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Engaging with Decolonisation, Tackling Antigypsyism: Lessons from Teaching Romani Studies at the Central European University in Hungary

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In discussions about 'race', empire, imperialism – and the decolonisation of the curriculum in European universities – the discipline of Romani Studies has, until recently, been relatively quiet. This article seeks to address this silence and offers commentary on the institutional silences, via both disciplinary historical and contemporary country-specific analysis. A case study is investigated to tease out the ontological and epistemological transitions from early 19th Century Gypsyism to 21st Century Critical Romani Studies: the teaching and learning of Romani Studies at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. We argue that the legacy of Gypsyism, as much as the political climate in which the teaching and learning of contemporary Romani Studies occurs, are important aspects to consider. In moving forwards, we suggest that the models and pedagogies adopted at CEU since 2015 offer a useful and critical template for other universities and departments to consider adopting in progressing Romani knowledge production.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Roma, antigypsyism, Romani studies, CEU.

Introduction

This article offers critical reflections on how the discipline of Romani Studies fits within a decolonised curriculum that enhances and promotes emancipated, liberated Romani knowledge (Acton, 2009). The lens through which this debate is viewed involves examining the Romani Studies programmes at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. To help contextualise the CEU case study, attention is given to how Romani knowledge production has shifted and progressed from a Gypsyist past to a critical Romani studies present. We argue that student and staff reflections and learning experiences are helping to shape a pathway to decolonised knowledge production in the area of Romani Studies, and likely, ethnic and racial studies more broadly (Suárez-Krabbe, 2017).

Importantly, the article considers the wider context of recent developments at CEU, in light of the Hungarian political climate and the anti-intellectual attacks on CEU by Viktor Orbán's populist Government (Mos, 2020). In such hostile environments, it is evident that the teaching of Romani Studies must dovetail with broader decolonisation theories,

methods and practices regarding issues such as curriculum content, assessment strategies, staff/faculty biographies and reading lists. Further, pro-active recruitment strategies that focus on both the pastoral and academic needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students attending University are crucial in securing cohorts who can graduate with a renewed sense of purpose and pride in not just their identity and language, but also their attainment and future careers. To tackle antigypsyism across Europe requires a decolonised knowledge base that extends beyond the walls of CEU and into all places of higher education and progressive learning.

The article is divided into four sections – first, looking at the discipline of Romani Studies and the legacy of Gypsyism; secondly, examining the political climate of antigypsyism in Hungary, where CEU is based; thirdly, providing an overview of teaching and learning of Romani Studies at CEU; fourthly, and finally, an analysis of decolonisation efforts in Romani studies and future pathways for the discipline to help enact wider social change. We begin by assessing the legacy of Gypsyism and the contemporary discipline of Romani Studies.

The discipline of Romani studies and the legacy of Gypsyism

Romani Studies began as part of the larger European colonial project, in which, beginning at the end of the Eighteenth Century, the production of knowledge and the framing of that knowledge as 'science' became part of the foundation and expansion of European empires into the Middle East, Africa, Asia and beyond. As part of colonial management and governance, science, and the creation of archives – along with museums and laboratories dedicated to understanding the cultures, people, languages and everyday lives of the colonised – a body of knowledge about Europe's Others was produced and would later come to be known as 'Area Studies'. As Edward Said argues in *Orientalism* (1978: 3), this body of knowledge was constituted through an:

:: : enormous systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.

Romani Studies arose at the same time, in the form of what Ken Lee (2000) and others have called 'Gypsyism'. Both Orientalism and Gypsyism were at the heart of colonial practices of governance, extraction and dominance – and, as such, they not only documented and described the subjects of their study, but, rather, they managed and produced them as *legible* subjects of empire. Drawing from Said (1978), Lee (2000: 132) argues:

Gypsyism can thus be seen as that field of study that discursively constitutes as its subjects 'The Gypsies.' Like Orientalism, Gypsyism is a discursive formation that emerges from asymmetrical exchanges of power of different sorts (political, economic, cultural, intellectual and moral) that in turn help to reconstitute and perpetuate the unequal exchanges that underlay the initial discursive formation.

It is not only that Orientalism and Gypsyism were concomitantly produced as disciplines, but Romani people were produced as the quintessential internal 'Other'. In the formulation of Smart and Croft (1875: xvi), 'Gypsies are the Arabs of Pastoral England – the

Bedouins of our commons and woodlands. In these days of material progress and much false refinement, they present the singular spectacle of a race in our midst who regard with philosophic indifference the much-prized comforts of modern civilisation :: : ' In this pursuit of scientific knowledge, there is a co-production of 'Gypsies' alongside 'Arabs' and 'Bedouins' as pre-modern and outside of civilisation. This formation of scientific documentation of 'other' languages, 'other' cultures, 'other' peoples, not only sets up a binary of 'us' vs. 'them', but constructs that difference around who is modern and civilised – thus reinforcing the colonial project of modernising and civilising as a continuous one, continually justifying the colonial production of (material) difference.

While Gypsyism and its practitioners in the British Isles and beyond, whose Oxford and Cambridge degrees justified their scholarly pursuits, the status of science would not have been possible without the trappings of the archive, the journal, and the scientific society. The archive and the scientific society, as well as the subjects of study, were formed with the creation of the journal in Edinburgh in 1888 (MacRitchie, 1888). The first issues of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* published current and past studies by non-Roma about Romani subjects, documenting the Romani language and its dialects, folklore, ethnographic practices and family structures and histories. These self-proclaimed non-Roma *Romani Rais* – 'Gypsy Kings' – were mostly men (Borrow, 1851; 1857), though some women, including the prominent Dora Yates of Liverpool, became part of the Romani Studies canon. While they did crucial work in documenting Romani language and history, with some also making-up stories that became included in the canon as fact, they were – in the fashion of parallel imperial and colonial projects – actively constructing the Romani subject over which to rule. In the same way, the epicentres of Romani Studies were at the same time imperial epicentres: London, Paris and Budapest, as well as Madrid, Bucharest and Edinburgh.

This particular combination of scientism and fantasy came to mark the imperial project just as much as it marked the Romani Studies project. The Editor's note in the very first issues of the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (MacRitchie, 1888) points to what we would argue is a parallel corporate institution for dealing with the Romani subject – its archive, its Journal, and its defining logic. As Lee (2000) argues, all of the elements laid out by Said (1978) are part of the Gypsyist project, bounded by the scientism of 'formulating results' and finding 'true answers.'

'Good wine needs no bush,' and our Journal, we trust, will thrive without self-commendation. Still, a word may be said as to its aims. These are to gather new materials, rearrange the old, and to formulate results, so as little by little to approach the goal—the final solution to the Gypsy problem. It has already been solved, but in so many and in such diverse ways, that the true answer still remains a matter of doubt, if indeed the true answer has ever yet been given.' (MacRitchie, 1888: 1)

In its 1888 formation, the 'final solution to the Gypsy problem' is an academic one, to be solved by knowledge production and careful scholarly debate. It is no coincidence that the same language is deployed forty years later; to make this connection, we have to understand the larger context – even down to the formation of the scientific question as a solution to a problem – *a Gypsy problem*.

Having briefly reviewed the discipline area of Romani Studies, and the history and legacy of Gypsyism, we now look at the political climate of antigypsyism in Hungary

and the impact this has had on how Romani Studies has developed and been taught at the CEU. We argue that a fundamental understanding of the political geography and spatial locations where decolonised curriculums are actually taking place and being taught is both fundamentally required and necessary.

The political climate of antigypsyism in Hungary

Despite a rich and multi-layered history of multi-culturalism, a truthful history and contemporary understanding of Hungary cannot be written without reference to anti-gypsyism or, indeed, antisemitism (Rorke, 2021). With a focus on the last decade or so, certainly since Viktor Orbán began his second term as Prime Minister in 2010, it is evident that antigypsyism has been mainstreamed in nativist, populist political dialogue in Hungary. Of note, this step-change in state-sanctioned racism directed towards Hungary's Roma population has occurred at a time when European Union and other transnational actors have attempted to advocate for policies and strategies encouraging Roma socio-economic inclusion and integration (Kende *et al.*, 2020). The truth is that advocating antigypsyism in political platforms is a position that can help win votes: this is more than demonstrated when examining the policies, and recent election successes, of Fidesz, the ruling party in Hungary. Indeed, it has been noted by Kürti (2020) that Trump, Brexit and other shifts in global politics have been used by Fidesz and Orbán to legitimise the push towards illiberalism and xenophobic populism at home.

What is important to appreciate here is the fact that the Hungarian brand of antigypsyism, as promoted by Orbán, Fidesz, Jobbik and other state and far-right non-state actors, is one that also advocates and practices antisemitism. Further, the range of policies and practices endorsed are solidly anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism in their positioning. Tremlett and Messing (2015) have argued that there is evidence of what they call 'old' and 'new' racism in Hungary that has what they call 'Romaphobia' (antigypsyism) at its core. The 'old' forms are institutional and deeply embedded – they are structural in nature and span most areas of social policy, such as education, health, housing, employment. These forms of everyday exclusion breed racialised stereotypes and tropes of 'Roma poverty' and 'Roma crime'. The 'new' forms that Tremlett and Messing (2015) refer to include the rise of right-wing violence with increased verbal and physical attacks, as well as the everyday acceptability of such 'reasonable antigypsyism', as van Baar (2014) phrases it.

Set within this context, we can see that the political climate of antigypsyism in Hungary is influenced by a deep legacy, as well as a continuation of, structural and racialised exclusion. Data from the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: *Roma – Selected Findings* (FRA, 2016) shows that across the EU, Roma deprivation, marginalisation and discrimination are the result of a failure of law and policy and a lack of political will when it comes to tackling such structural patterns. Regarding the situation in Hungary, the Fundamental Rights Agency data shows that around 75 per cent of Roma in the country live in poverty and 80 per cent either have difficulty or great difficulty in making ends meet on what they earn (FRA, 2016: 14-15). Further, with regards to education, there are ongoing concerns regarding school segregation in Hungary and Roma pupils being subjected to such practices. According to recent Roma Education Fund data, upwards of 45 per cent of Roma children in Hungary are routinely subjected to such racialised segregation practices, a policy move that effectively detaches them from

mainstream Hungarian society and offers a low-level of education (Redzepi, 2017). However, a recent case in Gyöngyöspata, a town in Heves County in Hungary, may signal a lasting change in such discriminatory structural practices as the Kuria (Supreme Court) ruled that sixty Roma families in the town should be compensated (100 million Forints, approximately \$310,000) for the unlawful segregation of their children in the school system (Dunai, 2020). The reaction from Orbán to the Kuria's ruling, unfortunately, was unfavourable and he has suggested that the ruling may be ignored.

It is evident that the prevailing structural conditions and political climate of anti-gypsyism in Hungary is not conducive to promoting a tolerant environment in which to teach and learn Romani Studies. However, despite these political and civil society struggles, the Central European University has managed to sustain and nurture a thriving programme in Romani Studies, first in Budapest and now in Vienna as well. The next section examines the CEU approach to Romani Studies and some of the programmes and actions that have occurred, looking at how these fit in a wider decolonising agenda.

CEU and teaching Romani studies

The Central European University has played a significant role in the transformation of Romani Studies due to its history of engaging with Roma populations. In March 2016, CEU announced the *Roma in European Society* (RES) programme, a five million Euro multi-donor initiative to support existing work to improve the situation of Roma in all sectors through graduate education, advanced research, teaching, leadership development, professional training, and community outreach.

CEU has had long-term engagement in Roma issues. In 2004, the university initiated its Roma Access Program (RAP), a unique programme to facilitate Roma students transitioning from undergraduate to English-language graduate studies. The strategic goal of RAP was to develop the academic excellence of Roma university graduates, and strengthen their Roma identity, pride and confidence, to ensure success in international MA degree programmes and prepare a new generation of Roma leaders in academia, business, government and the nonprofit sector. RAP facilitated the participant's transition from BA to competitively internationally-recognised MA programmes in English language by fostering participants' academic excellence through training in core subjects Academic English, Academic Writing, Academic Speaking, and a chosen subject in the humanities and social sciences. Participants also observe MA courses at CEU, attend seminars by Roma and non-Roma activists and academics on issues related to Romani identity and mobilisation and receive personalised guidance in identifying and applying for English-language MA programmes and scholarships.

It is important to note that CEU had a solid reputation for its record on Roma engagement prior to 2004 and the start of the RES initiative. CEU hosted courses on Roma, its staff and researchers have conducted important research on Roma, and it had a summer school on Romani Studies as far back as 1997. For example, in the academic year 2015-2016, there were seven courses on Roma taught across CEU. However, none of these courses were taught by Roma staff and, after intense contention with Roma scholars and activists in the past years, it was only in 2015 that the summer school was organised by a Roma-led faculty team.

In June 2016, CEU hired two Roma scholars as full-time staff, the Chair starting from August 1, 2016, and the second faculty member joining a year later. The CEU Senate

approved the establishment of the Romani Studies Programme, as a distinct academic unit within CEU, starting with 2017-18 academic year. The new unit was similar to other departments, bringing together the access programme, the RES activities as well as teaching and research by its staff and fellows. Via these two key appointments, CEU indicated it was time for change in Romani Studies.

According to the aims and objectives drafted by the newly appointed Chair of Romani Studies and approved by the CEU Senate, the RSP aimed: 'to engage scholars, policy makers, and activists in interdisciplinary knowledge production and debate on Roma identity and movement; antigypsyism; social justice and policy making; gender politics; and structural inequality.' It would do this by developing human resources able to lead institutions, ideas and people to promote social justice and change in society; engaging in critical and interdisciplinary knowledge production relevant for Roma communities, policy-makers, and donors; and by developing the infrastructure to support critical research and scholarly debates. As such, with the support of the CEU leadership and the available resources of RES, in three years CEU became a centre of excellence in Romani Studies. First, RSP staff taught innovative courses, conducted applied research and engaged in advocacy for social change. Secondly, RSP built a movement in academia to promote a different approach in Romani Studies from the traditional one. Thirdly, RSP strengthened cooperation with key networks and actors in the field.

The foundation of the CEU transformation was the need to decolonise Romani Studies and the curriculum taught at CEU. All the courses taught at the University were originally offered by non-Roma scholars; and Roma scholars and activists were, at best, token guest speakers. The courses promoted the vision of Roma as a pathologised and impoverished 'underclass', with specific traditions and culture that contributed to their own exclusion. The suggested solutions were logically social and economic integration and it was a task for Roma to integrate themselves with the support of the benevolence of the state and civil society. There was little critical discussion on topics such as Romani identity, racism and discrimination, oppression and exploitation. This biased view on 'the Roma problematic' has misinformed generations of students at CEU, providing them with the view of the *Gadje* (non-Roma) and without consideration of the view of Roma themselves.

The situation at the Roma Access Programme was, unfortunately, even more difficult. Although the aim of the programme was to create a Roma intelligentsia that would help drive change in Roma communities, and in society more generally, the knowledge on the Roma situation, Romani movement, culture and history that RAP students had was very poor. This situation was not surprising as they could not access such information during their studies in universities and high schools in the region, as such courses are, even now, not part of the curricula in most countries. The RAP curriculum provided the Roma students with the possibility to master the English language and to improve their knowledge and skills related to the field of study they intended to pursue. However, the curriculum had a Roma knowledge deficit: only during occasional seminars were Roma activists invited as guest speakers. Questions about the capacity of the Romani leadership to lead people, institutions and ideas for social change were apt, considering the limited knowledge they had of the communities they were supposed to lead and to speak on behalf of.

Following a review, the Chair of Romani Studies made significant changes to the RAP curriculum to strengthen its identity and leadership component. Romani language classes – a long-term absence and deficit of the programme – were introduced as a symbolic element

of the new approach. The previous non-Roma leadership of the programme did not consider language as a significant identity marker in the case of Roma and rejected requests from donors and Roma activists to introduce Romani language within the curriculum. In addition, the RSP Chair taught, from the very first semester, a course on Romani Identity and Movement as a way to address the Romani knowledge deficit. The curriculum reform included a course on Leadership and Management using a computer simulation game used by many leading universities. Currently, as part of RAP, there is a year-long course on leadership and identity (*Roma Identity and Leadership in Europe*) combining lectures and workshops taught by the new Chair of Romani Studies.

RSP faculty started teaching innovative cross-departmental courses covering important topics for Roma such as structural inequalities, discrimination, segregation, gender violence and discrimination, antigypsyism, critical theories and methods, Romani identity and movement, social justice and inclusion. Many of the topics were unique and one of the major challenges was to identify relevant bibliographical resources, especially papers and books written by Roma scholars and activists. For example, it took almost a year of research to put together the syllabus for the course *Jews and Roma in Comparative Perspective*, taught jointly by the chairs of the Jewish and Romani Studies programs. While the challenge for the Jewish Studies component was to narrow down the bibliography and identify the most up-to-date sources, for the Romani component the challenge was to identify at least one or two key sources for each topic in the syllabus, preferably written by Roma scholars or activists.

Producing new knowledge was a priority for RSP staff. Besides publishing their own monographs and articles, RSP brought together scholars and activists to achieve this aim. RSP awarded at least four fellowships every year as well as a number of research grants, resulting in book manuscripts, articles and conference papers. The topics covered by RSP Fellows' research are rich and diverse – for example, Roma in higher education in Serbia; the Romani associative movement in Spain and South America; Roma resistance under communism in Romania; the hermeneutics of Roma communities; and the building of the Roma nation.

Through its diverse activities, RSP not only led the discursive transformation on Roma in academia but also managed to build a movement *within* academia. By using social critical theories in analysing the situation of Roma, RSP promoted the cross-fertilisation of Romani studies with the fields of critical race studies, gender and sexuality studies, critical policy studies, diaspora studies, colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and studies of decolonisation. The overwhelming majority of Roma academics and researchers have participated in RSP activities in different capacities. *Critical Approaches to Romani Studies* – the CEU annual conference on Romani Studies – became a significant academic event on Romani Studies worldwide. It is not just a matter of numbers, but of the variety of papers and approaches used by the presenting scholars, that makes it a special event. The panels and presentations covered topics such as: Police Practices, Roma Holocaust, Environmental Justice, Roma Feminism and LGBTIQ and Urban Policies and Gentrification, to name just a few.

Since 2015, the CEU summer school in Romani Studies had Roma staff in the majority and taught classes on Romani identities, antigypsyism in different fields of public life, including academia, historical justice, Roma Holocaust, Romani feminism, Roma representation in arts and culture. Through the summer school and active networking, RSP has reached a wider audience, having a global outreach when it comes to the participants'

countries of origin. RSP organised workshops and provided support to other universities and faculty to develop course syllabi on Roma. RSP organised workshops with colleagues from Hungary, Norway, Romania, Ukraine and Portugal. In 2018, as part of an ERASMUS + program, RSP joined a consortium formed by Södertörn University from Stockholm, Charles University of Prague and University of Helsinki and was responsible for designing course syllabi in Romani studies.

The foundation and platform that unifies all the CEU RSP events and activities is the *Critical Romani Studies* (CRS) journal, published jointly with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture. Established by a small group of mostly Budapest-based Roma and non-Roma scholars, CRS was published in 2018 as an international, interdisciplinary, open-access, double blind peer-reviewed journal providing a forum for activist-scholars critically to examine racial oppressions, different forms of exclusion, inequalities, and human rights abuses of Roma. Without compromising rigorous academic standards, the Journal has created an inclusive platform critically to engage with academic knowledge production and generate critical academic and policy knowledge targeting – amongst others – scholars, activists, and policy-makers. Summer school participants, researchers and scholars taking part in other RSP events are invited to submit their work for publication. CRS is the connecting bridge between different RSP activities that brings together a large number of academics, scholars, policy-makers and practitioners in creating knowledge on Roma and it is one of the important RSP products that support this small social movement in academia.

Decolonising Romani studies and future pathways

The pushback in Romani Studies that has occurred at CEU, led by Romani students, scholars and activists, is an innovative template to be inspired by. The following achievements are to be noted and discussed: the reconstitution of the Romani Studies Summer School, with Romani directors, faculty, and students; the institution of the Chair in Romani Studies at CEU and the subsequent reorganisation of CEU's Roma-focused programmes; and the founding of a field-defining journal, *Critical Romani Studies*. If it were not for this sustained critique, protest, struggle and activism, the field of Critical Romani Studies and its scholarship, pedagogy, methodology and network would simply not exist. It was built as an alternative to the Gypsyologist model of Romani Studies and also to challenge the sustained exclusion of Romani subjects by scholars, policy-makers, practitioners and experts alike.

In this final section of the article we bring together the different threads of the argument and reflect on how, and in what ways, CEU might best develop its work in Romani Studies.

What might come next, in terms of the Budapest and Vienna locations and also new funding regimes via the Open Society and other bodies? What are the possibilities and the limitations of teaching Romani Studies at CEU and in other European Universities? Will a truly decolonised Romani Studies curriculum liberate younger and older minds, both inside and outside of the classroom? What will the future hold? However, working against this are those who continue to limit, challenge or block such critical decolonisation work and it is interesting to note how some within the discipline area have responded to the 'critical turn' in Romani Studies (Matras, 2017; Stewart, 2017).

There are important connections to make here, not least in terms of the continued emergence and growth of mainly young, female Romani activists who are University-educated and using the knowledge they have gained through programmes such as the CEU one to advocate for social justice, economic and legal reforms, and wider political change (Adamova, 2016). Such activism is made possible via the interdisciplinary nature of Romani Studies as well as the political climate of antigypsyism across Europe, including Hungary. These aspects are fundamentally connected, especially when viewed through the lens of the work at CEU and the advancement of Roma knowledge production in the context of wider decolonisation efforts.

In looking to future available pathways for decolonising Romani Studies, all such routes will now be shaped and influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, the impact of the coronavirus on teaching, learning, knowledge production and University life and livelihoods has been fundamental (Krasnici, 2020). During the course of 2020, it has become clear that these 'unprecedented times' are here to stay for some time to come and the 'new normal' is taking its toll. However, these extreme circumstances have created positive shifts in how technology is now used to deliver teaching and learning. It can be expected that such ICT innovations can help shape and deliver a new type of curriculum (UNESCO, 2020).

In many ways, the current period (2020-21) is reminiscent of earlier shifts in thinking and is not as unprecedented as assumed. For example, we are reminded of the radical shifts that occurred, for very different reasons, admittedly, during the late 1960s. We saw then a critical turn in the social sciences that witnessed a fusion of social thought and new social movements, a network of bodies and collectives claiming space at the mainstream table (Millward and Takhar, 2019). We can think here of the advances in feminist thought and emancipatory direct-action, the impact of Stonewall in the US and debates on sexual liberation, citizenship and social justice, as well as the civil rights movement, the disability rights lobby and many other progressive networks. Combined, such movements illustrated the potential of what can happen when forms of intellectual and activist liberation, in the widest sense, are put in place and enacted (Edelman, 2001).

Likewise, in Romani Studies, we are witnessing the impact of wider decolonisation efforts across North American and European Universities. A significant kick-start for this work in recent times has been the launch of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture in 2017. It is also evident that Black Lives Matter and other social justice groups have played an inspirational role in this work. One example is the work of FXB Center at Harvard where Roma issues have been foregrounded and framed in the context of much wider social justice campaigns and equality groupings and collectives (Matache, 2020). Similarly, the launch in 2020 of the ERIAC Barvalipe Online Roma University was an innovative intellectual and technological response to the realities of the global pandemic where new knowledge production (lectures and webinars) was accessed online by anyone through Zoom and Facebook (CEU, 2020).

It is also important to appreciate the role that advances in critical race theory (CRT) have played in helping direct and inspire thinking in current Romani Studies (Ryder, 2019). This development of CRT, building on work in postcolonialism, decolonisation studies and intersectionality, has assisted Roma scholarship in Europe and beyond. Indeed, the 'critical turn' in Romani Studies started to happen precisely as a result of the methods and tactics of exclusion that were enacted by non-Roma academics on topics such as anti-Roma racism, identity and oppression (Beck and Ivasiuc, 2018). In moving

forwards, there needs to be a narrative of Roma intellectual liberation and emancipation with new methods and ways of working being found to help steer a pathway around the physical and spatial barriers imposed by COVID-19.

Crucially, we argue that Roma knowledge production, including the ‘critical turn’ in Romani Studies, has been guided by a theoretical and practical awareness of the topics and issues mentioned above, most arising from the work at CEU. Three connected Roma-led aspects have led this shift: the emergence of new scholars and scholarship, new forums for creativity and industry, and new definitions of ‘knowledge production.’ All are marked by Roma-led reinterpretations of previously non-Roma controlled scholarship on Roma lives, livelihoods and experience. It is also evident that future pathways, given the ongoing physical and spatial restrictions of COVID-19, will necessitate examining how Roma knowledge production is both thought about – in allyship with BLM and #MeToo, for example – and also practiced, in terms of shifts to online methods of working and creating platforms of solidarity and resisting reactionary forces.

What is still missing, perhaps, in an intellectual, material and *asset-based* sense, is the Romani ownership of the means of production. Furthermore, questions remain in terms of future pathways: how do we ensure that Roma knowledge production is accessible, inclusive and participatory across all communities and geographies and respects social divisions and linguistic differences as much as the similarities? How do we convince potential allies – such as BLM, #MeToo, environmental groups – to associate with and join the cause of Roma knowledge production and what will such collaboration give rise to in terms of further paradigm shifts? Lastly, we know that establishing Romani presence at various tables of power is challenging, time-consuming, expensive and fraught with emotional and health-related dangers. So, what can we do better in order to nourish and protect those younger scholars and activists coming through that are trying to enact change on our behalf? These are just some of the issues to be addressed moving forwards.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that Romani Studies has travelled a great distance since 1888, when the Gypsy Lore Society was first established in Edinburgh. This article has offered some critical reflection on such intellectual and academic pathways, showing how the legacies of such *lorist*, ‘othering’ thinking have, somewhat ironically, helped shape the current opportunities for curriculum redesign, decolonisation and critical Romani knowledge production. Through tracing the contested histories of *gypsylorism*, we can appreciate the challenges to be faced by contemporary Romani scholars and activists, such as those based at CEU.

This discussion has been rooted in Hungary, and at the CEU, as an example of needing to consider time, place and context as a pre-cursor to decolonisation of the curriculum efforts. We have argued that geography and political climate are vitally important to consider when thinking about decolonisation efforts and tackling antigypsyism, both inside and outside the classroom. We summarised the scale of the challenges to students and staff brought about by Orbán’s populist attack on CEU and Hungarian civil society.

When placed against this intense political backdrop, it is all the more remarkable that the Romani Studies programmes at CEU have been as successful as they have been. We have detailed the energy and commitment shown by students and staff, across a range of diverse activities, that has allowed Romani Studies to thrive at CEU. Of course, this is an ongoing academic and political struggle, as the recent forced move of CEU to Vienna has

illustrated. There are concerns about how the programmes will change and develop in the face of such external pressures.

In closing, the central argument of this article is that the crisis of antigypsyism is a crisis of racism and state Government. We appreciate the future is uncertain and there are a number of questions remaining in terms of the direction of a decolonised Romani Studies, not least due to the physical and spatial restrictions enforced by the COVID-19 global pandemic. But, if history has shown us anything, it is the remarkable tenacity and adaptability of the Romani people, including those who are students, activists and scholars. We must remain committed to the cause and to advancing and promoting a form and type of Romani knowledge production, both inside and outside the academy that best represents a misunderstood and marginalised population. If we can, we will, we must, get out and escape the vaulted confines of gypsylorist thinking and embrace the possibilities of a critical, radical and interdisciplinary Romani Studies.

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