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THREE

Antigypsyism in a time of neoliberalism: challenging the radical right through transformative change

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Introduction

The chapter explores the rise of radical-right populism and authoritarianism and the implications for Roma. It critiques and seeks to refashion the strategies and frames used by anti-racists and Romani rights champions ranged against antigypsyism in a way that will enhance the potential for intersectional solidarity, dialogue and alignment with the concept of a New Social Europe (for a discussion of this concept, see [Chapter One](#)). This chapter argues for legal protections and human rights to be defended and upheld. However, the narrative directed by rights ‘champions’ at combating antigypsyism should also be focused on Romani potential, emphasizing the capacities of Roma in a social, political and economic sense, and leading to forms of empowerment; this is a central theme of this book. It is also argued that the process of tackling antigypsyism, which is a specific form of racism towards the Roma centred on tropes such as criminality and cultural dysfunctionality, warrants

transformative change (for a definition, see [Chapter One](#)) given the deep structural, cultural and institutional locus of racism, including antigypsyism, and the inflammation of such in the economic crises and convulsions so redolent of late capitalism.

Crisis and irrationality

The writer and philosopher George Santayana (2006: 32) famously said: ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’ The wonderful thing about history is that it is sometimes a guide to the future rather than just a record of the past. In his path-breaking book *The Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi (1944: 236) reflected on the rise of European fascism in the 1930s and noted: ‘[T]he moment would come when both the economic and the political systems were threatened by complete paralysis. Fear would grip the people, and leadership would be thrust upon those who offered an easy way out at whatever ultimate price. The time was ripe for the fascist solution.’ According to Polanyi, a country approaching the fascist phase showed symptoms such as irrational philosophies, racist aesthetics, anti-capitalist demagoguery, criticism of the party system and widespread disparagement of the status quo. Despite its revolutionary rhetoric, this was a sham (false) rebellion, arranged with the tacit approval of the authorities, where new alliances were formed between the fascists, the establishment and economic elites (Polanyi, 1944: 238).

As discussed in [Chapter One](#), populism is an offshoot of nationalism; some present-day observers fear that authoritarian populism in Europe may be the precursor to new forms of fascism and may normalize the politics of the extreme right (Ryder, 2020). Mudde (2018b), with reference to the growth of populism, notes:

The great recession that followed the 2008 financial crash freed populism from the (radical) right. The rise of

Syriza in Greece, and to a lesser extent Podemos in Spain, showed clear similarities with, but also fundamental differences from, the populist radical right. They shared a pro-people and anti-elite politics, but Podemos and Syriza were clearly part of the radical left, both in terms of ideology and subculture.

The dominant European forms of populism that have emerged have been associated with the radical right. Fascism and contemporary radical-right populism share some similar traits. Both present a homogenizing view of ‘the people’ and conceive of political opponents as ‘the anti-people’ (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). In general, populism follows an ideology that considers society to be separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, often centred on the ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and the need to follow the ‘will’ of the people. The homogenizing views of populism are grounded in nationalist thinking and symbolism. In considering such polarization, it is worth discussing the ideas of the controversial theorist Carl Schmitt, a key thinker active during and sympathetic towards National Socialism in Germany; despite his sympathies with the regime, his influence extended into the post-war period. Schmitt envisaged a ‘pure difference’ between the ‘self’ and ‘other’ developing through what can be described as an ‘agonism’ that had nation-building potential by marking the boundaries between insiders and outsiders (Roskamm, 2015). Agonism is the intense contestation by rival camps of their adversaries’ values and identities; it fragments social cohesion, deepening and reifying the identities of the besieged adversaries (Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2006). Agonism is a phenomenon that deploys binary speech acts, irrationalism and manipulation. For Schmitt (1996), a national identity could only be constituted by the suppression of the adversary. Schmitt’s concept of ‘us and them’ (friend and foe) – the marker between those classified as belonging to the national group and those outside the boundary – was nationalistic and

sympathetic to fascist ideals. The Schmittian form of agonism creates a public enemy who ultimately cannot be engaged with in partnership, but only be vanquished (Edwards, 2013).

Mudde (2007) has described ethno-nationalist radical-right parties as largely overlapping with the populist radical right. They have at their core a strong ‘charismatic’ leader, a ‘warrior’ who can lead the people into binary, Manichaeic contests against internal and external enemies. Mudde (2018a: 254) claims that ethnic or racial types of civil wars and pogroms are most evident in Eastern Europe but there are examples where Roma have become victims of radicalism in Western Europe too. There is increasing evidence of the Roma being cast by the radical populist and nationalist right as an internal enemy and external threat located outside of the boundary of the national group (see [Chapter Four](#) by Rorke).

As noted in [Chapter One](#), the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the nature and reach of antigypsyism in Europe, as well as how the state and a broad spectrum of political actors can orchestrate anti-Romani sentiments. In addition to general measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, authorities in Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria introduced additional restrictions to put Romani communities under strict quarantine, sometimes resorting to the use of police and military force. Amnesty International (2020) reports that in Bulgaria and Slovakia, the state authorities have argued that such measures are necessary for the protection of public health and safety. State intervention during the pandemic crisis has demonstrated how Romani identities have been securitized and problematized in such a way to make anti-Romani discourses seem ‘reasonable’ rather than offensive (Van Baar, 2011b). These actions were shaped by age-old racist perceptions of the Roma as carriers of disease.

Manifestations of antigypsyism by the radical right and state are not just to be found in Central and Eastern Europe. Prior to the pandemic, forced evictions in countries such as Italy and France raised considerable concern from the Romani

rights movement. For instance, in France, a secret government circular was leaked in 2010 and revealed a targeted policy to prioritize the deportation of Romani migrants, among other groups (Parker, 2012). The Conservative government of Boris Johnson pledged in the general election of 2019 to enforce a crackdown on nomadism, an action that was seen by some to be a cynical attempt to instrumentalize antigypsyism (Monbiot, 2019). Antigypsyism is to be found within mainstream governments as well as on the part of the radical right; however, the rise of the radical right encourages forms of shadowing and mimicry by a mainstream eager to conserve power and pander to anti-Romani sentiments.

Authoritarian and radical-right populism is a political force that downplays the separation of powers, the independence and legitimacy of a free press, and the rule of law. With authoritarian populism, though, unlike with fascism, democracy is challenged and undermined but not destroyed, which can potentially normalize extreme-right politics and prepare the ground for its wider acceptance (Mudde, 2018a). In discussing radical-right populism, it is worth reappraising Adorno's (1948) comments on the study he participated in: 'The authoritarian personality' (Adorno et al, 1950). The study sought to identify key personality traits inclined towards authoritarianism that might make some susceptible to embracing fascism in a crisis. For Adorno (1948: 129), fascism is a form of irrationalism as its consequences are contrary to the interests of those mobilized to support it. Commenting on the modern age and the emergence of a mass media, Adorno believed that the modern public sphere of film, radio and, in particular, television enforces conformity, quiets dissent and mutes thought. Negative media representation has been a major factor in shaping anti-Romani sentiments and has been notable in orchestrating forms of 'moral panic' against the Roma – basically, a form of hysteria fuelled by misleading tropes and inaccurate reporting (Kroon et al, 2016). Such reporting is, in part, a product of the increase in antigypsyism being coordinated and orchestrated by

unscrupulous politicians, but as authoritarian regimes and their allies take control of media outlets, this interplay in stoking moral panics has become more intense.

Anti-Romani sentiments also have an economic dynamic. Thomas Piketty (2020) argues that the growing accumulation of wealth by the top 1 per cent has led to neoliberal globalization and populism increasingly working together and/or reflecting shared xenophobic narratives in the scapegoating of immigrants and minority ethnic groups as undermining the position of a previously incorporated (white) working class, who are now the 'left behind' as an underclass. This has been most evident in the UK referendum vote to leave the European Union (EU) in 2016 and in the election of Donald Trump as President of the US in the same year, where we can see a fusion of neoliberal competition and populist nativism. Sensationalist media reporting of mobile (migrant) EU Roma from the 'new' EU member states begging on the streets of major Western European cities and setting up camps on the outskirts were vilified by the media, and politicians used those images for political gain and as evidence of the problems brought about by uncontrolled immigration, namely, crime and abuse of social welfare.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the strengthening and growth of the radical right and nationalist regimes in countries such as Poland and Hungary, and more generally the anti-migrant hysteria that was generated by the 2015 migration of large numbers of Syrian refugees into Europe, demonstrate the growing strength of radical-right movements across Europe. The economic and financial crisis of 2008 acted as a catalyst to the rise of radical-right populism (Mudde, 2018b). A difficult economic situation, coupled with an increasingly reactive and emotive political environment, has made the position of the Roma more precarious through increased economic exclusion, scapegoating and racism (see [Chapter One](#)). Filcak and Skobla (2012) suggest that the experiences of Roma are like the 'canary in the mine shaft', that is, the harbinger of

future crises. In other words, the Roma are a group that has experienced the impact of transition more harshly than others; this was very true as parts of Europe turned to fascism in the 1930s, then to communism in the post-war era, then to neoliberalism in the 1990s, and now to austerity, ordoliberalism and more entrenched forms of neoliberalism. During all these transitions, the Roma have been cast as a threat, a danger and a problem. By weakening the social contract, neoliberalism creates an ‘underclass’ of the unemployed and disadvantaged, a group where many Roma are to be found, and this pool also serves neoliberal interests by creating downward pressure on wages and rights in the workforce, with those in work fearing the risk of joining the ranks of the unemployed. The ‘underclass’ also serves as a scapegoat for those dissatisfied with the status quo to blame for their misfortunes, distracting blame from those in control. The Roma are thus cast as a socio-economic burden, a dysfunctional group prone to dependency and welfarism, committing benefit fraud, and embodying a ‘culture of poverty’.

The linkages between politics, policy and practice are continually being renegotiated, and authoritarian neoliberalism certainly foregrounds welfare as socio-political governmentality through discipline, compliance and control, combined with austerity, by blaming Roma for abusing the system. Such a stance can be described as ‘welfare chauvinism’, an explicit and systematic marginalization of subordinate Roma (Bruff and Tansel, 2019) and/or a rationale for imposing additional conditions on Roma (Vidra, 2018).

To help illustrate such processes in context, we can look at the case of Hungary. Szombati (2018) seeks to understand the rise of antigypsyism by using Polányi’s conceptualization of the ‘double movement’, that is, the expectation that economic shocks generated within a ‘disembedded economy’ will generate ‘countermovements’ in the political sphere if the state fails to protect society from the advance of the free market and/or from instability. For Szombati, the 2008–09 crisis was

paired with the ideological orientation and political strategizing of some racist movements in Hungary (the Jobbik Party and the Magyar Garda, a radical-right paramilitary organization), developing a ‘political antigypsyism’ that transferred generally prevalent racist sensibilities from the social sphere into the arena of political struggle. It is worth noting the traction the Jobbik Party and the Magyar Garda generated through their ‘Gypsy crime’ propaganda and agitation, which claimed the Roma were predisposed to criminality and that there was a need for greater sanctioning and control of this minority. This narrative thrust the Jobbik Party forth from the political margins to becoming the largest single opposition party in the Parliament (Szombati, 2018). The various forms of demonization of Romani communities outlined here so far form the locus of a series of ‘moral panics’, what Cohen (2002) defines as collective hysteria (see [Chapter One](#)), and this labelling and vilification can be described as constituting antigypsyism.

Understanding antigypsyism

Having charted the causes and forms of radical-right populism and nationalism, and their impact on the Roma, this chapter proceeds to explore the response of Romani civil society to this circumstance. A major reference point of Romani civil society’s counter-narrative is the concept of antigypsyism – but what is it?

One of the most prominent champions of the use of the term ‘antigypsyism’ is the Romanian Romani activist Valeriu Nicolae (2006: 1), who perceives antigypsyism as a distinct form of racism against Roma that is both similar to, different from and ‘intertwined with many other types of racism’. It is a term that is now part of mainstream discourse about Roma and has even entered the lexicon of institutional power in Europe. The term has received growing support within the EU; in 2019, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling for the EU and its member states to adopt strong Romani inclusion

plans post-2020 and to step up the fight against antigypsyism (ERGO, 2019).

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe (CoE) defines antigypsyism as ‘a specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatization and the most blatant kind of discrimination’ (ECRI, 2011: 3). That definition was included in ECRI’s ‘General Policy Recommendation No.13 on combating anti-Gypsyism and discrimination against Roma’ (ECRI, 2011). Similarities can be found between antigypsyism and antisemitism: both are persistent historically and geographically; both are systematic; and both are manifested by acts of violence. The international civil society group Alliance against Antigypsyism (2017) also argues that antigypsyism essentializes and creates discriminating social structures and violent practices that reproduce structural disadvantages.

It should be noted that there is an ongoing debate as to the appropriateness of ‘antigypsyism’ as a term, with Oprea and Matache (2019) arguing that it is wrong to use a term based on the word ‘Gypsy’, which has pejorative connotations, and that the identification of this phenomenon should instead be based on the more inclusive term ‘Roma’ to frame the concept of anti-Romani racism. Others use a capital ‘G’ in the spelling of ‘anti-Gypsyism’. Reflecting on such concerns, some authors are trying to define Romani-specific forms of racism by producing new vocabularies (Albert, 2012). McGarry (2017) has employed the term ‘Romaphobia’ as ‘the last acceptable form of racism’. I disagree with the term as ‘phobia’ per se relates to an ‘extreme or irrational fear or aversion to something’, in this case, the Roma. I contend in this chapter that antigypsyism has ideological, political and economic features that are instrumentalized through concrete policies towards Roma. Antigypsyism can be traced to

historically different social, economic and political realities; it has a multifaceted character but it cannot be reduced to simply being an emotional fear on the part of the non-Roma. The term ‘antigypsyism’ is connected with social stereotypes, clichés and prejudices that are rather enrooted in dehumanization and the view that Roma are incompatible with ‘civilized’ society and fundamentally subhuman. This chapter employs the term ‘antigypsyism’ because, at present, it is the term accepted by most civil society stakeholders. We do not wish to enter the debate on terminology and the relevance of umbrella terms, but want to discuss the definition and application of the currently prevailing term.

It is claimed that the term ‘antigypsyism’ first appeared in the late 1920s in Russia, was evident in academic debates in the 1970s and 1980s, and started to feature in the narratives and ‘frames’ of Romani rights campaigners from the 21st century (Cortés and End, 2019). According to Goffman (1974), ‘framing’ offers a conceptual structure that organizes interpretation through which people understand and construct social events. Goffman’s concept has provided an important source of inspiration for scholars who have studied social movements and how frames can mobilize and steer social movements. The term ‘antigypsyism’ has formed an important frame in the armoury of the Romani social movement. For example, it has been promoted by the Alliance against Antigypsyism (2017) – an ad hoc alliance of Romani and pro-Romani civil society organizations and individuals calling upon the EU and other power structures, such as local and national governments, to place a greater emphasis on tackling antigypsyism – and has become a prominent feature of Romani rights campaign rhetoric.

How does antigypsyism manifest itself? The expressed rhetoric of hate speech against Roma results in tacit forms of their exclusion from public services, such as access to electricity, water, sanitation and so on. Such hate speech is not just orchestrated by elites, but enters everyday language

and becomes casual and accepted on social media, creating what have been described as ‘micro-aggressions’, namely, unthinking remarks that betray underlying assumptions and make the people targeted feel uncomfortable or violated (End, 2014). In addition, we should consider the actions taken by those in power that negatively affect Romani communities and contravene the protective function of the state towards members of the public, such as forced evictions, allowing Roma to reside only at the margins of localities, police brutality and school segregation. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the institutional antigypsyism that has recently been recognized by the EU as one of the main barriers to Romani integration (Carrera et al, 2017). Institutional manifestations of antigypsyism have profound repercussions for the effective socio-economic inclusion of Romani communities in different life spheres, such as access to housing, health and education (FRA, 2018). What makes antigypsyism a special form of racism in Europe today is the involvement of the state in the production and co-production of these discriminatory norms, knowledge and politics in relation to Romani communities.

Racism can be defined as an ideology and a practice that produces a society in which some people systematically have less access to resources, power, security and well-being than others. Such systemic inequalities reflect hierarchical differences between people originally created by colonialism, which produced patterns of historical inequality, making it difficult for certain people to access opportunities and resources. If we accept this definition, and antigypsyism as a special form of racism, then antigypsyism clearly plays a central role in maintaining Romani marginalization in a broad socio-economic and cultural sense.

The term ‘antigypsyism’ could be perceived as having parallels with antisemitism, implying that specific forms of racism might exist. Anthias and Yuval Davies (1992) argue that there are ‘racisms|’ rather than ‘racism’, in other words, the experiences of racism are specific to particular groups and are

historically grounded. In this sense, the term ‘antigypsyism’ has relevance. Mac An Ghaill (1999) has drawn attention to the plight of Gypsies, Roma and Travellers (GRT), who receive much negative media and political attention in the UK, and notes that there is a long history of neglect, both by the state and by anti-racist movements, of the material and cultural experiences of GRT communities. Thus, combating antigypsyism could become a valuable tool to challenge the marginalization of these groups through affirmative, targeted measures and mobilizations.

Transformative change and combating antigypsyism

A review of the calls for reform and change made by those who espouse the term ‘antigypsyism’ finds that these calls include references to improving the cultural and political representation of Roma and corresponding calls for stronger legal measures to tackle this specific form of racism. In reflecting on the value of such aspirations, it might be useful to review the conceptual debates that have taken place between the proponents of liberal multiculturalism, anti-racism and critical multiculturalism.

Liberal multiculturalism embodies a version of liberal ‘tolerance’ based on the assumption that there is a dominant cultural identity to which minority ethnic groups have to adapt but that concessions could be made for members of minority ethnic groups. An important aspect of liberal multiculturalism has been the belief that education and cultural promotion can dispel the ignorance that allegedly fuels racist beliefs; basically, it rests on the assumption that we can educate people not to be racist. However, critics of liberal multiculturalism claim it caricatures culture in a simplistic manner, reducing the presentation of minority cultures so as to render them homogeneous, static and internally conflict-free. Moreover, it is argued that such an approach fails to challenge the institutional dimension of racism and offers minority ethnic groups mere tokenism. Some would argue liberal multiculturalism enables

forms of tokenism to act simultaneously with overt acts of institutional racism. For example, governments that include references to Roma in the school curriculum or that sponsor some form of celebration of Romani culture do so as a form of cover to enable them to profess a commitment to Romani inclusion when, in reality, they are complicit in maintaining Romani exclusion. For example, the Hungarian government has some measures to promote Romani culture in the school curriculum but is actively building an apparatus to maintain and extend school segregation (see [Chapter Four](#) by Rorke).

Proponents of anti-racism seek to challenge and dismantle the institutional components of racism in terms of the strategic direction and management of institutions, as well as the ethos and messages conveyed by them, and by promoting diversity of membership and participation in institutions. Rigid conceptions of anti-racism in the 1970s and 1980s have been criticized for relying on superficial generalizations and an over-focusing on institutional factors to the neglect of gender and class issues. Furthermore, it has been argued that anti-racism has been dependent upon rigid conceptions of racial identity that assume actors are the passive agents of homogeneous cultural identities. Proponents of the term ‘antigypsyism’ need to be attentive to the danger that some of the initiatives resulting from their endeavours could succumb to the deficiencies associated with liberal multiculturalism and anti-racism. The importance of the discourse, representation and epistemology of anti-racism suggests that these notions are unable to explain the complexities of the racialization process operating as part of assemblages that are impacting the Roma in everyday life (for a general overview, see Colombo, 2015).

A review of the campaign literature by the supporters of the term ‘antigypsyism’ indicates they do express some desire for structural change. Romani civil society has called for a strengthened rights-based approach, guided by an official working definition of antigypsyism, and has stressed the need for more ambitious targets and concrete social inclusion goals,

with measurable EU and national indicators and robust annual monitoring. Within such petitions for change are demands to eradicate segregation and drive out discriminatory recruitment practices that marginalize the Roma. It is interesting to note, though, that these activists do not acknowledge the impact of the financial crisis in Europe or how neoliberalism has accentuated Romani exclusion (for further discussion, see [Chapter One](#)). This failure has clearly been a consequence of agenda-setting not only by philanthropic foundations, but by bodies like USAID, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and so on, which are champions of the prevailing bias for free markets and open societies centred on neoliberalism, a state of affairs that has neglected the importance of social and economic rights. Old debates have re-emerged as to whether to privilege socio-economic inclusion over combating racism and discrimination; at this juncture, it makes sense to review Nancy Fraser's views on the politics of recognition and redistribution.

The marginalization, exclusion and demonization that ethnic groups like the Roma are subject to is based on racism, othering and the projection of stereotypes that constitutes cultural 'misrecognition', and this is compounded by 'misdistribution', or what can be termed a lack of services and resources, which further marginalizes groups like the Roma. Nancy Fraser (1995) has argued that redistribution and recognition must be united in attempts to understand and challenge social injustice. However, such a course of action may require political and transformative approaches favouring the deconstruction and destabilization of existing identities, codes and symbolic orders; in place of assimilatory (or narrow liberal multicultural) inclusion policies, new, bolder strategies may be required that empower, intervene and correct where the markets and institutions of the state hinder and impede social justice for Romani communities.

In terms of the process of mediating what social justice is and how it can be delivered, we need to consider the

importance and value of representation. Fraser has noted how status hierarchies map onto class differentials to block groups like the Roma from participation in mainstream arenas of social interaction. In other words, economic, political and cultural structures work together to deny participation. This chapter argues, therefore, that definitions of antigypsyism and calls for programmes of action that stem from the term need to incorporate a more transformative agenda that offers the potential to bring about fundamental socio-economic and cultural change. Such change should be seen as a sharp contrast to remedies centred on liberal multiculturalism and the narrow social inclusion policies that have formed the mainstay of national and EU policy towards the Roma.

In forwarding transformative change as an aim of the Romani social movement, proponents of the term 'antigypsyism' may need to be sensitive to the potential insularity among Roma that can arise from using the term. In this respect, it is worthwhile reviewing some of the critique of the concept of antisemitism, where some observers feel there is a disconnection between racism and antisemitism, as reflected in the intellectual specialization and separate development of postcolonial and Holocaust studies that, while having nurtured fruitful research in their respective fields, may have constructed disconnected frames of analysis, and even antagonism, between Black minority groups and Jewish social actors. Such fissures are evident in contemporary academic discourses, such as those on 'critical race theories' and 'new antisemitism' theories. Both of these conceptual frames seek to recognize and resist 'new' forms of racism and antisemitism, and have drawn attention to covert and subtle forms of prejudice; conversely, it is said they have a tendency to see racism and antisemitism as exclusive and ubiquitous (Cousin and Fine, 2012). It could be argued, though, that the proponents of antigypsyism may be able to escape charges of insularity through the growing commitment of young leaders in the Romani social movement to intersectionality, to the value of alliances between different

minority groups and to the exploration of shared experiences of exclusion and marginality across groups. Such alliances, it is argued, can help create a patchwork quilt of a broad social movement based on strategic alliances between a range of minority groups.

Intersectionality is an important component of critical multiculturalism, which seeks to explore the interplay between race, gender, class, sexual identity and oppressive behaviours and practices (Farrar, 2012). It encompasses anti-racist education, critical race theory and critical pedagogy, which challenge the social, economic and cultural drivers of exclusion and xenophobia. It is a more intercultural and deliberative form of identity management which recognizes that identity is neither rigid nor static, and that change and innovation are both possible and to be welcomed. It can be described as a more dialogic and negotiable form of multiculturalism that challenges oppressive outlooks in both majority and minority society. In such discussion, reference can be made to Parekh's (2000) notion of cultivating a 'sense of common belonging' among citizens that requires no flattening of diversity and allows for plurality.

Perhaps most importantly with reference to antigypsyism, critical multiculturalism has the potential to understand and challenge white privilege and thus the structural factors that divide ethnic groups and the cultural perceptions that reinforce and justify such divides. Such a form of challenge would give antigypsyism, as a transformative tool, the scope and conceptual power to more effectively offer resistance to the cultural and socio-economic hegemony that marginalizes Romani communities. The Roma have clearly not been passive victims and are offering creative responses to the dilemma they face; in part, this is attributable to what can be termed 'social resilience': the ability to cope with and overcome adversity through adaptation learnt from past experiences, and to adjust themselves to future challenges. This has transformative potential in devising counter-strategies and solutions. A key

factor in forming resistance to marginalization has been a sense of pride in Romani ethnicity (McGarry, 2017). The value of pride cannot be underestimated; Nicolae (2006) notes that antigypsyist messages can and are absorbed and accepted by Roma in the form of false consciousness, leading to the desire to assimilate and to self-stigmatization, depression and demoralization. In the past, though, pride in Romani identity, while socially bonding, could also create insularity and isolation. New forms of Romani pride that encompass intersectional and critical forms of multiculturalism will be invaluable in promoting intercultural dialogue and new strategic alliances with other oppressed communities. Such fluidity and the reinvention and adaptation of identity mirrors what the renowned sociologist Stuart Hall (1980) has explained, namely, how ethnic identity could enable a new cultural politics to emerge, one that engages rather than suppresses difference and is capable of challenging Western white cultural hegemony.

An attempt to challenge stereotypical representations of the Roma and give expression to new articulations of Romani identity is evidenced by the establishment of the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), based in Berlin and funded jointly by the Council of Europe and EU, with support from the philanthropist George Soros. ERIAC has given a platform to a range of avant-garde Romani artists and musicians positing new, dynamic conceptions of Romani identity that challenge tradition and reification. Critics of ERIAC, however, argue that there is a danger of such a project tokenizing the language of critical challenge and empowerment while actually being ‘highbrow’ and focused on a small intellectual elite among European Roma (Ryder, 2019). Time will tell whether this initiative is capable of energizing Romani arts and culture initiatives within local Romani communities and society more widely in a way that challenges long-standing tropes and prejudices.

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) support grass-roots politics, building on the ideas of Gramsci and the frames of new social

movements centred on intersectional notions of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and economic justice. In this sense, the notion of ‘Social Europe’ and a greater emphasis on redistribution, coupled with recognition, could strengthen Romani civil society in making alliances not just with other minority groups, but with social movements dedicated to raising social justice, such as the trade union movement when in a transformative form. Some of the more liberal, rights-focused Romani activists might feel apprehensive about such alliances and a transformative agenda, fearing this might alienate some elements of establishment support and might overtly politicize the Romani issue. Policy positions, though, are relative; positions and stances that might seem radical and utopian today were part of the political mainstream in many countries five decades ago.

What the French economist Jean Fourastié (1979) termed ‘*Les trente glorieuses*’ (‘the 30 glorious years’), in retrospect is seen as a gilded age where living standards rose dramatically from 1945 to 1975. The ‘glorious thirty’ saw large parts of the developed world commit to strong forms of social contract, with the development of universal and comprehensive welfare systems and a commitment to full employment guided by Keynesian economics. Post-war society learnt from the failure of laissez-faire economics during the deeply troubled 1930s, and from the rise of fascism, that the best antidote to extremism was economic stability, fairness and a human rights framework, principles that advocates of a New Social Europe believe we need to relearn.

The advent of neoliberalism unbalanced this consensus and the gradualist trajectory of reform and social progression. Nationalism and authoritarian populism have sought to fill the emerging vacuum with pledges to upend the status quo in the name of fairness. Parties of the centre-left have been ill-equipped to harness growing popular frustrations given their alignment with the neoliberal order through ‘Third Way’ politics. However, proponents of a Social Europe agenda are

not advocating the return to post-war statism, for despite their commitments to social justice, such regimes were hierarchical, bureaucratic and paternalistic. A New Social Europe would be guided by civil society (for a definition of civil society, see [Chapter One](#)).

In the present day, some hold the fear that civil society is being increasingly tamed and subverted by the state and donors. To use a term of the new right, ‘pulling back the state’ has been accompanied by a series of governmental strategies and technologies (governmentality) that, through top-down stipulations being attached to funding and overt promotion of the donor’s agenda, weaken the autonomy of civil society (van Baar, 2011a). Policies that invoke the language of social inclusion rest upon narrow, assimilative interpretations of what it is to ‘civilize’ and integrate others. Vibrant grass-roots activism among Romani communities and other communities could create a new policy regime predicated upon radical conceptions of inclusion. In effect, rather than civil society being a puppet of the state, it would be transformed into a key partner and a guide for government. Inclusive community development that builds on and develops existing skills and cultural practices, and that is community-driven, can be an important dynamic in creating an inclusive policy framework. In a process of ‘reverse governmentality’, rather than government using civil society as a tool to impose narrow inclusion/assimilation policies, we would instead see a situation where civil society takes leadership, demands proportional representation in politics and increases the public space for self-determination to give concrete expression to the emancipatory potential within Romani communities (Ryder and Taba, 2018). This point reiterates a central argument of this volume, namely, that an effective Social Europe approach for Romani communities requires greater support for the development and expansion of Romani civil society in a manner that extends not just its capacity and skills, but also its autonomy.

In this sense, Romani civil society could constitute part of what Fraser (1992) described as a subaltern public sphere, where, through forms of collectivity and social enterprise, mini-public forums would be created that would be useful in the formulation of counter-narratives, especially for marginalized groups who are poorly represented in the formal world of politics. In this sense, civil society has the potential to offer what Laclau and Mouffe (2001) describe as ‘chains of equivalence’, where marginalized groups can ally themselves behind their common opposition to forms of oppression but each retain a different logic and their own particular political identities and strategies. In this sense, if definitions of antigypsyism place greater emphasis on giving the Roma agency and a voice, it could do much to challenge the image of Roma as incapable of leadership in the body politic through their lack of skills or alleged cultural inclinations, and instead could emphasize the potential of Romani capabilities and the emancipatory potential within Romani communities.

With the rise of radical-right populism, we should not forget that there is, as noted earlier, a form of leftist populism, also steered by agonism and its own conception of the ‘will of the people’ and ‘us and them’, centred on economic elites. The French anthropologist and sociologist Fassin has criticized leftist populism, claiming it is fuelled by resentment, which ultimately, as with nationalist populism, cannot be immune to reaction and scapegoating (Hamburger, 2018).

The German philosopher Habermas has sought to revive notions of consensus based on deliberation within liberal politics; his writings also contain a corresponding commitment to social justice through his calls to challenge capitalism. Deliberative politics, it could be argued, has an important advantage over agonism in an age when politics seems to be increasingly characterized by fissure and dissension as it does not provoke and mobilize the support base of the adversary through dogmatic polemic. Instead, through dialogue, reinterpretation and reorientation, deliberative politics seeks

to dilute the views of its adversaries and convert them. The challenge, though, is to achieve such a state of affairs without recourse to the anodyne politics of the neoliberal Washington Consensus, the period that preceded the ‘glorious thirty’ or other such appeasement (Ryder, 2020).

A New Social Europe could offer solutions that would also appeal to the constituencies of opinion that have mobilized in support of radical-right populism, especially in deindustrialized and ‘left behind’ communities. Such communities might be persuaded to reorient their political aspirations if promised a version of the ‘good society’ that would entail transformative, interventionist, redistributive policies with the ability to create work and rebuild communities. This could be part of a counter-narrative to the politics of nativism, xenophobia and nationalism. A Habermasian vision of deliberative politics could entail accommodations in matters that eschew violence and hostility, and defuse tension. However, there will always be moments of antagonism, and irreconcilable claims will always surface, especially from those who wield unaccountable power, wealth and undemocratic influence. In between elections, the mass of the citizenry should be voluntarily engaged, through a vibrant civil society, to participate, to get involved and to feel they really belong to the *demos*, a bounded political community of fate, in ways that are consistent with cosmopolitan obligation and do not exclude others from meaningful participation and representation on any spurious grounds of ethnicity, gender, ability, faith and so on.

The Habermasian tradition of deliberation and dialogue would not shy away from forms of conflict resolution, even when negotiating with adversaries aligned to the Right, so long as core principles and values are not compromised. To gain insights into the application of such strategies in the Romani sphere, we could refer to the work of the greatly acclaimed Nicolae Gheorghe, who, while leader of the Romani NGO Roma Centre for Social Intervention and Studies (Romani

CRISS) in Romania, was active in conflict resolution. Gheorghe's work centred on dialogue and negotiation in communities where extreme ethnic tensions and pogroms had flared up, which sometimes entailed dialogue with those holding deeply ingrained anti-Romani sentiments. It is interesting to note that lead proponents of the term 'antigypsyism', such as the former MEP Soraya Post, who is of Romani origin, have called for a truth and reconciliation process about the history of the Roma in Europe, noting such initiatives in South Africa, Canada and Australia with indigenous groups, and, most recently, in Sweden, which led to Roma being recognized as a national minority there (LIBE, 2019). Such initiatives, it could be argued, have more to do with Habermasian deliberative politics than with leftist agonism, and it is useful that a framework for antigypsyism as a political tool incorporates and sanctions such dialogue. What this chapter has striven to emphasize, though, is that deliberation, reconciliation and cultural promotion will have limited value as stand-alone policies if not coupled with the transformative change promised through a New Social Europe.

Habermas provides another point of inspiration for Romani civil society in his discussion of the public sphere. Habermas (1989) defines the public sphere as a public network that shapes opinion through frames (viewpoints). Under advanced capitalism, Habermas posits that the discursive power of the public sphere has been emasculated through its colonization by the state and the market, where standardized mass media has erased the capacity for critical thought and manipulated it to create a notion of consensus geared to the interests of elites. Thus, the populace is swayed by the communicative techniques of advertising and marketing, creating unthinking citizens, a form of 're-feudalization' that limits the public's capacity for critical thinking. As noted earlier, the media has been a powerful force in the politics of securitization and anxiety, and in the instigation of moral panics against the Roma. Hence, the

Romani rights defenders ranged against antigypsyism should incorporate more detailed proposals to reform the media into their calls for action, such as stronger ethical codes for journalism, stronger fines and penalties, and a right to reply in the event of distorted reporting, as well as limitations on the number of media outlets any individual can own. In terms of wider legal protections for the Roma, maintaining the rule of law is paramount – a notion that is invariably undermined and challenged by the radical right; in this sense, the proposal for a rule of law mechanism to scrutinize EU member state practices and violations has great merit (LIBE, 2019). However, austerity has greatly eroded legal aid schemes in many EU member states, so improved funding in this area and more community-based paralegals could be invaluable in giving Roma greater legal redress to challenge antigypsyism. More generally, greater resources and access to the machinery of justice is needed to ensure Romani rights are protected.

Conclusion

We live in an age of crisis and turmoil, as evidenced by the rise of authoritarian populism and nationalism. Nonetheless, this chapter has argued that transformative notions of antigypsyism could have value at this time. The term ‘antigypsyism’ could have utility and relevance if aligned with critical thinking, with radical forms of empowerment that reach the margins, with challenges to white hegemony and the neoliberal order, with the promotion of fluid conceptions of identity, and with a commitment to a radical deliberative politics and alliance building centred on intersectionality and social justice. Romani civil society should be vigilant, for there is a danger that institutional power might merely accept the softer forms of action associated with the term ‘antigypsyism’ and neglect the more structural, transformative change required to address the marginalization of the Roma.

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