. Between 1998 and 2010, about 20,000 Roma from Hungary arrived in Canada, a number roughly equal to those from the Czech and Slovak Republics who had arrived a few years earlier.²⁷ The large number of Hungarian Roma applications for refugee status in Canada made both national and international headlines.²⁸ Because of these large numbers, and the crimes in which some Roma were involved, the Canadian government introduced visa restrictions in 2000, a move assisted, no doubt, by both the Hungarian government and Roma leaders, who both rejected the charge of racism and discrimination existing in

Hungary. Nevertheless, facing international pressure, the Canadian government revoked the restrictions in 2008. While some of the emigrants found opportunities in their new homeland, some were refused residency for various reasons. Many claims of refugee status were rejected because of unscrupulous lawyers (most of Hungarian origin) and illegal human trafficking.²⁹

Road to nowhere: Public work program

A new government initiative, The Road to the World of Labor (*Az Út a Munka Világába*) was a program fully funded by the European Union (Social Fund). It had a budget of approximately 7.5 billion HUF (roughly 20 million Euros) and aimed to promote the social integration of the Roma community. The program focused on providing employment opportunities, social education, and skills policies to underdeveloped areas and marginalized minority communities. Out of this, a one-billion euro scheme was inaugurated in 2007, called “Bridge to the World of Labor” (*Híd a munka világába*); soon an additional 3 million Euros was given to Lungo Drom, the largest Roma party in Hungary, to set up a framework of special co-operatives for the training and job opportunities of Roma. This governmental initiative was in line with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, aptly titled Decade of Roma Integration (*Roma Integráció Évtizede Program*), adopted in 2011. All member states developed specific strategies to demonstrate the common political will to attack discrimination and prejudice faced by Roma. Hailed originally as a major European-wide development to deal with the destitute situation of the Roma, Hungary’s largest minority, the newly created Ministry of Social Development and Employment (*Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium*) supervised and managed the distribution of EU funds. This included about a million euros set aside for an office of the International Secretariat for the Decade of Roma Integration.³⁰ A similar amount was targeted for the “Homes of Prospects” (*Esélyek Házai*) program facilitating social integration of disadvantaged people, the elderly, the Roma, the disabled, the unemployed, and children of poor families.

As previously demonstrated, the public works program has not been a feasible option for the inclusion of Roma individuals, particularly men, in educational training programs or stable salaried employment.³¹ While the program could offer immediate assistance to numerous struggling Gypsy families, it also perpetuates the existing disparities between the employed majority and the periodically employed minority Roma. Simultaneously, it reinforces second-class citizen status.³² Moreover, menial jobs in the public works program are reserved for Roma, which further exacerbates their already peripheral social standing.³³ However, having such a job, and the opportunity to earn some money has been seen by many Roma as a means of economic survival, if not a path to success. It enables them to scrape by and perpetuate their impoverished way of life. In my previous analysis of Hungarian illiberalism, I cited the words of a Roma father regarding his endorsement of the public works program: “When the meat factory shut down in our town, many of us were laid off, I remained unemployed

for nearly seven years. However, with the introduction of this new ‘public works program’ (*közmunka*), I have found employment once again. Although the wages are lower than what I used to earn, I am grateful to have a job.”³⁴ Undoubtedly, the potential for involvement in this economy may be a crucial factor in the Roma community’s political alignment and support for illiberal government policies. Since the early 2000s, Viktor Orbán, who has cultivated a strong personality cult, has consistently garnered the majority of Roma votes, enabling his party and himself to maintain their hold on power.³⁵

With all the fanfare and brouhaha, the Bridge program became a recipe for disaster. The National Roma Self-Government (ORÖ) was the only partner in this new initiative headed by MP Flórián Farkas, a trusted ally of Viktor Orbán and elected on the Fidesz list in 2002. The ORÖ received almost one billion HUF, but it soon became apparent that these strategies failed to address the root causes of prejudice, discrimination, and negative attitudes toward Roma. Adding to its fiasco, was the fact that the money’s superficial appearance led to no real progress, and within a few years Farkas experienced the ignominy of his life when investigators started questioning his misuse of funds. Both the national tax office (National Internal Revenue, or NAV in Hungarian), and the EU (including OLAF) investigated the use of funds, the former in 2015, and the latter in 2018. It soon became obvious that Farkas’ programs and grand plans to eliminate poverty primarily through the creation of jobs via small family cooperatives, as well as providing training and educational opportunities for Roma youth, were mismanaged.³⁶ In the end, the NAV requested reimbursement of 1.5 billion HUF from ORÖ but, instead of pressing charges, identifying the culprits, and exposing the complex criminal network involving Roma and various ministries, the government chose to reorganize ministries and offices. Additionally, they shut down most of the complicit programs.³⁷ Similarly, the various Homes of Prospects were either disbanded or simply renamed as general health and local governmental social service agencies to offer drug rehabilitation programs or assistance to people with disabilities. However, these changes continue to highlight the existing health inequality between the majority and Roma minority. Instead of adopting a comprehensive strategy to address disparities in education, employment, and social services, the government utilized a simplistic plan to integrate the Roma community into the labor force. This involved providing inadequate funding for a work program that lacked commitment. As a result, politically motivated support was given to specific organizations and Roma individuals, many of whom lacked proper training and were solely driven by financial incentives.³⁸

One important question that needs to be answered is why Viktor Orbán considered the President of Lungo Drom, Flórián Farkas, to be so important. Orbán decided to take over the liabilities of the ORÖ and paid the requested charges into the state treasury. Eventually, he ordered the closure of all investigations concerning Farkas.³⁹ The only indisputable answer is: to secure Roma votes. Despite the fact that Farkas was prosecuted in 1998 for embezzlement of funds as president of both Lungo Drom and OCKÖ/ORÖ (National Gypsy Minority Association, later ORÖ, National Roma Self-Government), he was able to secure minority votes for Fidesz

and Viktor Orbán in every national election.⁴⁰ It is no secret that for almost a decade and a half Farkas maintained his grip on the majority of the nation's Roma for two reasons. First, he received a presidential pardon from President Árpád Göncz in 1998, which symbolically projected his untouchable status to the Roma, thanks to high-level governmental connections. Second, there were the consistently received government and EU funds associated with his name and office during the early 2010s. This latter point is important because the funds distributed to ORÖ and Lungo Drom provided a real monetary basis for the promise of creating tens of thousands of jobs for Roma individuals who had been seeking employment opportunities since 2011. Their only option for participating in the labor force had been through the highly selective and mismanaged National Public Work Scheme.

The mayhem caused by Flórián Farkas's Bridge program is just one of the latest scandals that rocked the ORÖ. Former presidents Orbán Kolompár and János Balogh were also convicted of financial misconduct. Kolompár and his associates embezzled nearly 150 million forints, while Balogh attempted to cover up the disappearance of 80 million forints using fictitious contracts.⁴¹ As if that wasn't enough, János Agócs, the subsequent president of ORÖ from 2019 to 2022, was sentenced to four years in prison for bribery in November 2023.⁴²

I do not want to dismiss any of the political and cultural achievements that indicate a positive direction toward progressive development and harmonious coexistence between the majority and minority groups. It is worth noting that there are many mayors of Roma ethnicity, particularly in small settlements where the Roma population is either the majority or significantly represented. Simply put: these mayors are essentially the extensions of the national government and the ruling Fidesz-Christian Democratic coalition, leaving no room for any alternative political action focused on the Roma community. Furthermore, the Association of Roma Mayors, which was established in 2015, is now defunct.

Education

Education is a crucial factor in promoting opportunities and advancements for the Roma community, as well as promoting civic values and coexistence between the majority and minority populations. Since the collapse of the socialist state, governments have consistently prioritized these areas. However, in both areas, there are still obstacles to achieving lasting and effective change due to the existence of misconceptions, misguided programs, and pervasive stereotypes. Segregation of Roma pupils in state, private, and parochial schools is pervasive in Hungary. This is one of the reasons why Roma civil rights organizations have decided to sue local governments, which they have done successfully.⁴³ However, private and parochial educational institutions may create obstacles for Roma parents based on social status, fees, and grades. This can result in both visible and hidden barriers. While more Roma pupils are entering high schools today than three decades ago, approximately fifty percent of them drop out and do not receive diplomas.⁴⁴

Facing pressure from Roma organizations and EU activists, in the 2010s, four schools were given to the ORÖ. However, shortly after, two of these schools

(Szolnok and Budapest) ceased to exist. Only two regional elementary schools (Tiszapüspöki and Szirák) remained open, but they too were eventually taken into state management due to financial difficulties.⁴⁵ There were several risk factors involved. Entrusting educational institutions to enthusiastic yet inexperienced, politically motivated, and overconfident minority leaders proved to be a recipe for disaster. The mismanagement and embezzlement under ORÖ leadership led to the downfall of these four schools, depriving hundreds of Roma pupils and adults of the opportunity for vocational training and a better life. In other schools, such as the case of the Tiszabura community, the Order of Malta has taken charge of developing a viable education program for Roma children; another example can be seen in the neighboring town of Tiszabő, where local strongmen – commonly known as the “Gypsy mafia” – instill fear within the community.⁴⁶ These instances highlight the challenges faced in rebuilding the community and implementing effective education practices. Balancing this dismal picture are the few specific institutions such as the so-called “tanoda,” that cater to disadvantaged, poor, and Roma children.⁴⁷ Yet, they face uphill battles due to non-existent or minimal funding, a considerable drop-out rate among Roma pupils, and rampant reorganization and central monitoring.⁴⁸ As in any society, the future lies in our children. The question of how these programs will contribute to the development of a new Gypsy élite soon is uncertain, but their success is paramount for future citizenship development. Undoubtedly, progress has been made and we can point to several successful educational institutions such as the Gandhi High School in Pécs, which was founded in 1994. Additionally, there is the Kaly Jag Roma Minority Grade School, and the Snétberger Foundation, a special music mentoring program, both located in Budapest.⁴⁹ The Ministry of Internal Affairs, through its General Directorate for Social Opportunity (Társadalmi Esélyteremtési Főigazgatóság), offers special grants to pupils who declare their Roma identity and wish to study as long as they can maintain above-average grades.⁵⁰ It is evident that education, both at the primary and secondary levels, will be crucial in developing civic values and fostering political socialization among children and youth. If this system fails in the future, the only alternative will be through informal channels, where family values and age cohorts have significant influence.

In Europe, Romany families have long been marginalized and confined to ghettos, resulting in a second-class background and a vulnerable community existence. This disadvantage is also faced by the Gypsies in Hungary.⁵¹ According to national surveys and scholarly analyses, it is estimated that 7–8% of Hungary’s 9.6 million citizens belong to the Roma minority. However, it should be noted that this figure is not universally accepted, as many Gypsies do not identify themselves ethnically. Alarming figures from the last two demographic censuses show that in 2022, only 209,909 individuals declared themselves as Roma. This is a decrease of 100,000 compared to 2011. Furthermore, only about 10% of them use Romany (or Romanian) as their mother tongue.⁵² What could be the reason for this significant discrepancy?⁵³ Since the collapse of the communist state, opportunities for Roma to find paid work have dramatically decreased. Statistics from the early 2010s indicate that more than 50% of Roma men have

been unemployed, while the figure rises to nearly 80% among Roma women.⁵⁴ Their second-class status is further exacerbated by the meager social security benefits and the botched work-program assistance to which they are entitled. In terms of educational advancement, data compiled by the EU present a similarly distressing picture: “Only half (53%) of Roma children between the ages of 4 and 6 (or the starting age of compulsory primary education) participate in early childhood education, and 18% of Roma children aged between 6 and 24 attend an educational level lower than that corresponding to their age and the number of Roma early school-leavers is disproportionately high compared with the general EU population.”⁵⁵ These inequalities contribute not only to the low self-esteem of the Roma but to the difficulties those youth face who have been able to advance to secondary and higher educational institutes as their second-class status accompanies them even to the labor market.⁵⁶

These international statistics are even more obvious when viewed with national educational policy concerning the classification of school children with learning difficulties. As it turns out, about 30% of pupils in Hungary have been classified by the educational system as children having difficulty with comprehension and learning, a figure roughly corresponding to the national average. Schools are prone to classify most Roma children in primary schools as belonging to categories of specific learning disorders (SLD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These classifications have unfailingly been linked not only to parents’ lack of basic education, unemployed status, and extreme poverty on the fringes of Hungarian society but also to the one-sided governmental educational policies. Facilitating the secondary education of Roma, there is state funding by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the so-called Package for Scholarship (*Útravaló Ösztöndíjprogram*), a monetary incentive available to pupils declaring their ethnic Roma identity.⁵⁷ This process is managed by the National Roma Self-Government or its respective local affiliate, the agency responsible for issuing an official Recommendation of Roma Identity (*Ajánlás Cigány/Roma származásról történő önkéntes nyilatkozattal*).

This point brings us to one of the most salient features of Roma’s disintegration into the majority society. The minimal or in some regions non-existent participation in the official labor market has led to a significant misappropriation of national wealth contributing to the reproduction of social inequality. It is true that Roma in Hungary, as in most states of Eastern Europe, make up less than 10% of the country’s labor force. However, their lack of education, existence in ghettos, declining health, and discrimination by the majority population leave them permanently vulnerable and deprived.⁵⁸

In addition to family violence, alcohol and substance abuse, and general discrimination by the majority, the Roma minority of Hungary live in hostile racialized environments. These can be found in schools, workplaces, social services, and state and local administration. Unfortunately, these environments increase the likelihood of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder for the Roma minority.⁵⁹ Participation in the public works programs, originally hailed as a major step forward, proved to provide only meager income for select Roma families. This has trapped them

in a perpetual precarious patron-client limbo where they are forced to rely on the government's benefits and remain inseparably tied to the whims of municipal bureaucracies, including corrupt Roma leaders. They eagerly await inclusion in low-prestige menial public work further exacerbating their precarious situation.⁶⁰

Culture and media: Banal antigypsyism

A banal form of antigypsyism arises not only from political propaganda but also from popular culture and the media. Roma intellectuals perpetuate romanticized notions of their folk culture by showcasing it in media and stage productions. Meanwhile, in rural Roma settlements, the social structure has deteriorated. This issue is not unique to popular culture but is particularly prevalent in Hungarian elitist culture, as it embraces both perspectives. On one hand, it maintains virulent attitudes toward issues of race, ethnicity, and religion. On the other hand, it promotes majority and minority stereotypes promoting hate, bigotry, and majoritarian superiority. Misleading visual representations of Roma have been constant tropes since the nineteenth century, such as in Niklaus Lenau's morose poem *The Three Gypsies* (*Die drei Zigeuner*). After the liberalization, and subsequent re-nationalization of the media, public broadcasting has been given the freedom to create programs that are either stereotypical or, even worse, explicitly anti-Roma. This is evident in television, the internet, and films, where depictions of both criminal Roma individuals and the good Roma coexist. Sociologist Annabel Tremlett refers to reality television programs and sitcoms focusing on Roma as both "demotic and demonic."⁶¹ Hungarians will be familiar with one of the most ridiculous examples: *The Győzike Show*, a sitcom that first aired in 2005 and lasted until 2010 on the channel RTL Klub.⁶² The sitcom features Győzike (Győző Gáspár), a butcher-singer turned actor. It highlights the scandalous actions and day-to-day conflicts of Győzike's family members providing entertainment for the majority of Hungarians who enjoy laughing at them. For many Hungarians, the flat jokes, constant arguments, and rampant sexism in Győzike and his male buddies' conversations seem both hilarious and sadly accurate. What signals the appetite of consumerist media is the fact that in the subsequent almost two decades Győzike and his family have been elevated to the national limelight. His daughter has become an influencer, and his wife has been advertised as a master chef who has written several cookbooks. Similarly, popular music channels, like Muzsika TV and Slager TV, as well as Roma music programs aired on DIKHTV and DIKH radio, all owned and produced by István Szilvási, showcase a mix of traditional and modern fusion music that perpetuate stereotypes. Regrettably, these portrayals of Roma musicians and singers only reinforce the biased views of the prejudiced majority, who see them as representatives of a carefree Gypsy lifestyle.⁶³

There's a very fine line between symbolic, or banal antigypsyism, and verbal and actual atrocities, such as the burning down of Roma houses or the killing of families. Popular Hungarian anti-Roma sentiments have never lost their hold and one of the reasons for this is the mismanaged minority policy. As long as the state allows various forms of discrimination to thrive, it is clear to me that the rejection

of Roma and their way of life will continue to fuel bigotry and remain a prominent feature of racist ideology. Racialization and the dehumanization of the Roma, as well as branding them as a degraded and unwanted group in Hungary, are prevalent issues. It is important to note that governments may not explicitly endorse anti-Roma slogans or rhetoric but they may still support individuals who openly embrace nationalist, racist, and populist ideologies that align with the ruling illiberal value system.⁶⁴

One of the mainstays of antigypsyism survives in populist neo-folk music, which is a strange concoction of authentic and world music genres. Earlier, Anthony Smith realized how populist nationalism, “seeks inspiration from the communal past to link the past, present, and the future together.”⁶⁵ This reification of Roma culture and history puts neo-folk music and dance house cultures in a precarious position. It aims to connect a national community with a distorted view of the past, by highlighting certain aspects of a mythologized Roma culture. Specifically, it focuses on the experiences of transnational migrant Roma families while downplaying the suffering inflicted on them by the majority in society. This is not without its stereotyped and hierarchical notions of us and them, pitting peasants against others, particularly minorities like the Roma or the Jews.

The situation becomes more flexible and polychromatic when it comes to indigenous arts and culture. The Roma Cultural House (Romano Kher), which opened in 2023 in Budapest’s eighth district, and the statue erected in memory of the renowned writer József Choli Daróczy (1939–2018) in the town of Kiskőrös in the same year, are both excellent examples. However, such examples are few and far between. Also, the prevailing media portrayal of Hungary’s Gypsies continues to reinforce age-old stereotypes that create division rather than unity among citizens, Roma and non-Roma alike. The constant sensationalization and media coverage of the luxurious Roma lifestyles and culture have significantly contributed to confusion and discord among citizens. Today, a significant portion of Roma music, often referred to as traditional, is relatively new. Artists have been leaning toward experimentation such as Balkan, Indian, and Spanish (flamenco) fusion while still maintaining the essence of Hungarian sounds. With such a diverse array, Roma intellectuals and artists have gained national and international recognition. Musicians (like Ferenc Snétberger), film and theater actors and directors (such as Oszkár Nyári, Sándor Csányi), writers (like Károly Bari and Béla Osztojkán), bands (like Kalyi Jag, Szilvási Gypsy Folk Band, Parno Graszt, EtnoRom, Karaván Family, Romengo, and Khamoro Budapest Band), painters (like Mara Oláh), and dancers (like Katesz Balogh, Gusztáv Balázs), exemplify this. However, while Western scholars flock to Hungary in awe to study authenticity within the folk revival,⁶⁶ some Roma artists themselves often downplay their ethnocultural identity, fearing repercussions from the majority.⁶⁷ The increasing visibility of Roma singers and musicians in popular media often reinforces stereotypes that Roma people are not interested in working, as if they only want to sing and dance. However, the reality of the Roma popular music industry is far from glamorous. This can be seen in the case of Lajos Galambos, a well-known artist and entrepreneur, who was sentenced to three and a half years in prison for the theft of public utilities.⁶⁸

Yet, Roma arts, including literature, music, dance, and painting, are often wrongly dismissed by the majority as naïve, uneducated, and merely colorful, making them appear as a marginal contribution to national art. However, this perception fails to recognize the exciting, diversified, and game-changing nature of Roma arts. Moreover, it overlooks the subversive cultural statement they make about race, hierarchy, and precariousness which challenges and undermines the pervasive stereotypes held by the majority about Gypsy life, history, and culture.

Conclusion: Quo vadis Hungary?

Scholars studying Hungary have long recognized the disadvantaged and precarious situation of the Roma. Here, I highlight some examples the Roma face in Hungary and attempt to answer why there is such a huge gap in the social relationship between Gypsies and non-Gypsies, why Hungarians refuse comradeship with and empathy toward their minority fellow citizens, and how state policies contributed to these negative consequences? These are deep questions and there is no silver bullet. As always, there are two sides to every story: the discriminatory majority attitude has been well-known and documented in previous studies, and Gypsies today also need to confront reality and find a balance between outrage and optimism. As co-nationals, we must be willing to engage in mutual understanding and work toward shared standards to build civil society and a better future together.

I do not want to conclude this chapter on the present-day situation of Roma in Hungary and antigypsyism in general without addressing some key points that hinder the development of a unified democratic platform in Roma politics. These points include the lack of unity, solidarity, and common goals across age groups, regions, genders, and cultural backgrounds. I have no qualms about acknowledging my own bias but am concerned about trepidation regarding the fact that most pro-Roma research and publications are produced by non-Roma intellectuals, like myself. However, unless there is a significant increase in active participation from Roma community leaders and scholars, it is unlikely that Roma issues will be adequately addressed in all areas, including human rights, education, labor relations, and health. In such a scenario, marginalization and condescending treatment will continue to prevail. Despite the deep division and toxic relationship between the majority of Hungarians and Roma society, I would like to believe that it is not all doom and gloom. The numbers of entrepreneurs, scholars, and artists of Roma ethnicity are increasing, and we can be cautiously optimistic about the future.⁶⁹ Yet, when it comes to civic engagement and advocacy, a complex question arises: What specific policies and actions have the historically privileged Churches in Hungary, such as the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, implemented to support the civic program of the Roma community? While it is true that some of these Churches, as well as newer religious groups such as the Krishnas, have provided humanitarian and aid programs for the Roma, it is becoming evident that the charismatic and Evangelical Churches are attracting and involving more Roma individuals. This trend suggests that the wealthy historical Churches are aligning themselves with

illiberal state ideology and, as a result, avoiding discussion of the conflicting issues between the Roma minority, the majority population, and the state.⁷⁰

There is also a burning question as to how members of the Gypsy elites position themselves vis-à-vis other Gypsies living in poverty and rural ghettos. If we add, as we should, the issue of anti-Roma sentiments to the many negative images of destitute Roma, the statistics of alcohol and drug abuse, and criminality plaguing their communities, the questions become overwhelmingly complicated. This is because most of the discourses are generated within the majority society with little or no serious insights from the Roma participants themselves. As a note of caution: I should add that not only members of the majority, but also members of the Roma community as well, are culpable of presenting diverse, and often contradictory images of themselves. Internal hostilities within the Roma community do arise, often resulting in hypocrisy or rejection of one another. This pattern is based on traditional tribalism, as well as linguistic and regional identity differences. Cold-headed and well-informed perspectives from Roma intellectuals are rare, and even when they do exist, they are often marginalized or disregarded as subjective and extreme. These views, which should be considered crucial, reach only a limited audience of minor political influencers, further hindering their impact on governmental policies and prevailing social standards. Moreover, many alternative social and political actors, such as gender or LGBTQ activists, have been labeled as agents of foreign interests working to undermine national unity.

It is indeed true, as Lídia Balogh claims, that Roma women face discrimination from the majority of society. They are often accused of contributing to the growth of an ethnic minority through having multiple children, but not to the overall economic development of society.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Roma women incrementally suffer from paternalistic and gender-based discrimination and violence by male relatives. Male kin often force them into criminal activities such as petty theft, smuggling, and engaging in both national and transnational prostitution.⁷² Gender hierarchy, spousal abuse, and male chauvinism are just as prevalent in the world of the Roma as they are in mainstream Hungarian society. Balogh's argument which suggests that discrimination against Roma originates solely from the majority of society overlooks the other side of the problem. The existence of toxic masculinity and gender bias among husbands and male relatives, coupled with the conservative and traditional perspectives on family and reproductive roles held by Roma women, are pressing issues that demand immediate attention in Roma society.⁷³

The origin and nature of criminality, and alcohol and drug abuse are constant sources of conflict between majority and minority activists. While the former often point to these as ethnic-specific traits, the latter claim, and rightfully so, that lawlessness is not genetic. Yet, Gypsy elites have largely been unable to tackle these problems rampant in certain Roma communities and their regional ghettoized enclaves. The majority of society has frequently criticized the Roma elites for their inaction and inability to address these issues and promote education among "bad Roma."⁷⁴

Complicating the situation are the media images produced in state television and major film studios, which perpetuate the portrayal of Gypsies as either good or

bad. As I mentioned before, these stereotypical images of Roma “are interpreted by majority viewers as no more than an extended joke on their lifestyles.”⁷⁵ Mysticism and romanticized ideals of traditional occupations, the nomadic way of life, and Gypsy folklore are frequently exaggerated as emblematic traits of Gypsy culture. Artists draw inspiration not only from scholarly works on the Roma community and history as a whole but also from their nostalgic recollections of their childhood and rural upbringing. The combination of these elements tends to sustain solid references and creative force in their work. However, is that sufficient? Whether in film, literature, or visual narratives, the portrayal of Roma poverty, crime, and overall vulnerability by the elite has failed to bridge the divide between those who possess the resources and influence to create such art. There is also the problem of belligerent and hostile attitudes from different Gypsy group leaders and political puppets toward each other, which have not diminished in the past thirty years. There are indeed numerous studies available on the discrimination faced by Gypsies and the exceptional talent of Roma artists, but there is a significant lack of research on the aforementioned questions.

In conclusion, I am confident in stating that during this pervasive illiberal moment, the majority of Roma in Hungary are victims, while a small minority of them, primarily artists and those involved in politics, benefit from the dominant Orbán hybrid regime. By institutionalizing discrimination, marginalization, and national hierarchy as fundamental aspects of law and state policies, Hungarian illiberalism and antigypsyism are further reinforced. It is not only openly condoned but, on the contrary, rather encouraged through institutionalized projects and governmental media channels. This is based on the belief that national culture, essentialized national heritage, and peasant traditions should not be lost to foreign influences. The state has utilized fundamentalist Christian nationalism to win over a significant portion of the Roma citizenry aiming to strengthen its power base. Often, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-EU ideas are fostered through a chaotic and loosely articulated illiberal rhetoric. This narrative serves to uphold an unsustainable Roma cultural policy. These harmful ideologies are camouflaged by tokenism and a distorted popular culture, which is supported by a submissive and compliant Roma elite. Whether knowingly or unknowingly they inadvertently validate the ideology of state racism.

This is a tragic tale. Sadly, the Roma majority, confined to a marginalized second-class status, observe and appreciate the media-hyped Roma productions as unattainable ideals. Despite the enthusiastic pledges made during 1989–1990 regarding democracy, liberal values, and modest and even capitalistic advancement, Hungary has largely failed. I want to emphasize that achieving normalization requires numerous political, scholarly, and artistic initiatives that aim to address various forms of prejudice and racism. These efforts demand a collective and rigorous approach. Merely replacing terms like *Zigeunerschnitzel* with *Balkan Schnitzel*, in Germany, or renaming local Gypsy authorities as National Minority Self-Governments as I describe here for Hungary, is insufficient. As it stands, however, the Roma’s single official representative body has never been granted any effective political power to negotiate with the majority. Without any influence, the

role of the ORÖ as a national and local government becomes meaningless. Those who still aspire to a political career within the ORÖ have consistently demonstrated their incompetence and lack of leadership qualities. What the Hungarian case demonstrates is that tokenism of a few individuals, or civil organizations, only leads to superficial makeovers, avoiding the crucial task of addressing and eradicating poverty and discrimination in society.

Finally, I must stress, that Gypsies, regardless of their cultural and historical background, are regular people just like you and I. Throughout my encounters with them in Hungary and Romania, I have come to know many individuals – young and old, men and women, intellectuals, artists, as well as those who are unemployed and vagrant. From these experiences, I have learned that to truly connect with them, we must overcome both psychological and social barriers. Most importantly, I have also learned that mysticism and stereotypes aside, they try their best to navigate life in this complex world, ours and theirs. Some navigate skillfully, while others struggle. When we look at the past thirty or even 100 years of development, or rather retrogression, in majority and minority relations, it becomes clear that there is no holy grail when it comes to Roma education and labor participation. As much of the Roma civic society has been destroyed, I am disheartened to stress that we in Hungary are just at the beginning of confronting racism, discrimination, and anti-minority policies. The government of Hungary must face the truth: there is only one race in the world today, the human race. Well, we find ourselves in yet another race, the relentless pursuit of money and power. As we bear witness to the unpredictable ebbs and flows of this evolutionary marathon in Orbán's illiberalist nightmare, it becomes evident that the Hungarian state is on a path toward destruction. Unless unforeseen circumstances emerge in the next decade, we can expect a surge of hungry, impoverished, and unemployed, and not only the Roma, flooding the streets of Hungary, steadfastly refusing to succumb to defeat.

Notes

- 1 I utilize the ethnonyms Roma and Gypsy interchangeably, knowing well that lately even in Hungary the former has taken precedence over the latter. While politically, Roma may sound like the preferred and politically correct form, Gypsy and its Hungarian variant *Cigány* has been used as a term of reference and only in specific contexts is imbued with racist, xenophobic, and negative meaning. So, too, Roma can be used, as has been, both in a democratic and politically correct context and, also as an ethnic slur.
- 2 Pew Research Center, "Hungarians share Europe's embrace of democratic principles but are less tolerant of refugees, minorities," 30 September 2016, at www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/09/30/hungarians-share-europes-embrace-of-democratic-principles-but-are-less-tolerant-of-refugees-minorities/ [accessed on 8 February 2024].
- 3 For a cogent discussion of antigypsyism in Europe, see y Ismael Cortés Gómez and Markus End (eds.), *Dimensions of Antigypsyism in Europe* (Brussels: European Network Against Racism and Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, 2019), at <https://antigypsyism.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Dimensions-of-Antigypsyism-in-Europe.pdf> [accessed 20 November 2023].

- 4 Nemzeti Választási Bizottság, Decision 344/2019, at www.valasztas.hu/hatarozat-megijelenito/-/hatarozat/344-2019-nvb-hatarozat-a-phralipe-fuggetlen-cigany-szervezet-orszagosszervezete-kozponti-szervezet-jelolo-szervezet-altal-a-roma-orszagosszervezet-etisegi [accessed on 15 January 2024].
- 5 Martin Kovats, "Roma Politics and Policy in Hungary 1999–2003," in *European Yearbook of Minority Issues Online*, Vol. 2. Issue 1 (2002), pp. 73–93.
- 6 Imre D. Magyar, "Daróczi Ágnes: Merényletnek tartom, hogy azt mondták a szüleinknek, ne tanítsátok meg a gyermekeiteket cigányul," in *24Hu* (21 January 2024), at <https://24.hu/kultura/2024/01/21/daroczi-agnes-interju-cigany-nyelv-kultura-tortenelme/> [accessed on 23 January 2024].
- 7 Freedom House, *Hungary, Freedom in the World 2023*, at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/hungary/freedom-world/2023> [accessed 16 January 2024].
- 8 Out of the 2,122 national minority self-governments, 1,139 belong to the Roma/Gypsies. For statistics see, Központ Statisztikai Hivatal, *A települési nemzetiségi önkormányzatok nemzetiségek szerint, 2023. január 1*, at www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/fol/hu/fol0012.html [accessed on 9 February 2024].
- 9 Zoltan Barany, "Romani electoral politics and behavior," in *JEMIE – Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, 1 (2012), p. 2. at <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssor-62199> [accessed on 12 January 2024].
- 10 Some of the failed non-Roma interventions are described in János Ladányi and Ivan Szelényi, *A kirekesztettség változó formái* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2004), pp. 88–122; Kristóf Szombati, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Anti-Gypsyism and Right-Wing Politics in Hungary* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), p. xv. Local conflict in the town of Gyöngyöspata, and the various official governmental and oppositional steps to diminish it are described in the special report of the governmental committee "Az egyenruhás bűnözés folyamatát, hátterét és a gyöngyöspatai eseményeket feltáró, valamint az egyenruhás bűnözés felszámolását elősegítő eseti bizottság jelentése," Országgyűlés Hivatala, 29 March 2012, at www.parlament.hu/irom39/06574/06574.pdf [accessed on 11 January 2024].
- 11 Aidan McGarry, *Who Speaks for Roma? Political Representation of a Transnational Minority Community* (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd., 2010), pp. 159–160.
- 12 About the joint demonstration organized by Our Home, the Outlaw Army, and the Hungarian Defense Force, see "A cigánybűnözés ellen tüntetett a Mi Hazánk" (29 August 2023), at <https://mihazank.hu/a-ciganybunozes-ellen-tuntetett-a-mi-hazank/> [accessed on 16 September 2023].
- 13 For the Thematic Group, see <https://emberijogok.kormany.hu/romaugyekert-felelos-tematikus-munkacsoport> [accessed on 14 September 2023]. Information on the site is outdated and unreliable, the last minutes of the group's meeting dates from 9 November 2021, and several Roma civic associations exist on paper only.
- 14 Timofey Agarin, "Introduction," in Timofey Agarin (ed.), *When Stereotype Meets Prejudice: Antiziganism in European Societies* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2014), p. 11.
- 15 Péter Szuhay, *A magyarországi cigányok kultúrája: etnikus kultúra vagy a szegénység kultúrája* (Budapest: Panoráma, 1999), at <https://adatbank.ro/cedula.php?kod=2024> [accessed on 14 January 2024], p. 52.
- 16 Bernard Rorke, *Brutal and Bigoted: Policing Roma in the EU* (Brussels: European Roma Rights Center, 2022), pp. 27–35, at www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/5397_file1_brutal-and-bigoted-policing-roma-in-the-eu.pdf [accessed on 6 February 2024].

- 17 The 2012 report by the European Roma Rights Center may be accessed at www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/attacks-list-in-hungary.pdf [accessed on 19 January 2024].
- 18 For a history of the murders, see András Vágvölgyi B., *Arcvonal keleten: Történetek a romagyilkosságokról* (Budapest: Konkrét Könyvek, 2016); and János Tódor, *Vadászjelenetek Magyarországon - Gyűlölet-bűncselekmények Olaszliszkától a cigány sorozatgyilkosságig* (Budapest: Osiris, 2017). For a legal analysis, see, Endre Bócz, “Az úgynevezett ‘romagyilkosságok’ ügyének néhány tanulsága,” in *Belügyi Szemle*, Vol. 7–8 (2017), at <https://doi.org/10.38146/BSZ.2017.7-8.1> [accessed on 7 February 2024], pp. 5–37.
- 19 Amnesty International, “Violent Attacks against Roma in Hungary, Time to Investigate Racial Motivation,” Amnesty International Publications: 2010, at www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/eur270012010en.pdf [accessed on 8 February 2024].
- 20 Imre Bezerédi, “Kisebbségi koordinációs munkacsoportok a rendőrség és a roma kisebbség együttműködésének jegyében,” in *Belügyi Szemle*, Vol. 4. (2020), at <https://ojs.mtak.hu/index.php/belugyiszemle/article/view/3374/3763> [accessed on 7 February 2024], pp. 71–88.
- 21 For the Hungarian Self-Defense Force see their website at <https://magyaronvedelem.hu/> [accessed on 10 February 2024].
- 22 MIÉP emléktalálkozó, *Harmadik Út*, Mi Hazánk, Vol. 16, January 2024, at <https://mihazank.hu/harmadik-ut-16-szam-2024-január/> [accessed on 10 February 2024].
- 23 Mi Hazánk Mozgalom *Virradat Program*, 29 January 2022, at https://issuu.com/mihazank/docs/virradat_program_web02 [accessed on 9 February 2024].
- 24 Betyársereg, “Közerzetjavító sétát tartott a Betyársereg budapesti egysége” (23 December 2023), at <https://betyarsereg.hu/kozerzetjavito-setat-tartott-a-betyarsereg-budapesti-egysege/> [accessed on 8 February 2024].
- 25 Szentkorona Rádió, “Cigány gyilkosságok listája” (21 January 2024), at <https://szentkoronaradio.com/blog/2020/04/16/ciganyok-gyilkossagainak-listaja-csak-eros-idegzetueknek-2016-2020-iii-resz/> [accessed on 2 February 2024]; and Kurucinfo, “Cigánybűnözés,” in *Kuruc.info* (16 May 2020), at <https://kuruc.info/t/35/> [accessed on 10 February 2024].
- 26 National figures of criminality by regions, Hungarian police, Országos Rendőr-főkapitányság “Rendőrségi térképtár;Fertőzöttségi térképe” (30 December 2022), at <https://terkep.police.hu/portal/fertozottseg> [accessed on 10 February 2024].
- 27 Their successes and failures have been aptly documented in Hungarian and Canadian-Hungarian media, for academic perspectives, see Zsuzsanna Vidra (ed.), *Roma Migration to and From Canada: The Czech, Hungarian and Slovak Case* (Budapest: Central European University, 2023), at <https://cps.ceu.edu/sites/cps.ceu.edu/files/cps-book-roma-migration-2013.pdf> [accessed on 2 February 2024].
- 28 András Kovács (ed.), *Roma Migration*, Research Institute of Ethnic and National Minorities (Budapest: Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2002).
- 29 Julianna Beaudoin, Jennifer Danch, and Sean Rehaag, “No Refugee: Hungarian Romani Refugee Claimants in Canada,” in *Osgoode Legal Studies Research Paper Series*. Paper 94/2015, at <http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/olsrps/94> [accessed on 20 January 2024].
- 30 For the program, see A Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium által ellátott feladatok, at www.parlament.hu/irom38/03860/adatok/fejezetek/26.pdf [accessed on 8 February 2024].
- 31 Sára Hungler and Ágnes Kende, “Diverting Welfare Paths: Ethnicisation of Unemployment and Public Work in Hungary,” in *E-Cadernos Ces, Políticas laborais e*

- justiça redistributiva*, Vol. 35 (2021), at <https://journals.openedition.org/eces/6299#tocto2n6> [accessed on 8 February 2024], pp. 29–31; and Vera Messing and Bálint Ábel Bereményi, “Is ethnicity a meaningful category of employment policies for Roma? A comparative case study of Hungary and Spain,” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 10 (2017), pp. 1623–1642.
- 32 Kristóf Szombati, “The Consolidation of Authoritarian Rule in Rural Hungary: Workfare and the Shift from Punitive Populist to Illiberal Paternalist Poverty Governance,” in *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 73, No. 9 (2021), pp. 1703–1725.
- 33 Melinda Mihályi, “Újratermelődő ‘gettók’? – A helyi fejlesztés lehetőségei és korlátai egy szélsőségesen marginalizált kistelepülésen,” in *Tér és Társadalom*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2019), at <http://real.mtak.hu/107649/1/mihaly-ujratermelodo-.pdf> [accessed on 8 February 2024], p. 150.
- 34 László Kürti, “Orbánism: The culture of illiberalism in Hungary,” in *Ethnologia Europaea*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (2020), pp. 62–79, at <https://ee.openlibhums.org/article/id/1055/> [accessed on 2 February 2024].
- 35 For the economic explanation of political affiliation and voter support for Fidesz, see Bermond Scoggins, “Identity Politics or Economics? Explaining Voter Support for Hungary’s Illiberal FIDESZ,” in *East European Politics and Society, and Cultures*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (2020), pp. 3–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325420954535> [accessed on 8 February 2024].
- 36 On segregation, see Case Study: Combating Roma residential segregation, Hungary (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2009), at https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/602-ROMA_Housing_Case-final-ENHU.pdf [accessed on 2 February 2024].
- 37 On the Roma Self-Governments see, Martin Kovats, “The Political Significance of the first National Gypsy Minority Self Government (Országos Cigány Kisebbségi Önkormányzat),” in *Journal of Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe*, Vol. 1 (2001), pp. 1–25.
- 38 One case involved the regional Hungarian Evangelical Gypsy Mission (Magyar Pünkösdi Egyház Országos Cigánymisszió), known also as the Hungarian Gypsy Mission International, in the city of Békés. The eventual court decisions and fines forced the dismissal of the entire leadership, and a reorganization of the Mission. See Tamás Bod, “Nyolcmilliárdos kár a pünkösdistáknál: tudott róla az egyházvezetés, mégsem léptek.” *Magyar Narancs* (27 July 2022), at <https://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/nyolcmilliardoskar-a-punkosdistaknal-tudott-rola-az-egyhazvezetes-megsem-leptek-250976> [accessed on 20 January 2024].
- 39 See the interpellation by opposition MP Ágnes Vadai, “Miért szüntették meg az Országos Roma Önkormányzat ‘Híd a munka világába’ programjának ügyében – nagy vagyoni hátrányt okozó költségvetési csalás büntette és más bűncselekmények gyanúja miatt – indult nyomozást?” (14 December 2022), at www.parlament.hu/irom42/02387/02387.pdf [accessed on 14 January 2024].
- 40 Angéle Kóczé, “Political Empowerment or Political Incarceration of Romani? The Hungarian Version of the Politics of Dispossession,” in Péter Krasztev and Jon Van Til (eds.), *The Hungarian Patient: Social Opposition to an Illiberal Democracy* (Budapest & New York: Central European University Press, 2015), p. 103.
- 41 Kolompár is the president of Országos Cigány Önkormányzat (OCÖ), who was jailed in 2013 for 22 months, Index, “Egy év tíz hónapra ítélték Kolompár Orbánt,” 8 March 2013, 8 March 2013, at https://index.hu/belfold/2013/03/08/egy_ev_tiz_honapra_iteltek_kolompár_orbant/ [accessed on 8 February 2024].

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- 43 The largest of the school segregation cases concerned Roma pupils in the northeastern town of Tiszavasvári. After many years of bitter fighting and court decisions, the Curia ruled that flagrant human rights violation and discriminative school segregation was committed and fined the local government. For the documents of the case see *A Kúria szerint is diszkriminálta a romákat a Tiszavasvári Önkormányzat* (3 May 2019), at <https://tasz.hu/cikkek/a-kuria-szerint-is-diszkriminalta-a-romakat-a-tiszavasvari-onkor-manyzat> [accessed on 2 February 2024].
- 44 Tamás Hajdu, Gábor Kertesi, and Gábor Kézdi, “Romafiatalokaközépiskolában: Beszámoló a Társi Életpálya-felvételének 2006 és 2012 közötti hullámaiból,” *Budapest Working Papers on the Labour Market*, No. BWP – 2014/7,27 at www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/108503/1/bwp1407.pdf [accessed on 15 January 2024].
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- 48 The special program István Türr Educational and Research Institution was dissolved in 2016, only to be replaced by a more bureaucratic and selective Útravaló Ösztöndíjprogram. About the progress and difficulties see the report by the Autonomia Foundation, “Van ami jól megyen, van ami nem megy jól. A tanodák működéséről,” at <https://autonomia.hu/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Tanoda-kutat%C3%A1s-%C3%B6sszefoglal%C3%A1s.pdf> [accessed on 11 January 2024]. For special case-studies of Roma educational assistance program, see József Fejes Balázs, Máté Lencse, and Norbert Szűcs (eds.), *Mire jó a tanoda? A tanodaplatform keretében összegyűjtött innovációk, kutatások, történetek* (Szeged: Motiváció Oktatási Egyesület, 2016), at https://motivaciomuhely.hu/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Mire-j%C3%B3-a-tanoda_webfinal.pdf [accessed 4 February 2024].
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- 62 László Kürti, “Images of Roma in post-1989 Hungarian media,” in Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise Olga Vasvári (eds), *Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), pp. 296–307.
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- Scriptures and lends Dado some money to buy back his leather jacket. In the clip's final seconds, the singer returns to his family and happily hugs his three children. I leave it to the reader to make sense of the message of this music video, at www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfGdQ4s-LD8 [accessed 4 February 2024]. Romanticized narratives are ubiquitous in clips of other popular Roma musicians and singers such as Ham Ko Ham, LL Junior, Balogh Trio, Caramel, Joci Pápai, Kis Grófo, Notár Mary, and others.
- 64 For an apt chronology of illiberalist development in Hungary, see András L. Pap, *Democratic Decline in Hungary: Law and Society in an Illiberal Democracy* (London & New York: Routledge, 2018), especially Chapters 1 and 2.
- 65 Anthony Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), p. 144.
- 66 This is attested by, for instance, Barbara R. Lange, *Local Fusions: Folk Music Experiments in Central Europe at the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Lynn M. Hooker, "From Cafe to State to Museum: The Transformation of the Gypsy Music Industry in 20th Century Hungary." *Hungarian Studies*, vol. 29. (2015), at <http://real.mtak.hu/37657/1/044.2015.29.1-2.8.pdf> [accessed on 7 February 2024], pp. 121–134; Naomi Bath, *The Contemporary Folk Music Scene in Budapest: Explorations of Revival and Post-Revival*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London, 2017, at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/131177086.pdf> [accessed on 8 February 2024]; Mary Taylor, *Movement of the People: Hungarian Folk Dance, Populism, and Citizenship* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2021); and Jessica Vansteenburgh, *Transnationalism and Popular Music at Transylvanian Hungarian Festivals*, Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Colorado, 2019.
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- 68 Galambos accomplished this by tampering with electricity, water, and gas meters. Hirado.hu, "Marad a börtönben: másodfokon is elutasította a bíróság Galambos Lajos otthonápolási kérelmét," 13 April 2023, at <https://hirado.hu/belfold/cikk/2023/04/13/lagzi-lajcsi-borton-halasztasi-kerelem-birosag/> [accessed on 6 February 2024].
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