

Dimensions of Antigypsyism in Europe

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Escaping the Labyrinth of Roma Political Representation. Reflections on Common Citizenship¹

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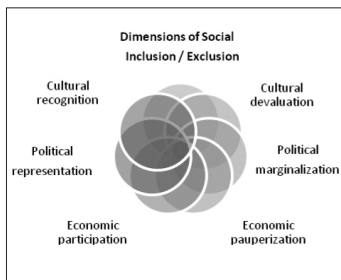
Introduction

The fall of state socialism in Europe led to new social conflicts, putting historical injustices and claims for recognition at the core of debates on inequality. With this approach, struggles for justice go beyond demands for economic equality among individuals (see Figure 1 below). In the words of social philosopher Axel Honneth:

For victims of historical disrespect, [recognition] has the direct function of tearing them out of the crippling situation of passively endured humiliation and helping them, in turn, on their way to a new, positive relation-to-self (Honneth, 1995: 164).

In the post-Socialist juncture, studies in the theory of recognition designed new models of justice, aiming to transform structural mechanisms of social exclusion. In Fraser's own words, this project of social transformation: "aimed at correcting [societal] inequitable outcomes precisely by restructuring the underlying generative framework" (Fraser, 1995: 82). For this purpose, economic redistribution policies were considered as systemically intertwined with policies of cultural recognition and new strategies for political representation (Fraser, 1997; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Fraser, 2014).

In this context, the notion of "exclusion" describes a state in which certain groups are unable to participate in different



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areas of economic, cultural and political life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state. As the United Nations (UN) recognise: “exclusion entails not only material deprivation, but also lack of agency over important decisions as well as feelings of alienation and inferiority” (United Nations, 2016: 18).

In this political scenario, theoretical tools such as feminist critique, post-colonial theory and critical race studies deployed a review of deliberative democracy, by tackling power relations embodied in ethnicity, gender, class and nationality (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2003; Andersen & Hill Collins, 1992). In line with these intellectual and political developments, Honneth sustains that

We may justify principles of justice only by locating them in the relations of [political] communication themselves, in their conditions of validity. This alternative procedure could thus be termed ‘reconstructive’, because it does not accept an impartial standpoint from which to justify principles of justice, but ‘reconstructs’ them within the historical process of relations of recognition in which they are always already at work (Honneth, 2012: 47).

At the core of this definition of justice, beyond any *corpus juris*, lies the right to claim rights. This requires a democratic redistribution of technical, symbolic and economic resources; as well as channels for dialogue with power drivers such as governmental / intergovernmental institutions and political parties.

Through institutional discourse analysis, this article looks at the ways in which texts crystallise a complex process of policy institutionalisation; and how texts are key instruments of influencing and ruling politics (Smith & Turner, 2014; Hult & Johnson, 2015; Peacock, 2017). It examines the genesis of EU Roma policies, pointing out two core antinomies: a) the ethnicity blind liberal conception of individual emancipation has been reproducing interethnic inequality, due to its inability to counter deeply rooted antigypsyism

as a mechanism of social exclusion;² and b) the ethno-communitarian concept of collective emancipation has revealed the limitations of civic initiatives based on NGO networks, while power differentials in democratic bodies and public institutions continue to be unaddressed. To overcome such antinomies, the paper explores different political scenarios to enable pathways for Roma equality by enacting processes of common citizenship.

The Unfinished Road of Minority Rights for Roma in Europe

Minority rights imply State protection of cultural diversity while enacting a democratic ground for common citizenship. The most important normative document for minority rights is the “UN Declaration on the rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities”, adopted in 1992. This declaration establishes fundamental norms for managing diversity and ensuring non-discrimination of minorities. Articles 1.1, 2.3 and 5.1 contain crucial aspects:

Article 1.1: States shall protect the identity and national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic existence of minorities within their respective territories and shall foster conditions for the promotion of that identity.

Article 2.3: Persons belonging to minorities shall have the right to participate effectively in decisions taken at national level and, where appropriate, at regional level with respect to the minority to which they belong or of the regions in which they live, in any way which is not incompatible with national legislation.

2 There are different definitions of the term “antigypsyism”: A) *Antigypsyism* is a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among other things, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination (ECRI, 2011). B) Antigypsyism is a specific nature of racism directed towards Roma, on a par with anti-Semitism: a) it is persistent both historically and geographically (permanent and not decreasing); b) it is systematic (accepted by virtually all the community); c) it is often accompanied by acts of violence (Council of Europe, 2012). C) *Antigypsyism* is a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma “gypsy” or other related terms, and incorporates: 1. Homogenising and essentialising the perception and description of these groups; 2. The attribution of specific characteristics to them; 3. Discriminating social structures and violent practices that emerge against that background, which have a degrading and ostracising effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages (Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016).

Article 5.1: National policies and programs shall be planned and implemented with due regard for the legitimate interests of persons belonging to minorities.

On 2 February 1993 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe approved the first recommendation on “Gypsies in Europe. Recommendation 1203.” Here the Roma were defined as follows:

as a non-territorial minority a special place among the minorities is reserved for Gypsies. Living scattered all over Europe, not having a country to call their own, they are a true European minority, but one that does not fit into the definitions of national or linguistic minorities (Council of Europe, 1993).

This definition plays a double role: a) on the one hand, it recognises the Roma as a “true European minority”; and b) on the other hand, it considers them neither a national minority nor a linguistic minority. Despite this initial ambiguity, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe, 1994) applies a flexible approach and does not stick to definitions of national minorities. In fact, the Roma are mentioned in all opinions of the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ACFC).³ ACFC recommendations to state parties cover major Roma issues, among others those related to articles 14 or 15 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM):

Article 14: in areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language.

³ See detailed opinions of the FCNM on the webpage: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/country-specific-monitoring>. Therefore, Roma are not excluded from the FCNM, although many countries indeed do not respect their rights and deny their access to many spheres covered by articles of the FCNM (ACFC, 2016).

Article 15: the parties shall create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural, social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them (Council of Europe, 1994: 6).

In the 2000 report on the “Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area”, the High Commissioner on National Minorities, van der Stoep, raised attention to the actual vulnerability of Roma rights. Moreover, the report acknowledged the Roma as a transnational ethnic minority, present across Europe, and sharing a common history and language. It also pointed out that the high number of Roma living in poverty is the result of centuries of political persecution. The report also provided two main recommendations on political engagement:

- Inclusiveness: mechanisms for securing Romani participation in shaping major policy initiatives are most likely to be effective and legitimate if they involve a broadly representative process.
- Involvement of Roma in implementation and evaluation: Roma should be meaningfully involved not only in developing but also implementing and evaluating the success of programmes aimed at improving the conditions of Romani communities (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2000: 161-162).

The above mentioned report influenced the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, specifically its “Recommendation 1557. On the legal situation of Roma in Europe”:

Roma form a special minority group, in so far as they have a double minority status. They are an ethnic community and most of them belong to the socially disadvantaged groups of society. Most Roma are currently faced with a rather severe economic situation in most of the member countries of the Council of Europe. Despite efforts in the social field, the market economy, especially the neo-liberal version of it, has marginalized disadvantaged social groups including Roma even in the most developed European countries (Council of Europe, 2002).

The analyses of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Council of Europe (CoE) evolved together, influencing each other mutually. These analyses eventually led to the “Action plan on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE area” (OSCE, 2003). This is a comprehensive plan that covers anti-discrimination measures, social and economic inclusion measures and political empowerment initiatives. However, this plan was never given sufficient funding to be implemented.

In parallel, the World Bank (WB) in partnership with the Open Society Foundations (OSF) designed an alternative plan for Roma inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), aiming to close the gap between Roma and non-Roma in four key areas: education, employment, healthcare and housing. This came out a year before the enlargement process of the European Union,⁴ when Roma poverty openly became a “security threat” for the entire EU, due to negative perceptions on the migration flux from CEE to the West (Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Stewart, 2012; van Baar, Ivasiuc & Kreide, 2018). Already in 1999, foreseeing tensions between EU members and accessing countries, policy commitments with special inclusion programmes for Roma became a precondition for joining the EU.

In the EU enlargement context, the WB published three main reports (2002; 2005; 2010) that provided fundamental arguments to adopt and implement a framework for Roma inclusion: first through the “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015” in CEE, and later in the entire EU through the “EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020”. The WB brought to the table a strong utilitarian argument, by referring to the benefits of integrating Roma into the labour market for European societies. It foresaw substantial societal gains such as: reducing social welfare spending; growing economic productivity; rising fiscal benefits; and reducing the risk of crimes driven by social exclusion and poverty (World Bank, 2010: 15-21).

4 On 1 May 2004 eight Central and Eastern European countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), plus two Mediterranean countries (Malta and Cyprus) joined the European Union. Although Romania and Bulgaria were initially deemed not fully ready to join in 2004 by the Commission, they became EU members on 1 January 2007.

What have been the results of these plans so far? What are the main critiques from a minority rights perspective?

The Roma, an Unaccounted Political Subject

In its last assessment report, the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation (2015) concluded that: “the Decade has failed to make an impact on the daily lives of the majority of Roma”. There is a general consensus on the causes that led to this failure: a) lack of funding; b) unclear and insufficient role of Roma actors in decision making processes; c) lack of involvement of high level authorities in the implementation of the Decade at national level; d) local Roma communities were not aware of the existence of these integration plans (Brüggemann & Friedman, 2017).

It is also relevant to mention that five years after the adoption of the so called “EU Roma framework”, the European Commission (EC) recognised in its 2017 communication on the mid-term review: “insufficient Roma participation in decision making processes, and therefore the need to promote an active role of the Roma, taking an integrated approach to policy interventions” (European Commission, 2017).

In addition, the assessment of the “EU Roma Framework” commissioned by the Open Society European Policy Institute underlined that the EU Roma framework leads to inconsistent approaches toward the issue of “inclusion”, confounding social and ethnic categories (Mirga-Kruszelnicka, 2017). As a result of this lack of clarity, the debate has been misled into economic terms, by labelling the Roma as an underclass population. In the meantime, the debate on the political dimensions of racist exclusion has been overshadowed. Indeed, as indicated by the “EC Report on the implementation of the EU framework for Roma inclusion”:

Roma communities are funded mainly under the objective of social inclusion, in particular from measures financed through the priority “integrating disadvantaged people” [...] It should be emphasized however that in most cases non-Roma disadvantaged people can benefit from the same measures (European Commission, 2014: 13).

To understand the logic behind this framing, we must acknowledge that the EC has “no competences on the recognition of the status of minorities; their self-determination and autonomy; their governing regime; the use of regional or minority languages” (Carrera et al, 2017: 14).

Based on the commitment of EU Member States to fulfil the Copenhagen criteria on the protection of minorities (European Council, 1993), the EC assumed that the EU-15 had satisfactorily resolved all questions relating to ethnic or national minorities. The protection of minorities was therefore one of the political criteria for accession in the context of EU enlargement in Central and Eastern Europe. This has led to the so-called “Copenhagen dilemma”: while most CEE countries formally recognised the status of ethnic or national minorities (including the Roma), such recognition is still lacking in several western European countries.⁵

Besides the Copenhagen dilemma in the EU, scholars like Galbreath and McEvoy have pointed out three fundamental critiques to the Europe-wide “Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities”:

- First: it lacks a definition of “national minority”. This lack of a definition raises fundamental questions about who the Convention applies to – all minorities within a state or just those that the state chooses to recognise.
- Second: it establishes a monitoring system for state policies but not a “supranational enforcement mechanism”.
- Third: the Convention does not specify what the appropriate government policies should be to ensure effective implementation. A considerable limitation of the Convention’s potential impact is that its implementation is dependent on domestic politics and legislation (Galbreath & McEvoy, 2012: 85-87).

The inconsistent minority rights scheme in Europe makes it very difficult for the Roma to consolidate a recognised democratic and

⁵ EU Member States which do not recognise the Roma either as an ethnic or as a national minority are Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.

legitimate voice (or voices). Therefore, Roma participation in governmental / intergovernmental institutions lacks the power to meaningfully impact decision making processes. What political options have been explored so far? And what possible scenarios can be imagined for the future?

Roma Voices Claiming Representation

On 1 January 2001 the International Romani Union (IRU) released its “Declaration of a Roma Nation”, under the presidency of Emil Ščuka. It states a very ambiguous claim:

Individuals belonging to the Roma Nation call for a representation of their Nation, which does not want to become a State. We ask for being recognized as a Nation, for the sake of Roma and of non-Roma individuals, who share the need to deal with the new challenges nowadays [...] we have a dream, and we are engaged in fulfilling it. We are a Nation, we share the same tradition, the same culture, the same origin, the same language; we are a Nation (Acton & Klímová, 2001: 216-217).

One may ask: representation where? / recognition by whom? In the 1980s IRU was given consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council. In the 1990s it created relevant institutional links with the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. One can therefore assume that IRU was asking for representation as a “nation” in such intergovernmental bodies. But again, a series of questions comes up: Who are the constituencies represented by IRU? On which legal basis could IRU claim nationhood for a transnational diaspora such as the Roma? What are the political limits of NGO networks taken as representative structures?

IRU’s model for Roma representation was established during the Second World Roma Congress (Prague, April 1978): connecting Roma communities through small local organisations, federating them under an international umbrella organisation, and claiming legitimacy from (virtually) the entire Roma people. Since then, different international Roma movements have followed the same pattern: the Roma National Congress (RNC, Hamburg, 1980), the

Secretariat of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF, Strasbourg, 2005) and the European Roma Grassroots Organisation (ERGO, Brussels, 2008). However, this will for self-determination and self-representation has not been significantly translated into actual political power (van Baar, 2011; Kocze, 2012; Rostas, 2012; Vermeersch, 2017).

In the 1990s Nicolae Gheorghe explained that

within the framework of a new Europe extending its democratic standards and borders, Romani elites are attempting to enter European politics and to gain political representation and recognition of their ethnicity. The Roma are among the last groups in Europe to discover the potential and power of ethno-nationalism and to struggle for a political space of their own (Gheorghe & Mirga, 1997: 2).

Gheorghe was a Romanian sociologist, deputy president of the International Romani Union (1990-1999) and head of the OSCE-ODIHR Roma contact point (1999-2006). During his mandate at the OSCE, he played a major role as a mediator in the negotiations that led to merging the two biggest international Roma organisations of those times, IRU and NRC, into one umbrella organisation under the patronage of the Council of Europe: the Secretariat of the European Roma and Travellers Forum. In 2009, ERTF published its “Charter on the Rights of Roma”, stating in article 6:

We Roma have the right to self-determination, in accordance with international law including: the right to cultivate one’s cultural autonomy, the right to freely promote our economic, social and cultural development and to select our partners, projects and programs on our own (European Roma and Travellers Forum, 2009: 6).

Gheorghe defended that “ERTF should have a parliamentary structure under the supervision of the Council of Europe’s parliamentary assembly, to prepare the way for an elected European Roma Parliament” (Gheorghe, 2013: 76). However, besides the lack of political will in the highest intergovernmental bodies, three factors blocked the development of a legitimate democratic process that could lead to a transnational Roma parliament: 1) in countries where

Roma are recognised as a national or ethnic minority, there are no reliable data to establish a rigorous ethnic census (Roma Initiatives Office, 2010; Carrera et al, 2017); 2) there are major European countries which do not recognise the Roma either as an ethnic or as a national minority; 3) in Germany and Sweden, where the Sinti and Roma are officially recognised as a national minority, it is forbidden to collect and use ethnic data for any political purpose.

Thus, the basic *conditio sine qua non* to build a recognised and legitimate democratic representation, i.e. to count on an official electoral census, was then (and still is) missing. Eventually, in 2015 the Council of Europe stopped funding ERTF. Since then, its political leverage has decreased significantly. What can we learn from this experience? And what are the alternatives for Roma political representation?

A Pathway Towards Common Citizenship

From my view point, there are two main lessons learned from the experience of ERTF: 1. the limits of ethno-politics in Europe; and 2. the nature of European liberal democracy on the basis of common citizenship.

1. The Limits of Ethno-politics in the EU

If we look at the EU legislative framework, it does not include a viable liberal-democratic form of multiculturalism (Kymlicka, 2007; Malloy, 2013). The EU is based on a liberal (ethnicity blind) conception of citizenship, articulated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Nice, 2000) and the different treaties (Maastricht, 1992; Amsterdam, 1997; Nice, 2001; Lisbon, 2007).

Aiming to prevent dynamics of *ethno politics / ethno policies*, the EU put at the core of its values the general principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. In this sense, the Lisbon Treaty built on the definition of EU citizenship, asserting a claim of equality for all EU citizens and defining exactly who those citizens would be:

Article 8: In all its activities, the Union shall observe the principle of the equality of its citizens, who shall receive equal attention

from its institutions, bodies, offices and agencies. Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship and shall not replace it (Lisbon Treaty, 2007).

The “EU Roma framework” represents an exceptional case, in which a single ethnic group is the target of an EU policy. This situation has been problematised by different scholars, starting from one of its main intellectual architects: Martin Kovats. He contributed to the development of the “EU’s 10 common basic principles on Roma inclusion” (European Commission, 2010). Moreover, from 2010 to 2013 he was the special advisor on Roma issues to the former EU Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, László Andor. Kovats advocates for (ethnicity blind) universal principles of justice, when he affirms:

regardless of what distinct cultural characteristics Roma people may share to a greater or lesser extent (or not at all), Roma are also citizens with the same rights and subject to the same economic, legal and political systems, part of the same national societies and cultures as their non-Roma compatriots. Integration, inclusion, equality of opportunity are concepts that must be meaningfully applied to real people in accordance with their actual circumstances (Kovats, 2012: 3).

This creates a paradoxical situation, in which a transnational ethnic minority that is not recognised as such by many EU Member States and experts (including Kovats himself), is at the same time the target of an EU policy framework. So, one may ask: on which basis are Roma targeted if there is no ethnic ground for such a policy decision? According to Kovats and Surdu, the category “Roma” is “an expert-political construction” (Kovats & Surdu, 2015; Surdu, 2016). They argue that

Roma is a dynamic political identity constructed mainly from above and from outside by political and expert communities and thereafter applied or adopted by people subjected to public labelling and policy interventions (Kovats & Surdu, 2015: 7).

This definition reproduces the paradox of the Roma being the subject of policy interventions, while being denied their own real subjectivity outside expert and policy frames. Who can define the Roma if not Roma themselves? And who speaks for the Roma if not Roma themselves?

As we have seen already, special mechanisms for minority representation are blocked by design in major EU countries. And the European Parliament (EP) has not developed any mechanism to facilitate political representation of ethnic minorities. Thus, Roma politics operate *de facto* through NGO networks. This political scenario has forced the Roma to play in such an asymmetrical power game that it has generated what Iulius Rostas (2012) called “a tokenistic relationship”. This is a form of political manipulation that consists of placing NGO leaders on advisory governmental / inter-governmental bodies or *ad hoc* committees, to get legitimacy from them; while their opinions are not substantially taken into account in agenda setting processes, budgetary decisions or policy design.

The words of the current director of the Roma Initiatives Office at the Open Society Foundations, Zeljko Jovanovic, reflect this:

Unlike other minorities that built their political organization on the model of political parties, we [Roma] have built our model on the NGO structure. This means a higher dependency on external sources, public or private donors. And on some occasions, they have capitalized on our human resources against us. I believe that more and more people are realizing about it. Now, we need to build new power structures, to develop our own emancipatory strategy (Cortés & Jovanovic, 2017).

How could this power imbalance be reverted to enable a fair political negotiation among Roma citizens and power holders?

2. The Nature of EU Liberal Democracy on the Basis of Common Citizenship

McGarry and Agarín (2014) bring a very relevant political question to the Roma case: how to ensure effective participation for minorities? They refer to three dimensions of participation: 1) politics of presence;

2) politics of voice; 3) politics of influence. I would add one more: politics of representation. This fourth dimension constitutes a challenge both for the Romani movement(s) and for mainstream political parties.

So far, the public presence of hundreds of Roma activists in institutional settings has been promoted by NGO networks, through different periodical events such as the EU Roma summits, the EU Roma platform, the EU Roma week and other similar meetings. The voices of some Roma activists can be heard in these meetings. In a much more select way, a few NGO leaders have access to bilateral meetings with high representatives from the European Parliament, the EC, the OSCE and the CoE, and can influence the decision making process. Therefore, we can say that the three dimensions of participation mentioned by McGarry and Agarín are already taking place within the current model of “NGOisation” of Roma politics. However, the fourth dimension, i.e. politics of representation, remains far off on the horizon.

As Vermeersch recognises: “Roma remain underrepresented in local and national assemblies... [and] the presence of minorities and vulnerable groups in representatives’ structures is a requirement in any society committed to democratic equality” (Vermeersch, 2017: 209). One may ask: what are the venues to participate in democratic representative structures? My answer is mainstream political parties. This requires critical efforts from both sides: a) from the side of Roma activists, this means acquiring new political knowledge and commitment to mainstream social problems; b) from the side of political parties, this implies mainstreaming Roma issues in all policy discussions, and furthermore, challenging the racist perceptions of their electorates; and c) from both sides, it requires the will to cooperate and to build common ground to mobilise the grassroots.

By principle, cultural and political identities should not coincide, for the sake of open democratic societies. The equation cultural identity equals political identity is a core axiom of fascism. On the contrary, according to EU liberal axiology, intercultural dialogue broadens the horizon of freedom, by opening up the possibility of developing a multiple and fluid identity, in what Bauman and Mauro call the “XXI century Babel” (Bauman & Mauro, 2016). Civic initiatives

play a central role in building social solidarity. This work is crucial at a time when “Social Europe” is in severe crisis (Kovats & Law, 2018; Taba & Ryder, 2018).

To illustrate the strategy of representation that I stand for, I would like to highlight the case of the Romani candidate for the Senate in France, Anina Ciuciu, in 2017. For her candidacy with *Europe Ecologie - les Verts*, she coordinated efforts to find a common denominator between Roma activism and other activist movements. As she described herself:

We chose to build "Our Future" [campaign slogan] not on identity basis, but on the concrete struggles for social and environmental justice, the equality of rights, the abolition of sexist and racist relations of domination, as well as on the values of resistance, justice and dignity, and in order to rebuild popular sovereignty from the multiplicity that we constitute (Ciuciu, 2018: 118).

Even though she did not gain a seat in the Senate, through her candidacy she put into play: 1) a strategy of politics of presence in many institutional settings and civil society meetings, by showing that her Romani identity is not isolated from the rest of society; 2) a strategy of politics of voice in public debates, national and international media, and academic events; and 3) a strategy of politics of influence within her own party and other parties close to her ideology.

As we can see, the strategy of politics of representation includes the three other dimensions of political participation: presence, influence and voice. Moreover, through her candidacy, Anina Ciuciu overcame the political blockade imposed on minorities in Europe (and especially in France). This innovative political strategy, initiated by a young French Romani woman (of Romanian origin), escaped the labyrinth of minority politics; and it opened a door for what she calls “a trans-minority multiplicity”. In her new position as a candidate for the Senate within a mainstream political party, she did not have to fit into the box that governmental / intergovernmental institutions imposed on her as a young Romani woman. On the contrary, she defended her own vision for the whole country, as a potential representative of the French people.

Conclusions

The article underlines how strategies for economic inclusion have failed, to a large extent, because of the lack of political involvement of Roma communities at national and local level. This form of exclusion continues to be the core element of a subtle and persistent antigypsyism.

In this rationale, the article shows how representation of minorities, in general, and of Roma, in particular, is blocked by institutional design in the EU: liberal democracy is a system made by majorities for majorities. In this logic, minorities remain either on the margins of politics or totally aside. Claims for recognition and representation from international bodies did not change the situation in practice. This article therefore proposes a way to build solidarity with other groups on the basis of common citizenship.

Through the case study, the article reflects on the nature of citizenship and the process of constitution of a complex political subjectivity: not on the basis of identity, but on a multiplicity of social groups fighting for equality from the margins of the system. With this approach, political identities are not ready-made structures that are culturally bounded; but fluid and adaptive structures that respond to contingent critical junctures. This is a way to re-articulate institutional regimes of rights, from the perspective of coordinated acts of citizenship.

In this framework, civil society groups such as NGOs, religious institutions, community service organisations or trade unions, are all power structures that can give a voice and provide influence to specific groups. However, beyond the strategies of voicing and influencing, to achieve an impactful strategy of representation, different groups need to figure out tactics of coalition building and solidarity. Such a coalition building would be united by a political party and decentralised by multiple civic constituencies. In this sense, bringing heterogeneous social demands under one political platform does not mean homogenisation / uniformisation of diverse social or cultural identities.

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