

POSTCOLONIALISM ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

RACISM POSTCOLONIALISM EUROPE

EDITED BY GRAHAM HUGGAN AND IAN LAW



Racism, (neo-)colonialism and social justice: the struggle for the soul of the Romani movement in post-socialist Europe

Nidhi Trehan and Angéla Kóczé

'It's not of air and eternity, evil isn't; it's of earth; it's physical, a disjointedness between our bodies and our souls. Evil is inanely corporeal, humans causing one another pain, no more no less...'

'The real thing about evil,' said the Witch at the doorway, 'isn't any of what you said. You figure out one side of it – the human side, say – and the eternal side goes into the shadow. Or vice versa. It's like the old saw: What does a dragon in its shell look like? Well no one can ever tell, for as you break the shell to see, the dragon is no longer in its shell. The real disaster of this inquiry is that it is the nature of evil to be secret.' (Maguire, *Wicked*, 1995)

What can the critical-theoretical framework of postcolonial studies offer to the study of contemporary Romani oppression, especially the study of oppression *within* the 'movement' for the equal rights of Romani Europeans? In this chapter, we employ the works of a number of critics, many of them influenced by postcolonial theories, in order to interrogate the diffuse forces of power and to show how these operate within the 'Roma rights' movement as a means of explaining the presence of racialized hierarchies and neo-colonial dynamics. In focusing on the repercussions for legitimacy, representation and autonomy in the movement, empirical data from post-socialist Europe¹ are combined with original theoretical insights about 'whiteness' and 'race' to offer a deeper understanding of the complexities of Romani emancipation in the multiply colonized space of the region.

1 In this chapter, we define 'post-socialist Europe' as consisting of those central and eastern European countries that have joined the European Union (EU) or are currently seeking membership. These countries all practised diverse forms of socialism prior to the 'transition' beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Romani subalterity: the burden of being the 'other'

The complexity and range of racism that Romani people, or, more importantly, people *perceived* to be Roma, face in contemporary Europe have begun to be critically explored in recent years. From the British Isles to the Balkans, if you are marked as being Romani (or 'Gypsy'), there is little respite from the violence that envelops you – physical, symbolic, epistemic – as a consequence of persistent and deeply embedded anti-Gypsyism within European cultural enclaves (Clark 2004; Hancock 2002; Heuss 2000; Trehan 2009; Zoltan 2006). Although anti-Gypsyism is persistent in both eastern and western Europe, there are significant differences in how Romani populations have been 'constructed', with the result that policy trajectories themselves reflect this separation.² For the purposes of this chapter, which focuses on paradoxical developments in the movement for the rights of Romanies, we restrict ourselves to discussing phenomena affecting post-socialist European states, since it is in this region that the confluence of demographics (large, concentrated Romani communities), the influence of established human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the large number of official projects (including public–private partnerships) targeting Romani communities, like the Decade of Roma Inclusion, have become most salient.³

The Romani subaltern – still to be fully acknowledged in Europe – has been subjected to the disciplinary exigencies of 'infra-humanity':⁴ in this particular case, Romanies and their sheer invisibility *as humans* within European discursive and social fabrics, from history books to everyday workplaces. Instead, where you will find Romani people, real or fictitious, will be in the minds of Europeans who have 'othered' them, proffering them a kind of distorted visibility (Clark 2004; Hancock 1997; Heuss 2000).⁵ In today's Europe (both 'western' and

2 For an excellent piece on how discourses on Roma can be dissonant (as well as deceptive) within the contemporary EU context, see Simhandl (2006). Simhandl suggests that the dichotomy within EU member states between 'western Gypsies and travellers' and 'eastern Roma' enables Romani populations residing in the "old" Member States to be rendered 'invisible' and, moreover, reduces Roma to mere political objects. She exhorts European policy-makers to undergo critical self-reflection as a prerequisite to future shifts in discursive practices and policies (109–10).

3 The key institutional founders of the Decade of Romani Inclusion (2005–15), which covers nine countries in central and eastern Europe, are the Open Society Institute, the EU, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme; in addition, affiliated NGOs participate in the implementation of the Decade's programmes, whose express purpose is to foster 'Romani integration' into mainstream European society through an ambitious array of initiatives in the fields of education, employment, health and housing, thus committing 'governments to take into account the other core issues of poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming'. For further details, see www.romadecade.org.

4 Social theorist Paul Gilroy has used this term in reference to both the black Atlantic diaspora and the 'enemy' detainees in Guantanamo Bay (Cuba) at the US military base (Gilroy 2004).

5 The 'banality of racism' towards Roma is ubiquitous in contemporary 'postmodern', 'post-colonial' Europe. A white European academic who completed a doctorate from the University

'eastern' halves), and within this falsely constructed and vigorously recycled *imaginarium*, Romani people occupy varying paradoxical positions, ranging from exotic dancers and wedding musicians to 'annoying' beggars, welfare dependants, prostitutes and thieves.

Within the previously socialist east European countries, this essentialized iconography of deviance and otherness was contained to some extent by an all-pervasive state which disavowed open displays of ethnicity, and which celebrated 'workers' solidarity' – at least rhetorically – across ethnic lines. By minimizing various cultural markers such as language, clothing and even seasonal economic migration, the state offered possibilities for 'proletarianization' through socio-economic integration. You could be a good Bulgarian, a good Hungarian, a good Slovak, a good comrade – even if you were an 'inferior Gypsy'. There was a place for you at the common table, although your seat might be a bit rickety and your cloth napkin tattered beyond repair.

The 'civilizing mission' of the Habsburgs

Attempts to assimilate Romani communities in central Europe date back to the times of the Habsburg Empire's dual monarchy. The Austro-Hungarian Empire in the late eighteenth century covered present-day Austria, Hungary, parts of Italy, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, southern Poland and Ukraine, the Banat and Transylvania (Romania), Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and northern Serbia: huge swathes of territory, in which many Romani communities lived. However, the 'civilizing mission' of Empress Maria Theresa and her son, Emperor Joseph II, referred to as an 'enlightened absolutist' by some historians, resulted in far more draconian measures towards her Romani subjects than the communist state enacted. The Habsburgs' experiments with assimilating Roma were essentially a series of regulatory decrees over the thirty years from 1753 to 1783. Initially, these measures appeared inclusive in nature, for example the provision of land for Romani settlement, the permission to conduct artisan trades and the opening up of guild membership to Roma. In addition, Romanies were to be called 'new Hungarians' or 'new peasants', the use of the term 'Gypsy' being discouraged. Nonetheless, the decrees became progressively harsher and, in 1772, mandatory military service was enacted for all Romani males above the age of sixteen, while Romanes, the mother tongue, was prohibited, along with the wearing of traditional dress, marriage among Roma and even the custody of children (Kállai

of London, and a person who specializes in gender studies, told one of the co-authors of this chapter that 'Gypsies are dirty and disgusting', thus not only denigrating the very people whose movement she was researching, but further confirming how deeply entrenched and common these biases are, even within 'progressive' intellectual circles, in contemporary Europe. Another colleague, a white doctoral student from south-eastern Europe, made an ironic 'joke' about the recent accession to the EU of two new Balkan countries, commenting dryly, 'well, of course I know about Gypsies in the Balkans – my research focuses on crime!'

and Törzsök 2000, pp. 9–11; Kemény 2005, pp. 15–17).⁶ Thus, a conscious effort was made on the part of the Habsburgs to eliminate Romani identity from Austro-Hungarian lands, even as the Romani body was ‘salvaged’ and became a site of colonization.⁷ This ‘civilizing mission’ has strong resonances with the British colonial mindset in such places as the United States and New South Wales (Australia), where indigenous children underwent forcible removal from their families and were placed in foster care (usually day and boarding schools) for the express purpose of ‘becoming civilized’, with emphasis being placed on their becoming ‘good Christians’, but without concern for the corresponding negation of their core identity and beliefs (Buti 2004).⁸ Fortunately for some Romani families living under Habsburg rule, the local authorities responsible for the implementation of the decrees did not fully comply with the new regulations. Investing in Romani settlement was not necessarily felt to be a desirable objective, guild membership for Roma was rejected by members who feared competition from Romani artisans, and the social conflicts and financial costs surrounding the removal of Romani children from their families and placement in foster homes proved to be a significant deterrent. The royal courts verified these resolutions, but governing councils simply chose not to implement them in their local areas. Thus, Romani assimilation and cultural negation remained a ‘failed experiment’, mired at the level of legislative declaration: by the late 1780s, the ‘Romani issue’ was no longer of official interest to the Habsburgs and it disappeared from the imperial agenda with the closure of the Department of Gypsy Affairs in 1787 (Kemény 2005, pp. 15–17). Nonetheless, the policies of the time reflected the pervasive belief in Romani ‘deviance’ and ‘inferiority’ within Austro-Hungarian society, a belief that continues to have repercussions for Romani communities as pernicious narratives of ‘Gypsy otherness’ reproduce themselves in contemporary European society.⁹ These ‘civilizing’ impulses towards Romanies have historically been coupled with broader and diffuse relations of neo-colonialism with respect to the central east European region, relations that are covered in further detail later in this chapter; first, however, some insight is needed into the contemporary realities of Romani life.

6 Romani children were to be placed in foster homes with peasant families from the age of four, and the counties would pay the farmers directly for their maintenance costs. Many Romani children ran away and ultimately found their way back to their own families.

7 In some areas of Europe, it was a crime merely to be a Gypsy/Romani, and there harsh punishments were put in place (including the death penalty) in order to dissuade Roma from even entering these lands. Thus, the Habsburgs were perhaps relatively ‘enlightened’ among their contemporaries, as they at least accepted the corporeal humanity of Roma, despite Romani culture being viewed as alien, deeply flawed and in need of ‘civilizing’.

8 Boarding schools for Native American children had become more common in the United States by the late 1870s, ensuring the children’s isolation from the ‘contaminating’ influences of their own peoples (Buti 2004).

9 In Hungary today, less than 15 per cent of Romanies speak a dialect of the Romani language, which can be attributed in part to the antipathy towards that language during the time of the Habsburgs.

The post-socialist setting in Europe

There are an estimated six million citizens of Romani ethnicity in the post-socialist countries of Europe today.¹⁰ These Romani communities are highly diverse, both linguistically and culturally, as a result of different historical narratives. The levels of assimilation or integration within eastern European societies also vary according to community background and state policies directed at them. Nonetheless, taken as a whole, Romani citizens of these states comprise the most marginalized peoples in the region: more than 50 per cent are officially unemployed, and in some so-called ‘compact communities’ – a polite sociological euphemism for segregated settlements – the proportion hovers at around 99 per cent. By contrast, under state socialist regimes, Romanies had relative income security and by the 1980s, in countries such as Hungary, employment rates for Romani men were nearing ratios comparable to those of other citizens. As John Wrench of the European Union’s Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) has noted, the integration of Romanies into the larger social fabric – primarily through educational integration – has become an avowed priority for successive governments throughout the region (Wrench 2006).

One response to rising hostility and xenophobia in the region, both officially and in public discourse, has been the formation of a collective political consciousness among diverse groups of Roma. Let us take the example here of post-socialist Hungary, widely recognized among European policy-makers for its liberal and enlightened policies on minorities. The myriad number of Romani cultural associations (some of them active since the 1980s) and of development and human rights NGOs (primarily launched in the mid-1990s), the many media initiatives whose purpose it has been to raise the visibility of the Romani community, as well as the vast network of bureaucratic institutions resulting from Hungary’s ‘pro-minorities’ legislation in the early 1990s – all of this has meant that the socio-political activities surrounding Romani Hungarians has generated an elite class of Hungarians, some of whom are Romanies themselves, whose primary task has been to govern and manage the growing Romani minority (Kovats 1998, 2003; Trehan 2006b).

10 This figure is based on data gathered primarily from NGOs, and does not represent official government statistics on the Romani population, which are considerably lower, as a result of strong stigma (including internalized stigmatization) attached to Romani identity. Romani ethnicity is a complex construction and, like other ethnicities, a fluid phenomenon. Moreover, people with just one Romani parent may self-identify in complex ways, depending on various factors, including age (generational belonging) and community setting. For example, a popular female rap singer in Hungary, Fatima, of the band Fekete Vonat (‘Black Train’), has an Arab (Egyptian) father and a Romani mother. Few studies have been done in this area; suffice to say that, contrary to popular mythology, Romani communities are not hermetically sealed, despite the fact that spatial segregation is pronounced (and, indeed, has been on the rise since the collapse of the eastern European socialist regimes).

The emergence of the 'Roma rights movement' and ideology

In the early days of 'transition', in the late 1980s, Romani activists, along with liberal dissidents in the newly emerging civil rights movement for Roma, began to challenge the vilification of Roma as belonging to a 'criminal subculture' and to contest the prevalent 'Gypsy problem' discourse by exposing discrimination and racism on the part of both private actors and the state. While the 'Gypsy problem' discourse tends to construct the problems that Roma experience (unemployment, poverty and other manifestations of social exclusion) as essentialized by-products of their own culture (e.g. Romanies are inherently 'socially unadaptable' and intellectually deficient), the 'Roma rights' discourse challenges this characterization by identifying racism and discrimination as being at the root of the problems Roma face (Kohn 1995; Trehan 2009). Furthermore, the 'Roma rights' movement, similar to other movements for the rights of subaltern communities, seeks to ameliorate these negative social phenomena, primarily, though not exclusively, through legal means (Bukovská 2006; Trehan 2006b; Woodiwiss 2006). Issues of socio-economic justice, if addressed at all, are generally marginal to this discourse, though in the late 1990s an emphasis on the 'extreme poverty'¹¹ of Romani communities surfaced, resulting in a greater appreciation of the need to advance their socio-economic rights. More recently, this has translated into an emphasis on housing rights as a result of the Romani evictions crisis.¹² It is worth noting that the housing rights agenda among Romani activists is not a new phenomenon, being one of the key issues around which early indigenous formations for social justice were developed, in the 1980s (for example, the Anti-Ghetto Committee, led by Hungarian Romani activist Aladár Horváth in the north-east of the country), nearly a decade before the emergence of western 'human rights entrepreneurs'.¹³ Nonetheless, rarely do Romani NGO activists make explicit the underlying connection between the embrace of neo-liberal policies in post-socialist Europe since the late 1980s, including various forms of economic 'shock therapies', and increasing rates of housing evictions, which have deepened social exclusion (Trehan 2009).

Viewing the 'movement' as similar to the black civil rights movement in the United States or the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa is potentially misleading. This has to do with several factors relating to the specific nature of power and political organization in contemporary Europe, particularly in

11 This is a term used by international multilateral institutions such as the United Nations and the Council of Europe. International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development have begun to take an active interest in European Roma. See, for example, Ringold *et al.* (2003). In 2005, several multilateral institutions began the joint initiative Decade of Roma Inclusion (see note 3, p. 51) and devised national action programmes.

12 See 'Roma and Travellers Project', on the Website of the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), www.cohre.org/view_page.php?page_id=191 (accessed 20 January 2009).

13 This is a term adopted from H. Becker's concept of the 'moral entrepreneur'. See Trehan (2009).

post-socialist countries, which have connections to global forces that inevitably impinge on the current trajectory of the transnational movement for Roma rights (Guilhot 2005; Ost 2005; Trehan 2001). Unlike these other movements, the Roma rights movement emerged at a time of overwhelming neo-liberal policy consensus in post-socialist Europe, and one corollary of this development, as we will show, has been the *marketization* of human rights, through the interventions of human rights entrepreneurs, particularly those affiliated with George Soros's Open Society Institute.

(Neo-)colonialism, east European 'backwardness' and Romani emancipation?

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from the outside. (Nkrumah 1965)

Post-socialist central and eastern Europe as a region can be viewed as a colonized space marked by the profound influence of global capitalist forces based in western capitals, and by the academic and institutional hegemony of the west. This dominance is replicated in the movement for the human rights of Roma, which has been overrun by the influence of neo-liberal policy regimes over the past decade (Chen and Churchill 2005; Gowan 1996; Wessely 1996). Furthermore, neo-colonial forces operate at the macro-institutional level of society: academia, law, policy-making. In this context, the region is often conceived of as being implicitly 'backward' and in need of assistance by western countries.¹⁴ Wessely cites Norbert Elias's path-breaking 1978 study *The Civilizing Process*, in which Elias asserts that the concept of civilization 'sums up everything in which Western society of the last two or three centuries believes itself superior to earlier societies or "more primitive" contemporary ones' (Elias 1978, quoted in Wessely 1996, p. 13). Moreover, Elias points out the divergence in the notion of 'civilization', used by western nations such as France and Britain, as a self-confident appellation for their national identity, and

14 Within Britain itself, the (post)imperial landscape is marked by a curious imperial legacy, an almost incontrovertible belief that Britain 'has got multiculturalism right'. Particularly in comparison with continental Europe, liberal British policy-makers and intellectuals emphasize this aspect of contemporary (read 'progressive') Britishness, which they imply is superior to that on the continent (in terms of integration of immigrants). Furthermore, continental Europeans, particularly those who reside in south-eastern Europe, are framed as people suffering from an atavistic 'backwardness', or what the historian Maria Todorova (1997) has termed 'Balkanism'. It remains to be explored how the orientalist view of Romanies (what some prominent Romani scholars such as Ian Hancock and Ken Lee have termed 'Gypsyism') and Balkanism are interwoven, and to what extent this creates a double burden of 'otherness' for Romani subjects.

that of *Kultur*, used initially in Germany and then subsequently adopted by all central European peoples 'to define and assert the identity of nations lacking stable boundaries and the institutions of civil society' (Wessely 1996, p. 13). This dichotomy between civilization and *Kultur* offers an intriguing clue as to why Romanies themselves have been perceived differently in various parts of the region, and as to how state policy continues to reflect these differences at the national level, despite the 'civilizing' tendencies vis-à-vis Roma that are pervasive throughout Europe today.

It is also important to contextualize the terms 'colonialism' and 'post-colonialism' with regard to the Romani movement. The application of the term 'colonialism' can be understood in a broader sense, not just as a specific conquest or event in the past, but as an ongoing exercise of economic, military and political power by stronger states and groups over weaker ones. The 'colony' as such is internal to the state, comprising subaltern classes and those human subjects perceived to be 'inhuman'. Furthermore, if we view colonialism as a way of maintaining asymmetrical relations of economic and political power (in the same way as Edward Said talks about 'Orientalism' as deploying a variety of strategies whose common factor is the resultant position of superiority for westerners vis-à-vis the 'Orient'), then there can be no doubting the existence of a neo-colonialist attitude in relation to Romani activism within the European political landscape today.

In subsequent sections of this chapter, the political conditions of Romani communities will be explored, along with their complex, intertwined and symbiotic relationship with the human rights elite. We aim to interrogate the postcolonial realities of Romani advocacy, realities characterized by increasingly problematic questions of agency, subjectivity and the commodification of Romani culture, along with core issues of power and justice. Adopting Spivak's classic language, we will ask: can the Romani subaltern speak? Can the Romani subject finally create a reality for herself, and can she speak on her own behalf?

Romani subalterity – objectification and racialized hierarchies within the movement

A discussion of postcolonial racism and social justice *within* the Romani civil rights arena entails a meticulous engagement with various taboos that are characteristic of internal oppression mechanisms within the movement – with the 'silences' that permeate its discourse, much of which is exercised by non-Romani human rights entrepreneurs, but also by those Roma who hold power and who, in many cases, have been installed in these power positions by their non-Romani patrons. Several aspects critical to the internal power dynamics within the Romani movement have not been exposed and are clearly being neglected by a self-perpetuating power structure. Many non-Romani human rights advocates working in the sphere of 'Roma rights' are convinced that they are not racist. Applying Frantz Fanon's approach to racism in our research, we might ask the same question as he did:

what does racism do to people? Fanon's own answer was brief: racism objectifies (Fanon 1965). Here, he was following Aimé Césaire, who had previously equated colonialism with what he called 'thingification': the process by which the subjects of colonialism are reduced over time to the status of mere objects (Césaire 2000, p. 21). This concept of objectification is a more complex process than merely conceiving of someone as an object. As Richard Schmitt argues:

Objectification is not best understood either as turning persons into things, or as depriving them of their freedom, but as a carefully orchestrated and systemic refusal of genuinely human relationship. (Schmitt 1996, p. 36)

Objectification is visible and pervasive in Romani affairs, and is further intensified by the dispossessed economic status of Roma and the asymmetrical relations within broader society that are its result. And, as we shall see, diffuse and pernicious racist practices, at least some of which can be viewed as colonial techniques, can be identified even within the Romani civil rights movement and have emerged over the course of our research.

One of the unintentional outcomes of the work of pro-Roma human rights organizations, we want to suggest, has been the objectification of Romani representatives by human rights entrepreneurs. Romani critics claim that rather than being received as active participants in the human rights movement, they have become subjects for the human rights work of others – a tiny number of Romani elites notwithstanding – and have frequently been treated as 'experiments' in the hands of legal professionals and international human rights entrepreneurs. Put succinctly by Blanka Kozma, 'we are nothing but a project to them'.¹⁵ In a rare reflexive piece on the interventions of legal professionals in the arena, human rights lawyer Barbora Bukovská (2006) notes that:

litigation concentrates [the] agenda in the hands of elites – lawyers; victims [who] are often uneducated with little or no understanding of the law assume a subordinated position with regard to tactics and strategy after human rights advocates decide on litigation. Once victims are confronted with a mysterious legal procedure and complicated legal language, their 'fate is no longer in their hands' as advocates as specialists automatically take over their problems. (Quoted in Trehan 2009, p. 208)

The above insight about the imbalance of power in the relationship between (usually non-Romani) lawyers and their Romani clients emphasizes the subaltern position of Romani human rights victims,¹⁶ who, from the outset of

15 Blanka Kozma, interview material from 1999, quoted in Trehan (2009, p. 178). She also mentioned how difficult it was for Roma in Hungary to assess 'who are our genuine friends, and who are the parasites'.

16 The term 'victim' can be problematized; however, it is used here generically in reference to a person suffering from a human rights abuse. There is a large literature on the subject of 'victims' and victims' agency, but this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

legal procedures taken up on their behalf, often initiated by an NGO lawyer or researcher seeking out a victim for a specific test case for 'impact litigation' purposes, exercise little control over the outcome of proceedings, after which time many will continue to live their lives in extreme poverty and exclusion. Indeed, some Romanies even risk becoming local or national scapegoats if there is a backlash as a result of litigation procedures. This is another area where, as Bukovská (2006) correctly points out, there is a current lack of ethical responsibility on the part of human rights entrepreneurs in the region, since even basic respect for the victims is often missing during case proceedings, and very little follow-up is conducted afterwards.

Two characteristic practices of objectification mentioned by Fanon (1965) from his own experience in colonial French Algeria are worth mentioning here in relation to the Romani movement:

(1) *Infantilization*. Roma are perceived to be, and are thus treated as, children. Fanon refers to the example of the black French: it was assumed by the dominant (white) group that they would be incapable of gaining mastery of the French language. Similarly, many Romani activists are patronized by non-Roma in the movement, who assume that the former are not as capable as the latter of professional work. Even the co-author of this chapter, Angéla Kóczé, who has worked in the past for the Brussels-based NGO the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), has experienced the same kind of infantilization by non-Roma working on Romani issues. If we take a closer look at the staff composition of leading development or human rights organizations working in the sphere of Romani interests, it is still rare, well over a decade since the movement was first established, for a Romani person to be in a senior management position. This is the proverbial elephant in the drawing room: the one everyone notices, but also the one we are all careful to ignore.

(2) *Denigration*. As Fanon indicated in his research, it is nearly always assumed that members of various colonized groups are 'defective'. Likewise, leading members of the Romani community who have fallen out of favour with the established power structure have been accused of being criminals or thieves, sometimes with the assistance of the same Roma who are beneficiaries of their patronage. Postcolonial theorist Leela Gandhi (1998), among others, has referred to the existence of a tension between colonizer and colonized and to the mutual dependency and desire contained within this relationship; this tension surely merits further exploration in connection to Romani 'yes men' or 'uncle Toms'. Further, since the funding for Romani projects generally rests in the hands of philanthropic benefactors and governments, there is a tendency not to raise public dissent. The aforementioned character attacks on outspoken Roma who have crossed this invisible line serve to marginalize them within the movement, similarly serving to stifle dissent. In short, there continues to be a deep denial of these 'silenced' narratives and insights, as well as a surreptitious process of auto-censorship, and both of these deserve further analysis in order to better our understanding of the dynamics of internalized oppression within the movement itself.

The story of Melinda

We offer the narrative here of a Romani NGO executive, 'Melinda',¹⁷ who was confronted directly with the (neo-)colonial dynamics of the NGO sector as she sought to advance the rights and visibility of her people. Although the experience damaged her life, perhaps irreparably, it enabled her to understand the colonial structure which is generated around the lives of Romani subalterns, and which serves to prove their 'incapacity', thereby making them fulfil their 'inferior fate' in a way that is scripted by a broader white power structure.

Melinda began her work as the executive director of a newly founded strategic organization in the Romani civil rights movement, and very soon began to confront the forces of structural exclusion. In the first place, she was hired with a lower starting salary than other directors of similar advocacy-type organizations. When she mentioned this to her superiors, she was told by one of the key non-Romani funders that she should be happy that, as an east European Romani woman, she was selected to work for such an organization. The message was clear: she should 'know her place' and not create such a fuss; moreover, she should appreciate their enormous efforts to provide her with such an opportunity in the first place. Secondly, the founders of the organization and financiers designed an organizational structure which resulted in corrosive relations among the staff. By offering two full-time positions within a small office – the executive and the deputy director positions, along with a part-time administrator – they laid the ground for a strong rivalry between the two key NGO staff, both of whom were Roma. In organizations of this size, having two directorial posts tends to generate conflict rather than cooperation, and the case of this particular NGO was not an exception. Melinda believed there were certain intentions behind this, but could not fully comprehend why she did not revolt against it at the time. As she informed one co-author of this chapter, 'my tragedy was paved structurally and very little effort was needed to destroy me'.

Melinda's problems at work were compounded by a relatively low salary. Basically, by the end of every month, she scarcely had money for food or medicine for her family (she was the main breadwinner); moreover, she was working in a city (indeed country) where she had no relatives or friends, and therefore no support network. Nonetheless, when viewed from the outside, Melinda was a high-profile professional employed by an international NGO, and presumably had enough financial means to maintain her family life. She worked on a daily basis with high-ranking officers and politicians in order to persuade them to work on the issue of the social and economic integration of Roma. She was careful to demonstrate articulacy in both oral and written presentation skills and, in addition, ensure that her physical appearance and style were sophisticated enough to challenge the various biases and prejudices towards Roma. In the meantime, she sacrificed her family's happiness to a large degree, as she took

17 'Melinda' is a pseudonym.

them to an alien environment where they did not speak the local language; her spouse was unable to obtain work and her son was unable to enjoy spending significant time with her.

Under these circumstances, she needed to take out some money (€50–€100) at the end of each month from the organization's budget in order to survive and to pay for regular childcare. This money was accounted for in bookkeeping, although she admitted she was rather ashamed to report this to the board (she did inform one member of the board whom she trusted, and he was made aware of these ongoing transactions). She used to travel and attend conferences on the weekends without financial compensation.

One summer, when her son needed to have surgery, she decided to take him to her home country in order to have the operation, as the medical fees were far more affordable. While in the hospital, she rang her colleagues in the office, and they began to berate her, talking to her as if she was a criminal: they demanded that she stop using the office telephone and bank card. They informed her that, in her absence, they had gone through the office bookkeeping and scrutinized all her expense receipts and bills, and had come to the conclusion that she had misused office money. Subsequently, it emerged that they had prepared an internal report, which they sent to donors, board members and other influential actors in order to destroy her professional reputation and place doubts on her integrity, thereby engineering her dismissal from the post. Needless to say, she was shocked by this attack and became psychologically shattered. Instead of hiring a lawyer to start a legal procedure against her colleagues for violating her personal integrity, she began to internalize – as many subalterns do – all the accusations levelled against her. For its part, the board did not recognize the complex nature of the case, with all the mitigating circumstances mentioned above. On the one hand, it was an underhanded attempt to overtake the directorship from her at a time when she was in a vulnerable position and, indeed, not even in the country. On the other hand, besides her own administrative failures, she was embedded in a colonial organizational structure without adequate administrative and financial support, and this only served to solidify the power structure's own expectation of a subaltern unable to accomplish a professional job.

These unconscious and sometimes unspoken assumptions by colonizers can devastate the life of subalterns and work as powerful 'self-fulfilling prophecies'. It took her over five months to be able to talk about the events to her close friends and family members. She did not retain enough self-esteem and mental strength to challenge the organization legally and the people who had worked behind her back to destroy her professional standing. After she left the organization, the board hired a Romani man to be her successor. He was offered a significantly higher salary than she had received and, in addition, the organizational structure of the office was modified. While, on the one hand, she takes comfort in the fact that the board eventually recognized some structural issues which were internally divisive, Melinda feels that she has 'paid' for this belated acknowledgement with her own dignity, which has been damaged and for which she has never been compensated. The case of Melinda, as with

other Romani NGO workers, has been instructive in pointing out how broader ideological agendas obscure the reality of (neo-)colonial relations within the movement for the civil rights of Roma.

The hegemony of human rights entrepreneurs and the rise of neo-liberal agendas

In attempting to make sense of and explain the ‘neo-liberal human rights’ approach to the contemporary Romani rights movement in post-socialist Europe, the following questions need to be addressed.

- How is the neo-liberal human rights approach manifested in the ‘Romani rights’ movement?
- What order is it (re)producing and whose interests does it reflect?
- What are its consequences, and are there alternatives to its current trajectory?

In employing the term ‘neo-liberal human rights’, we refer to the phenomenon whereby human rights concerns and campaigning operate within a global capitalist system, and thus – perhaps unwittingly – become an appendage of the global neo-liberal economic order (Chen and Churchill 2005; Guilhot 2005; Trehan 2009). More than any other single philanthropist, Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros has been responsible for the support and promotion of Romani NGO initiatives through the work of the Open Society Institute (OSI), a global network of foundations.¹⁸ The organizations funded and supported by the OSI currently form the backbone of the ‘movement’ for the rights of Romani peoples in post-socialist Europe. Notwithstanding the OSI’s generous support of numerous progressive campaigns globally, including HIV/AIDS prevention and the rebuilding of democracy in the United States, we would suggest that the Romani civil rights struggle to date has tended to reveal unintended consequences – in this particular case, the creation of hierarchies and divisiveness within the movement – that are characteristic of utopian approaches within the global NGO sphere today. We want to argue (and other scholars concur) that the OSI, in attempting to create an ‘open society’ in post-socialist Europe, in fact promotes a policy agenda based on particular ideological frameworks that have had a powerful impact on civil society in the region (Guilhot 2005; Trehan 2009). This is all the more evident in the OSI’s activities, which focus on the human rights and development of subaltern Romani communities in post-socialist Europe precisely because of the asymmetrical relations of power between Roma and non-Roma.

To a large extent, the neo-liberal approach works hand in glove with the dominant discourse on ‘civil society’ in eastern Europe, which began to permeate the

18 The writings of Popper and Hayek were strong influences upon Soros, who was a student of Popper’s at the London School of Economics. See Guilhot (2005) for further details on Soros’s ideological development. See www.soros.org for further details on the work of the Open Society Institute and its affiliates.

NGO sector in the early 1990s.¹⁹ The notable absence of alternative trajectories to this approach has been a result of the ideological and material dominance of American epistemic communities and human rights networks in the region throughout the 1990s (Trehan 2006a). There were several cogent reasons why the former dissidents of post-socialist states believed they were compelled to adopt a language and philosophy of human rights commensurate with their Euro-Atlantic donor networks – and why they did so, even when they had grave doubts about the motives of their western benefactors, with only minimal resistance to the prevalent neo-liberal paradigm of human rights. Dimitrina Petrova, a Bulgarian philosopher and human rights advocate, was the director of the European Roma Rights Centre – the pre-eminent NGO in the field – for over a decade from its inception from 1996 until December 2006. She accounts for the relative silence of eastern European human rights activists during the time of the NATO bombing campaign in Kosovo²⁰ with the following rationale:

three additional factors overwhelmed the judgment of human rights organizations in eastern Europe. First, eastern European states had opted for NATO membership. The human rights community in these countries was therefore afraid of compromising their respective national chances of being admitted to the alliance if they criticized NATO. Second, *the very status and jobs of most human rights activists were made possible by the generous support of Western, particularly American, donors. Without their continued support, the future of the human rights movement would be uncertain.* Third, the human rights community in our region was caught in the sinking ship of cold war logic. Human rights activists feared that whatever they said would immediately place them in one of two camps – for or against NATO. If one is against NATO, one sides with Russia and China and therefore is an enemy to democracy. (Petrova 1999, quoted in Trehan 2009, p. 201, emphasis added)

Petrova notes the ‘lack of leadership’ from established NGOs in the west, whose response to the bombing campaign was muted at best (Petrova 1999). Thus, the feeling of powerlessness and lack of agency on the part of eastern European activists, as well as their inability to construct alternative discourses and practices of human rights, have resulted in an implicit acceptance of the model of human rights informed by the contemporary neo-liberal ethos (Trehan 2006a). Aware of their financial dependence on American-based foundations whose political

19 ‘Civil society’ generally incorporates NGOs and non-profit organizations, and broadly encompasses political parties, labour unions, workers’ cooperatives, business associations, membership-serving organizations and religious bodies, among other actors in society.

20 One of the unintended consequences of this ‘humanitarian intervention’ by Euro-Atlantic military powers was the ‘ethnic cleansing’ and/or forcible internal displacement of approximately 75 per cent of Kosovo’s pre-war Gypsy population. These included Ashkali, Egyptians and Romanies numbering close to an estimated 90,000 citizens before the NATO military intervention. See the Website of the European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF), www.ertf.org. For information on lead poisoning within camps in Kosovo for Romani internally displaced persons (IDPs), see <http://krff.tripod.com>.

orientations tend to be limited to one particular variant of 'democratization' – to wit, pro-free market and procedural democratic considerations (constitutional reform, elections, etc.) – activists in eastern Europe have seemed unable to devise more radical means for their human rights advocacy, alternative means and methods that are not reliant on the dominant model of corporatist human rights.²¹ The movements for reforms of the legal/judicial structures of the past decade in the region have been partly based on the strategic adoption of liberal 'rule of law' and 'democratization' concepts, as formulated by influential NGOs such as the OSI and its affiliates. These principles are in no way incommensurate with the neo-liberal project, according to its prevailing logic (Harvey 2005).

All of this has had profound implications for the trajectory of Romani projects and initiatives throughout the region. It has resulted in an interesting collaboration between the World Bank and the OSI, with the ongoing Decade of Romani Inclusion: 2005–15, which was launched with a donors' conference in Budapest in 2004. The politics surrounding this Decade initiative are instructive. Many grass-roots Romani NGOs were not invited, and participation was based on selective criteria, ensuring that the 'multiplicity' of human rights perspectives would remain altogether 'manageable' by its sponsors (Vesely 2005). The lack of effective resistance to the status quo also characterizes the Romani leadership – both traditional community leaders and those who represent NGOs – engaged in the human rights movement for Roma. Acton and Gheorghe offer one compelling explanation for this:

in seeking legitimacy for their struggle, Roma politicians have no choice but to lock onto the same concepts of human rights and anti-racism that operate in international organizations and relations between existing states. (Acton and Gheorghe 2001, p. 57)

Alternatives to the current order have yet to be explored because of the stranglehold of neo-liberal human rights, which inhibits the rethinking of Romani grass-roots advocacy and emancipatory politics. Part of the reason for this is the dismissal of Romani agency and resistance by elites within the movement (Bukovská 2006; Oprea 2005; Trehan 2001). This latter point is connected to another aspect of the neo-colonial process – the internalization of domination by oppressed groups, as suggested by C. Wright Mills in his classic 1959 study *The Power Elite*.

Romani subalterity in the NGO sector

[T]he metaphor of the [human rights] 'box' encompasses a set of historical and structural circumstances that allow the human rights framework to gain

21 As Canadian political scientist Richard Cox asserts, 'Corporatism left those who are relatively powerless in society out of account; but being powerless and unorganized they could hardly be considered part of civil society' (Cox 1999, p. 7).

currency among elites while limiting advances, and even creating setbacks, for the awareness and acceptance of human rights among the general population. (Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, 2000)

Well funded organizations whose work focuses on the diverse Romani communities in the region generally lack grass-roots constituencies and, in many cases, cooperate only superficially with local and national NGOs. In place of a grass-roots constituency for these NGOs, an elite constituency has become established, comprising national and international policy-makers, academics and coalitions of activists (Trehan 2001). In addition, white privilege is also prevalent in the NGO world, for the organizations that comprise Romani civil society are themselves not immune to racialized hierarchies.²² As one prominent Romani activist has suggested, 'one of biggest challenges facing the non-Roma who work with us is how to work for Roma rights without controlling the movement' (Kóczé 1999, p. 69).

The elite composition of NGO circles also influences the construction of priorities within the movement. Blanka Kozma, the director of the Romani Women's Association in Hungary, and one of the few Romani members of the Budapest city council, offers the following insights in relation to the planning of Roma-related NGO projects:

these projects were not designed from our perspective, it's not about our survival, it's not about our development ... their main aim is not to help Romani society or to develop the situation, but to *prevent them [Roma] from going to England or America so that we are not a danger to the EU* ... this was the motivation [in the past], and it continues to be to this day. (Kozma, interview material from 1999, quoted in Trehan 2009, emphasis added)

This type of radical critique rarely surfaces in the mainstream literature on Roma, nor is it likely to be found in the plethora of NGO publications. Nevertheless, in various discussions with Romani leaders, we have found this to be one of their foremost concerns about the movement. A concomitant development is that, once elite NGOs have established their dominant position within the 'Romani rights industry', they then seek to legitimate this position by reaching out to community-based organizations and by forming alliances and 'strategic' partnerships. These partnerships are generally on an unequal footing, as the grass-roots NGOs often have a dependency funding relationship with the elite NGOs. This then exacerbates existing asymmetries within the sector as a whole, particularly in relation to Romani development or human rights projects.

In the early days of post-socialism, NGO entrepreneurs in the region and abroad believed that recruitment efforts were critical to attract people to the field of development and human rights. The objective was to enhance professionalism in the field, and offering generous salaries was seen as an effective

22 Strategic management posts are disproportionately granted to non-Romani professionals in the field of 'Roma rights'. For a further discussion of white privilege, see McIntosh (1988).

way to achieve this. One result has been that the salaries of NGO workers in the region, especially within NGOs sponsored directly by international private foundations, are likely to be several times higher than those of local professionals, and higher still if one is a foreign worker (Trehan 2001).²³ By the late 1990s, this had had the effect of attracting a large number of degreed professionals into the NGO sector who would otherwise have joined the private sector, government or academia, as the 'Romani rights' sector was a field with good 'career potential'. This has been one of the corrosive impacts of the marketization of human rights, whereby the core ethos of human rights work becomes eroded and transmogrifies from an ideal of solidarity and social justice into one in favour of technocratic skill and loyalty to the established neo-liberal human rights order. Thus, the generous influx of money into the region through the auspices of western private foundations has led to an adjoining, perhaps dysfunctional phenomenon: what many Romani intellectuals cynically refer to as 'ethno-business' or the 'Gypsy industry'.²⁴ While one should certainly not lament increasing professionalism within the field of human rights, serious questions must be asked when actors within the movement, and the strategies they adopt, begin to manifest the imperatives of a neo-liberal economic order, losing sight of the priorities of the communities and people they are meant to serve. Indeed, prominent American human rights lawyer and scholar David Kennedy has suggested that reflexivity within the 'human rights community' is imperative (Kennedy 2004). The above section has raised issues associated with the growing institutionalization and marketization of human rights work in post-socialist Europe. We now continue this enquiry below by looking further at the hierarchical dynamics of NGOs working in the area.

Relations between elite NGOs and Romani communities

Some scholars have suggested that the complex of projects related to Roma is part of an important survival strategy within Romani communities, an avenue for strengthening these communities' prospects for the future by offering spaces of resistance to non-Romani notions of 'integration' (Pinnock 1998, 1999). With due

23 For example, in Hungary, a teacher employed by the state in 2000 earned on average \$150 a month; a full-time Hungarian NGO worker based in Budapest could earn over \$500 a month. The salaries within some international NGOs in the region are higher, after taking into account the cost of living and purchasing power parity, than for those working in New York or London in similar positions.

24 Monika Horaková, a Romani Czech MP, claims that 'there is too much paternalism ... with too many Czechs who speak no Romani making a living by helping a people they do not understand, while Gypsies themselves go jobless' (see Erlanger 2000). The 'Gypsy industry' is not solely a phenomenon of the third sector, but also encompasses the growing number of Romani-related offices and programmes, from culture to education, to minority rights in the state sector as well. Indeed, the EU Phare programmes in the region have funding earmarked for the 'development of civil society', which includes many Romani-related projects.

respect to the fields of human rights and development, we take a more critical view of the proliferation of the NGO sector, or what some scholars have called 'NGO-ization' (Stubbs 2007). For one thing, there is increasing resignation on the part of older Romani activists (those in their forties and above) and a tacit acceptance or even eager acceptance by the younger generation (those in their twenties or thirties) of the inequalities within the NGO sector as it has evolved. In our view, the profound deterioration of the socio-economic circumstances of the majority of Roma resulting from the transition to a market economy based on neo-liberal principles has forced many Roma to 'clutch at straws', leading to their participation in a wide range of 'paper NGOs' and projects in order to get a much-needed piece of the NGO funding pie (Kovats 2001; Trehan 2001, 2006a).

Donor dependency – ideological and structural control

If Romani leaders and politicians have historically been dependent on state structures for financial support, so too, in post-socialist times, have Romani actors within the NGO sector become dependent on major philanthropic donors for continuing their work. A pecking order of dependency has emerged in which elite NGOs and international NGOs in particular are reliant on western philanthropy via private foundations, and local Romani NGOs then rely in turn, for their own survival, on these elite NGOs. As explained earlier, most NGOs working in the field are not sustainable without foreign assistance, and membership-funded organizations are virtually non-existent, the majority of projects being necessarily donor driven.²⁵ Donor dependency undermines the autonomy of local NGOs and initiatives, as donors subscribing to neo-liberal agendas may have different priorities from local, economically depressed communities (Trehan 2001).

Some advocates for the Roma in Europe have drawn parallels between their Romani communities and those in the so-called Third World (Biró 1995). Nevertheless, these same advocates tend to overlook the power dynamics and distortions that result from their well meaning interventions in Romani communities. Even active Romani advocates and intellectuals within civil society are comparable to those in the Third World in terms of both their relatively isolated position globally and their subalternity. Their common struggle as double minorities in the region – both dissidents and Roma – takes place on several fronts simultaneously: not only against the state, but now increasingly against structures that inhibit Romani participation in the achievement of their

25 The lack of voluntary membership of these organizations was explained away in the early days of post-socialism, for example in the 1990 annual report of the Autonomía Foundation, by the 'legitimate suspicion against voluntary action, as during 40 years [under communism] there was the practice of compulsory "volunteering", and membership fees were deducted from salaries'.

own emancipation, including those within civil society at large.²⁶ This polemic raises serious ethical questions that Romani activists have now begun to ask. To whom are Romani and non-Romani NGOs ultimately responsible – to their donors, to the Romani communities they seek to assist, or to the general public? Who decides, and who should decide, what the priorities are for the development and emancipation of Roma within the NGO sector?

Bukovská (2006) raises an interesting point with regard to the question of legitimacy, noting that many elite human rights NGOs have been accepted as legitimate ‘partners’ by governments and intergovernmental organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and the EU. One result is that Romani voices at the local or national level have been largely usurped by the power of elite human rights entrepreneurs, who have superior networking skills and easier access to global human rights sponsorship. At times, Romani representatives have publicly aired their increasing frustration with the monopoly these entrepreneurs wield within the human rights sector. In one particular forum at the Central European University in Budapest in 2001, Aladár Horváth, then director of Roma Polgarjogi Alapítvány (Roma Civil Rights Foundation), a national NGO in Hungary, suggested a colonizing role in the movement was indeed being played by elite human rights entrepreneurs, most of whom were not Romani:

The Romani Movement has a long way to go. This present discussion itself illustrates how far we are from a normal situation: we have several non-Roma experts discussing the future of the movement, while we Roma get to say something in the end. I will offer some conclusions about the background of this development by quoting Malcolm X, who after his trip from Mecca once asked, ‘If you drink coffee which is too strong, too black, what do you do with it? Well, you put some cream ... but if you put too much cream, it no longer tastes like coffee’. This is a lesson from the Black civil rights movement, which offers us a strong critique of black integration. (Quoted in Trehan 2009)

Horváth was irritated because the non-Romani human rights entrepreneurs had been asked to speak first; by invoking Malcolm X, he was seeking to emphasize his own marginal position, even within a social field that was supposedly representing the emancipatory interests of his own community.

Of equal importance is that, inside these institutional circles, human rights elites use their personal leverage to promote the careers of friends and family members, many of whom reappear on various boards and/or act as trustees of

26 Aladár Horváth, Rudko Kawczynski and Blanka Kozma are a few of the many Romani intellectuals in the region who believe that the hierarchical structure of the NGO sector today inhibits Romani people from participating fully in the decision-making process. Certainly, the burden most Romani intellectuals carry in their attempt to represent themselves, their families, their communities and, indeed, their whole people – if this is even conceivable, let alone possible – is tremendous. See Kawczynski (1997). Rudko Kawczynski was at that time director of the Regional Roma Participation Program within the Budapest branch of the OSI, as well as on the board of directors of the European Roma Rights Centre.

domestic NGOs and international NGOs as well as members of their legal advisory committees. Those of Romani origin are few and far between. Retrospectively, we can see that the 1990s were characterized by the American human rights establishment's controlling stake in the 'Roma rights' cause in Europe. By contrast, German, French or British human rights advocacy networks have only recently become active in this area, propelled by the EU accession of post-socialist states (Trehan 2009).

As shown above, the proliferation of US-funded NGOs – whose ideological orientations are usually burdened with preconceptions drawn from the neo-liberal paradigm, for instance 'law as salvation'²⁷ – reflects the interests of those Euro-Atlantic elites who are attempting to manage – or pacify – Romani communities perceived to be dangerously marginalized and potentially unstable. This 'management of Roma' appears to be concealed within a broader framework in which progressive agendas of integration and civil rights are espoused.

However, despite the increasing number of civil rights lawsuits brought before the courts on behalf of Romani plaintiffs, the seeming rise in rights awareness in the public sphere and the media, and the launch of ambitious programmes for the integration of Roma over the past decade, the fundamental oversights and weaknesses of these approaches are now becoming clear. For example, the social distance between Roma and the majority population is actually on the rise. Legal interventions do not always obtain desired results for the victims, and in many cases prove to be harmful for local Romani–majority relations. Nor do court trials always result in justice *per se*, since a primarily litigious approach does not address the roots of popular prejudice or the structural inequalities embedded in society. In many cases, litigation does not even help Romani victims to regain their dignity (Zoltan 2006). Moreover, with regard to 'Romani-specific' initiatives for integration, post-socialist societies have begun to react negatively, either by suggesting that Roma are now being favoured by government programmes at the expense of their non-Roma counterparts, or by implying that policies of the 'affirmative action' type are unwarranted in the first place, with the Roma being considered a particularly undeserving group.

The two faces of the Romani civil rights movement: emancipation and exploitation

For central and eastern European countries, the disintegration of the diverse ideologies of state socialism (and subsequent membership of the EU) created a space for liberal human rights discourses and concomitant socio-legal practices. We have suggested in this chapter that these discursive human rights practices were then subsumed within a global hegemonic neo-liberal political

27 This is the model espoused by the European Roma Rights Centre's former director Dimitrina Petrova (2003), and one of the legacies of international human rights NGOs such as Human Rights Watch, which is closely affiliated with the OSI.

order, thereby relegating issues of egalitarianism and social justice within civil society to the periphery. This has been particularly marked in the case of the Romani civil rights movement. In exploring an emerging hierarchy of 'post-imperial' privilege within the movement for the empowerment of Romanies in central and eastern Europe today, which is labelled the 'Roma industry' by some activists, we have offered a critique of the broader marketization of human rights. The collapse of socialist state structures resulted in the re-emergence of a full-blown nationalism as well as the rise of ethnic visibility in the region. One casualty of the 'transition' has been the incipient and fragile social solidarity between Romani and non-Romani communities that had accrued under successive socialist regimes in eastern Europe. The resurgence of nationalism has been linked to the rise of extreme violence, both physical and symbolic, towards a number of visible minority groups, including Romanies, while the rise of 'ethnicization' – in one of its most liberal variants – has taken the shape of a 'celebration and preservation of cultural difference' (cf. Kovats 1998). This latter view is supported by extensive state institutional machineries, including state institutional frameworks for minorities, offices for ethnic and national minorities, and various ministerial departments that specialize in social policy issues linked to Romani citizens. Although these may appear to be sites of well meaning initiatives for social inclusion, one inadvertent result has been the consolidation of a status quo which obscures the ongoing marginalization and 'infra-humanity' of Romani Europeans, who continue to occupy the bottom rung of a racialized hierarchy, even in seemingly progressive social spaces such as the contemporary 'human rights community'.²⁸

More specifically, within the movement today, the advocacy elites at the very top of the ladder tend to be western (primarily American) human rights entrepreneurs, followed by eastern European 'white' (or non-Romani) elites; the order then moves down to include Romani elites (urban, educated Roma), and, finally, local Romani communities and their representatives (usually rural and semi-literate). Moreover, EU accession for the post-socialist countries has resulted in a *de facto* centre and periphery within Europe itself, thus exacerbating the already marginal economic and political position of Roma, whose communities continue to subsist as internal colonies within Europe. The multiple levels of visible neo-colonialism – for example, western Europe's economic stranglehold over eastern European polities – propels eastern Europeans to show their 'western credentials' by separating themselves from their Romani neighbours, which only 'others' them further, and reinforces the racialized social pecking order that is already set in place (Trehan 2006b).

As we have shown, this racialized hierarchy is not hermetically sealed, as there is considerable differentiation and fluidity within it, but the basic contours of its structure have continued to remain recognizable along these lines for more

28 The expanding institutionalization of minority policies in post-socialist Europe is akin to what Stuart Hall (1999) has termed 'multicultural drift' in Britain.

than twenty years, ever since the first Romani civil rights organizations were formed. We have suggested, further, that the autonomy of these indigenous Romani organizations has now been usurped by the powerful interventions of neo-liberal human rights entrepreneurs. The postcolonial racism embedded within this hierarchy is a result not just of material resource advantages (e.g. the dominance of those American philanthropists who have taken up the Romani cause), but also of symbolic power configurations that have their roots in 'eastern otherness' and, in contradistinction to it, 'western normality'. This chapter has attempted to make sociological sense of the above developments, in many cases paradoxical, within the contemporary human rights movement for Roma today.

The struggle for the soul of the Romani movement is currently being waged on multiple fronts. One crucial task over the next century for Europeans living side by side with their Romani neighbours will be to acknowledge and humanize their common lives and realities, for entrenched mutual apprehensions and suspicions urgently need to be overcome. For Romani Europeans, this task will be achieved only when they begin to acknowledge and challenge the neo-colonial relations they encounter as subalterns, thereby empowering themselves in the diversity of contexts that encompass their daily lives (schools, workplaces, government offices and other institutions). We emphasize *next century* because, in the spirit of W. E. B. Dubois's classic study *The Souls of Black Folk* (1905), it is clear to us that, for an oppressed people, emancipation is a multi-generational struggle, and it is likely to remain so for decades, possibly centuries, to come.

Works cited

- Acton, T. and Gheorghe, N. (2001) 'Citizens of the World and Nowhere: Minority, Ethnic and Human Rights for Roma'. In: Guy, W. ed. *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, pp. 54–70.
- Biró, A. (1995) 'The Prince, the Merchant, the Citizen ... and the Romany'. *Magyar Hírlap [Hungarian Daily]*, 30 May.
- Bukovská, B. (2006) 'Dignitati Memores, as Optima Intenti...? Some Reflections on the Human Dimension of Human Rights Work'. Proceedings of the Human Rights and Public Interest Law Fellows Retreat (unpublished), Cairo, 26–29 January.
- Buti, A. (2004) 'The Removal of Indigenous Children from Their Families – US and Australia Compared'. *University of Western Sydney Law Review*, 6. Available at <http://search.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/UWSLRev/2004/6.html> (accessed 20 January 2009).
- Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs (2000) 'Introduction: Human Rights Litigation: Promise v. Perils'. *Human Rights Dialogue*, 2(2). Available at www.cceia.org/resources/publications/dialogue/2_02/articles/621.html.
- Césaire, A. (2000) *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York, Monthly Review Press.
- Chen, T. and Churchill, D. (2005) 'Neoliberal Civilization and the Economic Disciplining of Human Rights: Convergence of Models in the US and China'. *Rhizomes*, 10 (spring). Available at www.rhizomes.net/issue10/chen.htm (accessed 20 January 2009).
- Clark, C. (2004) 'Severity Has Often Enraged but Never Subdued a Gypsy: The History and Making of European Romani Stereotypes'. In: Saul, N. D. B. and Tebbutt, S. eds. *The Role of the Romanies: Images and Counter-images of Romanies / 'Gypsies' in European Culture*. Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, pp. 226–46.

- Cox, R. W. (1999) 'Civil Society at the Turn of the Millennium: Prospects for an Alternative World Order'. *Review of International Studies*, 25(1), p. 7.
- Elias, N. (1978) *The Civilizing Process*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Erlanger, S. (2000) 'Czech Gypsies Knock Harder on the Closed Doors'. *New York Times*, 12 May.
- Fanon, F. (1965) *The Wretched of the Earth*. London, MacGibbon & Kee.
- Gandhi, L. (1998) *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. St Leonards, Allen & Unwin.
- Gilroy, P. (2004) *Between Camps: Nations, Cultures, and the Allure of Race*. London, Routledge.
- Gowan, P. (1996) 'Eastern Europe, Western Power and Neo-Liberalism'. *New Left Review*, 1, p. 216.
- Guilhot, N. (2005) *The Democracy Makers: Human Rights and International Order*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Hall, S. (1999) 'From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence'. *History Workshop Journal*, 48, p. 188.
- Hancock, I. (1997) 'The Struggle for the Control of Identity'. *Transitions*, 4(4), p. 4.
- (2002) *Ame Sam e Romane Dzene/We are the Romani People*. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press.
- Harvey, D. (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Heuss, H. (2000) 'Anti-Gypsyism Is Not a New Phenomenon. Anti-Gypsyism Research: The Creation of a New Field of Study'. In: Acton, T. ed. *Scholarship and the Gypsy Struggle*. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press, pp. 52–68.
- Kállai, E. and Törzsök, E. eds. (2000) *A Roma's Life in Hungary*. Translated by T. Wilkinson. Budapest, Bureau for European Comparative Minority Research (BECMIR).
- Kawczynski, R. (1997) 'The Politics of Romani Politics'. *Transitions*, 4(4), pp. 24–29.
- Kemény, I., ed. (2005) *Roma of Hungary*. Translated by A. Gane. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Kennedy, D. (2004) *The Dark Sides of Virtue: Reassessing International Humanitarianism*. Oxford, Princeton University Press.
- Kóczé, A. (1999) 'Taking Control of Our Identity'. *Roma Rights*, 3, p. 69.
- Kohn, M. (1995) *The Race Gallery: The Return of Racial Science*. London, Jonathan Cape.
- Kovats, M. (1998) *The Development of Roma Politics in Hungary 1989–1995*. PhD thesis, University of Portsmouth.
- (2001) 'Problems of Intellectual and Political Accountability in Respect of Emerging European Roma Policy'. *JEMIE*, autumn. Available at www.ecmi.de/jemie/indextitle.html (accessed 20 January 2009).
- (2003) 'The Politics of Roma Identity: Between Nationalism and Destitution'. *Open Democracy*. Available at www.opendemocracy.net/people-migrationeurope/article_1399.jsp (accessed 20 January 2009).
- Maguire, G. (1995) *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*. New York, Harper Collins.
- McIntosh, P. (1988) 'White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies'. Working Paper No. 189. Wellsey, MA, Center for Research on Women, Wellsley College.
- Mills, C. W. (1959) *The Power Elite*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Nkrumah, K. (1965) *Neo-colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*. London, Nelson & Sons.
- Oprea, A. (2005) 'Child Marriage a Cultural Problem, Educational Access as a Race Issue? Deconstructing Uni-dimensional Understanding of Romani Oppression'. *Roma Rights*, (journal of the European Roma Rights Centre), 2. Available at www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=2284 (accessed 20 January 2009).
- Ost, D. (2005) *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press.
- Petrova, D. (1999) *Human Rights in the Aftermath of Kosovo*. Human Rights Dialogue Series. New York, Carnegie Council on Ethics in International Affairs (CCEIA).
- (2003) 'The Roma: Between a Myth and the Future'. *Social Research*, 70(1), pp. 111–61.
- Pinnock, K. (1998) 'Social Exclusion and Strategies of Inclusion: Romani NGOs in Bulgaria'. Seminar on New Directions in Romani Studies, University of Greenwich, 11 June, pp. 7–8.

- (1999) *Social Exclusion and Resistance: A Study of Gypsies and the Non-governmental Sector in Bulgaria 1989–1997*. PhD thesis, University of Wolverhampton.
- Ringold, D., Orenstein, M. A. and Wilkens, E. (2003) *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*. Washington, DC, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.
- Schmitt, R. (1996) 'Racism and Objectification: Reflections on Themes from Fanon'. In: Gordon, L. and White, R., et al. eds. *Frantz Fanon: A Critical Reader*. Oxford, Blackwell.
- Simhandl, K. (2006) "Western Gypsies and Travellers" – "Eastern Roma": The Creation of Political Objects by the European Union'. *Nations and Nationalism*, 12(1), pp. 97–115.
- Stubbs, P. (2007) 'Community Development in Contemporary Croatia: Globalisation, Neoliberalisation, and NGO-isation'. In: Dominelli, L., ed. *Revitalising Communities*. Aldershot, Ashgate Press, pp. 161–74.
- Todorova, M. (1997) *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Trehan, N. (2001) 'In the Name of the Roma? The Role of Private Foundations and NGOs'. In: Guy, W. ed. *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*. Hatfield, University of Hertfordshire Press.
- (2006a) 'Neo-liberal Human Rights Entrepreneurs as a New Power Elite: The (Un)intended Consequences of the "Romani Rights Movement" in Eastern Europe'. Proceedings of the conference on C. Wright Mills and 'The Power Elite' (unpublished), Columbia University, New York, 14 April.
- (2006b) 'Racialising Hegemony Within the Marketplace of Romani Emancipation in Europe'. Proceedings of the conference White Terror/(Post)Empire (unpublished), London School of Economics, London, 19–20 May.
- (2009) *Human Rights Entrepreneurship in Post-Socialist Hungary: From 'Gypsy Problem' to 'Romani Rights'*. PhD thesis, London School of Economics.
- Vesely, I. (2005) 'Where Are the Romani Organizations?' *Transitions Online*, 3 February. Available at www.tol.cz/look/TOL/home.tpl?ldLanguage=1&ldPublication=4&NrIssue=333 (accessed 20 January 2009).
- Wessely, A. (1996) 'The Cognitive Chance of Central European Sociology'. In: Hadas, M. and Vörös, M. eds. *Replika* (Hungarian social science quarterly), special issue, 'Colonisation or Partnership? Eastern Europe and Western Social Sciences'.
- Woodiwiss, A. (2006) 'The Law Cannot Be Enough: Human Rights and the Limits of Legalism'. In: Meckled-Garcia, S. and Cali, S. eds. *The Legalisation of Human Rights: Multidisciplinary Perspective on Human Rights and Human Rights Law*. London, Routledge.
- Wrench, J. (2006) 'Conference Keynote Address'. Proceedings of the conference Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe (unpublished), University of Leeds, Leeds, UK, June.
- Zoltan, F. (2006) 'Citizens or Denizens? The Future of Romani Integration in Europe'. Proceedings of panel presentation, Centre for the Study of Human Rights and Central London Europe Group (CLEG), London School of Economics, London, June.

