

Ethnic caste systems and their erosion in Székely and Transylvanian villages

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Paper Presented at the 2019 ASN World Convention, Columbia University 2-4 May 2019” and “Do No Cite Without the Permission of the Author(s).

My paper is based on a comparative inquiry of local systems of ethnic classification and stratification. We did qualitative and quantitative research in 13 settlements in Székely Land and other (partially) Hungarian-speaking parts of Transylvania and we choose localities where sizeable Roma communities and large all-Roma neighborhoods exist.¹ I opine that in these localities are not only multiple ethnic groups coexist but ethnic categorization is multidimensional.² On the one hand, the ethno-national distinction between Romanians and Hungarians organizes politics and many other institutional fields, while on the other the (basically ethno-racial) distinction between Roma and non-Roma is rather consequent in everyday life. My paper focuses primarily on changing characteristics and local varieties of ethnic boundaries between Roma and non-Roma and from this perspective (non-Roma) Hungarians are also part of the dominant majority.

The paper has three interconnected arguments. First, the relation between Roma and non-Roma still has the characteristics of caste-like systems. In caste-like systems ethnic boundary maintenance is primarily not a matter of “groupness” (institutionally reproduced group solidarity) but mostly a matter of social closure and exclusion. Further, the field of local politics is entirely monopolized by the superordinate group and, consequently, the boundary between subordinate and superordinate groups is not politically salient. In Székely Land and in some other Hungarian majority areas of Transylvania this aspect is particularly interesting, as the (locally) superordinate group is also minority community in Romania. In many Székely and Transylvanian villages and towns the monopoly of Hungarian elites over the political domain is coupled with a strong connection of Hungarian-speaking Roma to the institutional system of the Hungarian minority.³ Many Roma for instance applied for Hungarian citizenship, vote for Hungarian ethnic parties, belong to Hungarian churches and chose Hungarian language education for their children. However, in spite of these cultural and institutional attachments, the distinction between Roma and non-Roma (both Hungarian-speaking) is extremely rigid and conclusive in daily life.

My second argument is that ethnic caste-systems in Transylvanian villages and small towns are eroding rapidly due mostly to changing macro-structural and economic conditions. This has relevant consequences on the relation between Roma and non-Roma and alters profoundly the

¹ Our investigation was carried out in the framework of INTEGRO - *Inclusion through training and mediation* (POSDRU/165/6.2/S/140487) project run by the Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center in Cluj Romania. The project manager was Monica Călușer. The research design was elaborated by Margit Feischmidt (Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Institute for Minority Studies) and the author of the article. The fieldwork was carried out by the following senior researchers: Dénes Kiss, Gyöngyi Pásztor and László Péter (Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Sociology), Töhötöm Szabó (Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Ethnography), Tibor Toró (Sapientia University), Ágnes Kiss, Gyula Kozák, Lehel Peti and István Gergő Székely (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities), István Kinda (Székely National Museum).

² On multidimensional ethnic classification see Chandra (2004); Posner (2005).

³ A dense net of ethnically defined institutions (Hungarian language schools, churches, political and cultural organizations) are instrumental in sustaining Hungarian identity and ethno-cultural reproduction in Transylvania. One might even argue that an institutionally sustained ethnic parallelism vis-à-vis the Romanian mainstream exists (Kiss-Kiss 2018).

characteristics of group boundaries. While in caste-like systems ethnic boundary making is a matter of closure, in more unranked systems ethnic boundary maintenance is hardly imaginable without institutions reproducing group solidarity (*groupness*) and persistent ethnic boundaries tend to have political consequences.

My third argument and my basic question refer to the possible outcomes of the erosion of the ethnic caste system. I argue that multiple outcomes are possible and characteristics of the emerging new systems of ethnic classification will depend greatly on the agency of local Roma actors. My paper offers an empirically grounded typology of identity political alternatives being at the disposition of local Roma actors and tries to present some aspects of their functioning through the description of local processes explored in our research sites. We identified four possible strategies, namely self-isolation, individual crossing, boundary blurring and ethnic mobilization. In some of our fields there was a real competition between these alternatives of Roma identity politics. My typology does not try to be logically exhaustive but only empirically complete. I did not try to elaborate a typology of all possible Roma identity political alternatives but only to map those that are institutionally attainable for local Roma actors in our research sites.

My paper has five parts. In the first part, I present the conceptual framework of the analysis in a threefold structure that resembles that of the upcoming empirical parts. As a first step I define what I mean by ethnic caste system. Then I compare ethnic boundary making in caste-like systems and in more symmetric arrangements of ethnic relations. As a last step, I present my most important conceptual references concerning the strategical alternatives of actors facing subordination. The second part focuses on the basic characteristics of the ethnic caste systems functioning in Székely and Transylvanian villages and small towns and also presents the most important macro-political factors that sustained these types of inequalities. The third part focuses on the erosion of caste-like systems that is also due primarily to structural factors. The fourth part of the paper focuses on identity-political strategies employed by local Roma actors and on (meso-level) institutional structures sustaining these alternatives. Here I present the typology mentioned above. The fourth part of my paper summarizes my findings and outlines some conclusions.

1. Conceptual framework and research sites

I present the conceptual framework used in the upcoming empirical parts of the paper in a threefold structure. First, I outline what I mean by ethnic caste system. Secondly, I elaborate my hypothesis concerning ethnic stratification and modes of boundary making. Thirdly, I turn toward the strategic possibilities of subordinates in order to face asymmetries and exclusion.

1.1. Ethnic caste system

As I use it in this paper, the notion of ethnic caste-system is connected to Donald Horowitz's (2000 [1985]) distinction between *ranked and unranked systems of ethnic groups*. As Horowitz put it, the distinction denotes two ideal-typical relations of ethnic belonging and class-position. In ranked systems ethnic belonging and class positions overlap meaning that (virtually) no members of the subordinated groups belong to upper classes.⁴ One should emphasize that although Horowitz (2000

⁴ This does not mean that no social differentiation exists inside the subordinated groups; however, elites (or well-off members) of the subordinated groups lack the recognition of their social position beyond their own group.

[1985]: 18) refers to class positions, he indicates that in ranked systems ethnicity is an indicator of *social status*⁵ (meaning first of all honour and prestige instead of economic position). In ranked systems of groups hierarchies of prestige are “obvious” and internalized by members of subordinated groups too. On contrary, in unranked systems prestige hierarchies are a matter of contestation, meaning that stereotyping tends to be ambivalent with everybody putting his/her own group on the top of the hierarchy (along certain dimensions)⁶ (Horowitz 2000 [1985]: 24).

Importantly, in ranked systems social relations with the subordinated groups are tightly controlled. Taboos regarding food and commensality, sexual relations, marriage and other forms of social relations produce high degree of social closure (Horowitz 2000 [1985]: 26–30). Nevertheless, certain stability is also characteristic for ranked systems (before starting to disintegrate) and this is related to the fact that patron-client type relations and asymmetric forms of reciprocity are usual among members of the dominant and subordinated groups. Horowitz also stresses, and it is a key importance for us, that in stable ranked systems members of subordinated groups accept “*premise of inequality*”,⁷ meaning that they acquire some sort of “habitus of subordination” during a process of adaptation to patron-client structures and asymmetric reciprocity. Another additional characteristic is that subordinated elites do not control channels of social mobility, while the dominant group is able to control the elite selection of the subordinates too.

As for Eastern European Roma, the term of *ethnic (under-)caste* was used by Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) as a historically relevant form of social exclusion. They argued that this category captures the situation of Eastern European Roma before state socialism. State socialism, however, integrated Roma populations in the lower class of unskilled workers, those de-ethnicizing social differences. The authors also argue that following the regime change a new form of social exclusion has evolved, namely ethnic underclass.⁸ In their new condition following state socialism, Roma face extreme segregation and poverty and also lack (the evidently asymmetrical) patron-client type linkages toward non-Roma.

This study builds on the conclusion that in the majority of our research sites states socialism did not put an end to the ethnic caste system but rather conserved and strengthened it.⁹ In some cases changes described by Ladányi and Szelényi have occurred but it was even more frequent that ethnic caste-system has begun to erode only after the regime change, as the informal agricultural sector narrowed due to the transformation of agricultural production, while the premise of inequality has eroded due to transnational Roma mobility.

1.2. Ethnic boundaries in ranked and unranked groups

Several scholars utilized Horowitz’s distinction to explain differences in ethno-political processes and minority claim making. They argued that while in unranked systems ethnic (or ethnicized) politics tends to be socially conservative, in ranked systems subordinated groups are likely to strive for

⁵ On the difference between classes and status groups see Weber (1978).

⁶ See Kiss (2017) on ethnic stereotyping in Romania.

⁷ Maquet (1961), cited in Horowitz (2000 [1985]).

⁸ For a critique of the use of this notion in Eastern European context see Stewart (2001).

⁹ Ladányi and Szelényi (2006: 181-184) also allowed for the hypothesis that ethnic caste system used to be dominant in Bulgaria and Romania until the third millennium.

greater social equality¹⁰ (Gisselquist 2013; Vogt 2014; Lee 2015). However, – to my best knowledge – there is no systematic account of the differences between ranked and unranked systems in terms of ethnic boundary making at a more general level.¹¹ My study is a step toward this direction, as argues that not only ethnic politics but characteristics of ethnic boundaries are different in case of ranked and unranked systems of groups.

Wimmer (2013) distinguished four characteristics of ethnic boundaries, namely closure of personal networks, political salience, cultural differentiation and durability. In what follows I will focus only on the first two aspects. My first thesis is that ethnic boundaries usually lack political salience in (stable) ranked systems, meaning that, in spite of harsh socio-economic differences and persistent boundaries, ethnicity is of little political relevance. This is due to the fact that dominant groups monopolize political representation and the political field, while elites of subordinated groups have a rather limited political function, namely to mediate between their own group and the administrative structures “owned” by the superordinate group. Along the same line, one might argue that the political activation of ethnicity and the increasing political salience of ethnic boundaries are clear signs of the dissolution of caste-like arrangements.

My second thesis is that, while in ranked systems social closure and exclusion exercised by the majority might be enough for persistent ethnic boundaries, in unranked systems one might hardly imagine boundary maintenance without effective institutional structures sustaining groupness and reproducing internal solidarity. As for this second thesis, the distinction between *groupness* and *closure* is of key importance. According to Wimmer (2013: 83-86), both (the degree of) groupness and closure are characteristics of personal networks. However, in case of groupness homophilia is the result of internal group solidarity, while in the case of closure it is the consequence of the rejection by out-group members. Jenkins (2008) employed the distinction between (external) categorization and (internal) identification in a similar manner. Categorization is a process through which powerful external observers (having the authority to do so) define (impose) one’s membership in a social category. On contrary, identification indicates that group formation rests on internal processes and subjective identification of those concerned. Obviously, the distinction is just analytical. Individuals might identify with externally created categories, while external observers might recognize the results of internal group formation. Jenkins argues that socially relevant identities occur exactly at the intersection of these two processes. While both Wimmer and Jenkins define groupness (or identification) as a micro-level phenomenon,¹² Lamont et al. (2016) tries to capture it at a meso-level. According to them, groupness is connected to institutions and discourses producing group solidarity, while individual members of the subordinated group may rely on it when they face discrimination and exclusion. It is also important that Lamont et al. (2016: 20) distinguish between two aspects of groupness, namely identification (self-labelling, politics of recognition, census categories and policies making group identities salient) and boundary making (homophily in personal relations and marriage, symbolic boundaries, spatial segregation, perceived cultural differences).

It is also important that Jenkins (2008) distinguished between different contexts of categorization/identification on a formal-informal axis. This is not a dichotomy but rather a

¹⁰ Surprisingly, social equality has not been a central issue in the Romanian and international Roma movement for long time. Trehan (2009) explained this fact by the penetration of neo-liberal agenda setting in the Roma movement.

¹¹ For the ethnic boundary making approach see Barth (1969); Lamont and Molnár (2002); Wimmer (2013); Lamont et al. (2016).

¹² Jenkins has an individual-psychological starting point, while Wimmer focuses on the micro-social aspect through emphasizing the significance of personal networks.

continuum, as all interactions contain both formal and informal elements. The most formal setting is official categorization (census being the most obvious example), while routine everyday interactions represent the most informal context. Political representation, labor and marriage market, friendship and kinship can also be placed along this continuum. Classification unfolds simultaneously on all of these arenas and classifications in different arenas do not necessarily overlap.

My third thesis might be phrased as follows: in ranked systems dominant groups play a pivotal role in classification and in more formal settings their control tends to be more tight and rigid. Many authors emphasized that in colonial settings for example “regimes of official counting” (through censuses and other administrative procedures) were important tools of domination (Rallu et al. 2006; Simon 2012; 2017). In these settings censuses, population registers not only classified people in distinct and hierarchized categories but were important tools of boundary policing. As for our case, several authors argue that the Roma category was created by official and expert categorization, such as ethnic and racial profiling by the police, data recording by official administration, policies targeting Roma and scientific data collection (Surdu-Kovats 2015; Surdu 2016).

Nevertheless, as I will try to show, the picture might be more complex and puzzling. The result of the tight control of formal classification by the dominant group can be “not counting” too. In our case exactly this is the situation. The majority of Roma living in Székely Land does not appear in census records not only due to their willingness to adopt a Hungarian national identity but also to constraints to conform to the representation of the region of the Hungarian elites as an ethnically homogeneous area. One might add that local Hungarian elites monopolize political representation and Roma are classified (and/or they identify) as being Hungarians in other more formal contexts too: they are enrolled in Hungarian language schools, many of them applied for Hungarian citizenship and Hungarian Card.¹³ However, the distinction between Roma and non-Roma (Hungarian) remains relevant in other contexts, such as labor and marriage market, housing, kinship, friendship and a wide range of more informal everyday interactions.

1.3. Strategic alternatives of subordinates

To sum the paragraphs above, in ranked (or caste-like) systems subordinated groups have fewer tools to influence processes of ethnic boundary making. The dissolution of ethnic caste system, however, opens up a wide range of strategic alternatives for the elites of subordinates to improve the position of their own group. In this last part of the conceptual outline I will focus on these strategic alternatives.

Numerous typologies concerning the strategies of subordinated groups exist in the relevant literature (see Horowitz 2000 [1985]: 33–35; Alba 2005; Wimmer 2013: 49–63; Lamont et al. 2016) and I cannot discuss here them in details but I just outline some points that are relevant for the upcoming empirical parts of the paper. First, one should distinguish between strategies that rely on boundary maintenance on the one hand and those aiming to eliminate ethnic boundaries on the other. In the first group enter strategies that aim to turn the ranked systems of groups into an unranked ones (Horowitz 2000 [1985]: 33) or to question (“transvaluate”) the existing hierarchy between ethnic groups (Wimmer 2013: 57–58). These strategies suppose boundary maintenance vis-à-vis the majority, require relatively high level of groupness and rely on political mobilization and institutions

¹³ The 2001 Status Law introduced the Hungarian Card, as a form of personal-bureaucratic relationship between Hungary and members of Hungarian minority communities. Following 2010, minority Hungarians may apply for extra-territorial citizenship.

that reproduce group solidarity. In the second group enter collective and individual attempts of assimilation toward the dominant majority. Here a second distinction should be made, namely between individual crossing and boundary blurring (Alba-Nee 2003; Alba 2005; Wimmer 2013). These might be perceived as different forms of assimilation. Individual crossing means that members of the subordinated group relocate themselves (or are relocated) to the other side of the boundary and join the dominant group but their move does not alter the very characteristics of the boundary itself. Boundary blurring should be perceived as an attempt to de-emphasize ethnic boundaries through emphasizing membership in other types of categories, for example local community, religious group or universal humanity (Wimmer 2013: 61–63). Boundary blurring induces a change in the characteristics of ethnic boundary, as it reduces groupness/closure and makes ethnic differences less conclusive in different setting. Alba and Nee (2003) and Alba (2005) argued that the characteristics of assimilation differ along bright and blurred boundaries. If boundaries are bright no ambiguous forms of group belonging are possible and assimilation takes the form of individual crossing that is similar to religious conversion. In case of blurred boundaries entering the social circle of the majority does not necessarily require renouncing to minority nexuses, as in-between situations and multiple memberships are also allowed.

As a last remark, one should mention the work of Lamont et al. (2016). They emphasized the significance of the meso-level institutions in shaping the strategies of subordinated groups. As mentioned already, the authors conceptualize groupness at this meso-level. Next to it, they also emphasize the importance of cultural repertoires minorities have at their disposal, which defines the forms and means they use when facing subordination. From this perspective, we are interested only in strategic alternatives that are culturally and institutionally available for Roma actor in our research sites.

1.4. The field and the research

Our investigation was based on multi-sited fieldwork combining qualitative and quantitative methodology. Our aim was to carry out locally bounded investigations (or “community studies”¹⁴) in a comparative manner. The main wave of data collection was in summer 2015, when senior researchers spent three weeks at each field, made interviews and focus groups in each location and when a survey of Roma and non-Roma population was also carried out. In 2017 an additional fieldwork was conducted using the same methodological tools. In some of the research sites we conducted fieldwork, carried out additional interviews following the main wave, while in some other cases the main wave was preceded by other occasions of qualitative data collection.

The quantitative investigation was based on an exhaustive survey of all Roma households and a sample-based control survey of non-Roma households. In a preliminary phase, we identified the Roma households based on the accounts of Roma and non-Roma clerks employed by the municipalities. In case of villages we asked our assistants to classify each household as Roma, non-Roma or ethnically mixed. Roma households were contacted irrespectively of their location inside

¹⁴ We did not take at all for granted the existence of spatially well bounded communities. Our starting point was the methodological proposal of Appadurai to differentiate between place (location in a geographical sense), neighborhood (meaning the social interactions between people living in the same place) and locality (meaning the narratives that produce the attachment to a given place or “localize the subjects”). In this framework one of the possible outcomes is the existence of parallel communities or localities. Nevertheless, in the villages and small towns of Transylvania sociability is spatially bounded in many (even if not in all) respects and/or the existence of a local social field is quite obvious. See Appadurai, Arjun: *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996.

the locality (meaning that not only Roma living in segregated neighborhoods were investigated). In case of urban settlements, we asked the employees of the municipality to delimit territorially the areas which are represented as compact Roma neighborhoods or communities. Following this step we selected one of these areas and there we tried to carry out an exhaustive household survey. We also carried out a control survey of non-Roma households. In case of villages we selected the non-Roma households randomly, while in case of small towns we collected data outside the segregated Roma neighborhood we choose to survey exhaustively. The methodology of the investigation was similar to the census, as one adult household member was interviewed and the questionnaire contained questions for both the household and its members. We received information for 2287 households (1347 among them Roma) and 8724 persons (among them 5309 Roma).

We also tried to carry out qualitative investigation in a comparative way. We elaborated a detailed guide for the researchers¹⁵ and they followed the same steps during their fieldwork. The qualitative inquiry was based primarily on interviews. Researchers conducted 20-25 interviews in each locality with both Roma and non-Roma respondents. In case of non-Roma, representatives of different institutions distributing locally available (material, cultural and symbolical) resources were interviewed (mayor or vice-mayor, social worker, local representatives of political parties, employers of Roma both in formal and informal sector, school directors etc.). In case of the Roma, we focused on local Roma elites (entrepreneurs, neo-protestant pastors, political representatives, informal leaders) and socially mobile Roma (Roma working abroad, Roma moving out of the segregated neighborhoods) but also made interviews with Roma having typical life trajectories (working as daily laborer, working in industry or in the agricultural sector before 1989 etc.). We also conducted focus group interviews, one with Roma and one with non-Roma participants in each locality.

One might emphasize that our fields do not represent Romania or Transylvania either. As Table 1 summarizes, we choose mostly Hungarian-speaking Roma communities to investigate. We focused our research over two statistical regions and six countries¹⁶ of Romania. As mentioned already, an important characteristic of this area is the strong Hungarian presence and the rivalry between different nationalizing projects. This has of course relevant consequences on Roma population too. In what follows, I will name the localities during the quantitative analysis. However, in case of some interviews and remarks that might have personal implications for interviewees I will anonymize the fragments and not even the localities will be mentioned.

Table 1. Characteristics of the fields

Area	Type of settlement	Number of Roma		Ethno-national character	Language spoken by Roma	Religion among Roma
		Integro 2015	2011 census			
Székely Land	(1) Large village (<i>Ojdula</i>)	800	800	Hungarian dominance	Hungarian	Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Adventist
	(2) Large village (<i>Zagon</i>)	1000	0	Hungarian majority, large Romanian minority	800 Romanian and 200 Hungarian speaking Roma	Reformed, Orthodox
	(3) Village (<i>Cozmeni</i>)	400	50	Hungarian dominance	Hungarian	Roman Catholic
	(4) Village (<i>Șimonești</i>)	550	10	Hungarian dominance	Hungarian	Unitarian

¹⁵ The guide (including guidelines for different types of interviews) is available upon request from the author.

¹⁶ Harghita/Hargita, Covasna/Kovászna, Mureș/Maros, Satu-Mare/Szatmár, Bihor/Bihar and Cluj/Kolozs.

	(5) Village (<i>Atid</i>)	500	80	Hungarian dominance	Hungarian, with approx. 80 Gábor Roma speaking their own dialect	Reformed, Unitarian, Adventist
	(6) Small village (<i>Agrişteu</i>)	300	130	Hungarian dominance/majority	Romanian with some Roma speaking Romani	Orthodox, Pentecostal
Central part of Transylvania	(7) Village (<i>Bahnea</i>)	800	800	No absolute majority, Hungarian plurality	Romanian some Roma speaking Romani	Orthodox, Pentecostal
	(8) Small town (<i>Huedin</i>)	1500	1100	Romanian majority with significant Hungarian presence	Romanian/Romani/Hungarian	Reformed, Orthodox, Pentecostal
	(9) Village (<i>Suatu</i>)	190	160	Hungarian majority	Romanian	Orthodox
Romanian-Hungarian border region	(10) Large village (<i>Turulung</i>)	470	320	Hungarian dominance	Hungarian	Roman Catholic
	(11) Village (<i>Tiream</i>)	500	350	Hungarian and Hungarian speaking Swab dominance	Hungarian	Roman Catholic, Pentecostal
	(12) Small town (<i>Săcuieni</i>)	1800	1100	Hungarian dominance	Hungarian	Roman Catholic, Baptist
	(13) Big city (<i>Oradea</i>)	620	2300	Romanian majority with significant Hungarian presence	Hungarian	Roman Catholic, Baptist

On the other hand, however, our “sample”¹⁷ is representative in terms of economic characteristics of the settlements we selected. We selected mostly villages and small towns. Except the city of Oradea (where a large urban Roma ghetto was chosen), our localities are part of economically disadvantaged areas, where both the Roma and Hungarians minorities of Transylvania are concentrated.

2. Characteristics of caste-like systems in Székely Land and Transylvania and macro-structural factors sustaining them

In what follows, I enlist and discuss the major characteristics of caste-like systems of ethnic stratification and classification in Székely and Transylvanian villages and small towns. The characteristics that should be discussed here are as follows:

- (1) territorial segregation and non-Roma control over the use of public spaces;
- (2) ethnic homogeneity of personal networks combined with strict taboos concerning forms mixing, especially concerning intermarriage;
- (3) ethnic division of labour and patron-client type relations;
- (4) non-Roma control over the political representation and elite-recruitment among Roma.

I will also present societal macro-processes which determined the characteristics of local systems of ethnic stratification and classification. I argue that both during and following state socialism the ethnic selectivity of the most important policy incentives reproduced and widened the social

¹⁷ We do not pretend and did not intend to have a representative investigation in a statistical sense.

distances and the perceived differences between Roma and non-Roma and thus it maintained ethnic caste systems.

Authors analyzing the policies concerning the Roma in Romania during the state socialist period usually underscored two major elements. First, the state socialist regime was reluctant to recognize Roma as a national minority (or even as an ethnic group) and treated them mainly as a social stratum. Second, the regime fostered the assimilation and proletarianization of the Roma through its strong and centralized institutional system. It is often emphasized that “*the Communist regime forced many Roma to settle in fixed residences, to enroll their children in schools and to work in factories or agricultural co-operatives. The Țigăni ethnic identity was denied: even use of the ethnonym was forbidden*”.¹⁸ However, the affirmation that the regime treated the “problem of Gypsies” rather in social than in ethnic terms is valid only until 1960s. During the 1970s and 1980s, Roma were perceived increasingly as an ethnic and not as a social category by state authorities, even if they were not entitled for cultural institutions owned by „co-existing nationalities”. For instance, in 1976, the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted a nationwide conscription of the Roma population based on external classification by police (*miliția*) officers. The report based on this conscription indicated a series of policy programs targeting directly Roma focused mainly on sedentarizing them, distributing identity documents and enrolling them in the socialist division of the labor.¹⁹ Both the language of the report and the very fact that the conscription was conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs indicate a criminalization of the Roma category during the last decades of the former regime. This paradoxical situation was captured by Sam Beck, an American anthropologist who was conducting fieldwork in Romania during the 1970s and 1980s: “*Romanians treated Gypsies as a matter of class but understood as a matter of race*.”²⁰ My argument is that state socialist authorities not only failed to integrate Roma but that the policy measures fostering social modernization were directly ethnically selective and – contrary to the often emphasized thesis of assimilatory policies – they led to an ethnic division of residence and labor in almost all local societies included in our investigation.

As for the post-socialist period, many authors emphasized that the socio-economic transformation created the macro-structural condition for new and far extreme forms of marginalization of Roma communities. The so called (Eastern European Roma) underclass-debate should be mentioned here. János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi proposed the use of the term of underclass to describe the historically specific form of social exclusion emerged following 1989.²¹ The authors were heavily criticized, first of all due the use of the concept of the “culture of poverty”.²² In this subchapter we focus mainly on structural aspects and less on behavioral consequences of exclusion. The last

¹⁸ Rughiniș, “The forest behind the bar charts”, 338. See also Achim, Viorel: *The Roma in the Romanian History*. CEU Press, Budapest, 2004.

¹⁹ Achim: *The Roma in the Romanian History*, 159.

²⁰ Beck, Sam: Racism and the Formation of a Romani Ethnic Leader. In. Marcus, George ed.: *Perilous States: Conversations on Culture, Politics and Nation*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 165–186. Cited by Fosztó, László: *Ritual Revitalization after State Socialism. Community, Personhood and Revitalization among Roma in a Transylvanian Village*. LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2009, 17.

²¹ See Ladányi, János: The Hungarian Neoliberal State, Ethnic Classification and the Creation of a Roma Underclass. In. Emigh, Rebecca – Szelényi, Iván (ed.): *Poverty, Ethnicity and Gender in Eastern Europe During the Market Transition*. Praeger, Westport, 2001, 67-83; Ladányi – Szelényi: *Patterns of Exclusion*; Stewart, Michael. 2002. Deprivation, the Roma and ‘the Underclass’. In Chris Hann (ed.): *Post-socialism: Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. Routledge, London, 33-155. Ladányi, János – Szelényi, Iván: „Van-e értelme az underclass kategória használatának?” *Beszélő* 11 (2001), 94-98.

²² Stewart: Deprivation, the Roma and ‘the Underclass’.

chapter, however, deals with the agency of Roma actors and will show that they actually dispose of multiple possibilities.

Recently many authors highlighted the role of the neoliberal ideals and discursive order in producing the new ethnicized and racialized marginality.²³ Our analysis aims to contribute to this the literature by emphasizing that marginality and exclusion are not unintended consequences of the economic transition but are direct effects of some important macro-policy measures. This is certainly not a novelty in the literature concerning Eastern European Roma. For instance, Gábor Kertesi highlighted that the employment in rural area in Hungary is blocked not only by the “economic transition” *per se* but by the corruption of the infrastructure and transportation.²⁴ The corruption of the rural infrastructure and transportation was even more striking in Romania and in some of our investigated settlements (in Bahnea and Turulung) Roma had lost their industrial employment before the factories were closed. Other authors followed Loïc Waquant²⁵ and highlighted that the welfare provisions were not only curtailed but restructured in a way to support the middle classes at the expense of the lower strata.²⁶ I will highlight that following the regime change the manner in which land properties were restituted had a direct effect in reproducing and strengthening ethnic caste system and in some localities this has begun to erode only when subsistence farming and the informal agricultural sector have contracted following the EU accession.

2.1. Territorial segregation and non Roma control over the use of public spaces

Territorial segregation is one important aspect of Roma-non-Roma relations. Two major aspects should be mentioned here, namely the concentration of Roma in economically peripheral regions on the one hand and spatial segregation inside the investigated settlements on the other.

The first, aspect, the concentration of Roma in economically disadvantaged rural areas and small towns is a direct consequence of ethnically selective policies of internal migration of the former regime. The number of people living in major urban centers (in Romanian *municipii*) in the six counties we investigated has doubled between 1956 and 1992 and has surpassed 1 million in 1992, meaning a territorial restructuring of the population and marking the era of depopulation for some rural settlements. From our perspective, the most important aspect of the internal migration was the *ethnic selectivity of the flows*. The ethnically selective character of the migration policies in Romania is a well-known aspect. The *en mass* emigration of the German and Jewish community of Romania was intensively investigated. While Jews and Germans were allowed to leave, the emigration of persons belonging to other ethnic categories was obstructed. Although the migration of Jews and Germans cannot be considered forced migration, selecting migrants according to ethnic background establishes a strong link between the Romanian migration policies and the concepts of *ethnic*

²³ Vincze et al. ed. (2019).

²⁴ Kertesi Gábor: “Ingázás a falusi Magyarországon. Egy megoldatlan probléma” (Commuting in rural Hungary. An unresolved problem). *Közgazdasági Szemle* Vol. 48, 775-798.

²⁵ Waquant, Loïc: *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. Polity Press, London, 2007.

²⁶ Szalai – Zentai: *Faces and Causes of Roma*; Vincze, Enikő – Hossu, Iulia: *Marginalizarea socio-teritorială a comunităților de romi din România*. Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, Cluj, 2014.

engineering.²⁷ Ethnic engineering was also discussed concerning the Hungarian urban population.²⁸ Demographers highlighted that the ethnic composition (more precisely the Hungarian majority) of the major urban centers of Northern Transylvania has changed due to the influx from rural areas during the 1950-1989 period. It should be mentioned that in the investigated area the inward migration of Romanians from other regions was not characteristic and the overwhelming majority of the new urban residents came from the rural settlements inside the given county. However, inside the counties the ethnic selection of internal migrants was characteristic. Târgu Mureș, Cluj and Oradea were so called “closed towns” during the 1980s meaning that no new resident permissions were issued and internal migrants could reside in these towns with special authorizations. Zoltán Novák and Márton László found evidence in the state archives that in the case of Târgu Mureș an explicit state policy aimed to alter the town’s Hungarian ethnic majority existed during the 1980s and that the main tool of ethnic engineering was the ethnic selection of internal migrants.²⁹

The subject of ethnic engineering using the tool of the selection of internal migrants has not been explored yet properly concerning the Roma.³⁰ In our cases it is evident, however, that Roma were severely underrepresented among rural-urban migrants even compared to Hungarians. In Șimonești there was an intensive out-migration to Odorheiu Secuiesc and to a lesser degree to Cristuru Secuiesc. Actually, the majority of young non-Roma left the village during the 1970s and 1980s and virtually none of the people moving to Odorheiu Secuiesc were Roma. In Bahnea and Agrișteu many non-Roma left the village, the majority of them for Târgu Mureș, some for Târnăveni or other nearby small towns. Ethnic Romanians were highly overrepresented among out-migrants. The Agrișteu Romanian community practically ceased to exist, while Romanians in Bahnea lost their slight demographic plurality vis-à-vis Hungarians. Many Hungarians left too. However, it was impossible for Roma to move to Târgu Mureș. Târnăveni remained an eligible option, so many Roma (especially from Bahnea) moved there. From Tiream some of the non-Roma and Roma moved to the nearby Carei. Roma were most probably underrepresented among those moving to Carei, but Carei was not so attractive for the villagers as Târgu Mureș or Odorheiu Secuiesc. In Cozmeni there was an out-migration of non-Roma, primarily to Miercurea Ciuc. This possibility was not open, however, for Roma. In Ojdola some left for Târgu Secuiesc or (to a lesser degree) Sfântu Gheorghe. The majority of the non-Roma worked in the factories of Târgu Secuiesc; however, they did not move but commuted. The option to move to Târgu Secuiesc was not open at all for Roma and very few of them commuted. In Săcuieni and Huedin, as small towns, it was allowed for Roma from the nearby rural area to move in. It should be emphasized that rural Roma moving to Huedin or Săcuieni lacked the possibility to move (or even to commute) to the regional centers of Cluj or Oradea. In Zagon many non-Roma but quite few Roma left for Sfântu Gheorghe, Târgu Secuiesc, or the nearby smaller town of Covasna. In Turulung more than a quarter of the population left primarily for Satu Mare. Roma were severely underrepresented among them and in the case they succeeded to move to Satu Mare they received flats in compact Roma neighborhoods (in *Cartierul Solidarității*). A great number of non-Roma in Satu, especially Romanians but also Hungarians moved to Cluj during state socialism. This possibility was inexistent for Roma, while some Roma from Cluj were pushed to move to Satu following 1989.

²⁷ See Brubaker, Rogers: “Migrations of Ethnic Unmixing in the New Europe” *International Migration Review* vol. 32, no. 4 (1998), 1047-1065

²⁸ For the relation between nationalizing efforts and the policies concerning internal migration affecting the city of Cluj see Brubaker, Rogres – Feischmidt, Margit – Fox, Jon – Grancea, Liana: *Nationalizing Policies and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, 109-119.

²⁹ László Márton – Novák Csaba Zoltán: *A szabadság terhe, Marosvásárhely, 1990. március 16–21* (The Burden of Freedom, Târgu Mureș. March 16-21. 1990). Pro-Print, Csíkszereda, 2013.

³⁰ Nevertheless the collection of relevant historical documents and some analysis of them was done by Manuela Marin (2017).

In sum, the most important factor lying behind the fact that the proportion of Roma has increased considerably in the localities included in our investigation (except Oradea) was the ethnic selectivity of policies concerning internal migration. In general terms, this led to a concentration of Roma in economically peripheral rural areas and in small towns.

The second aspect is territorial segregation inside the settlement: in all of our research sites the majority of Roma lives in all-Roma neighbourhoods and during the former regime and the 1990s territorial segregation used to be even more pronounced. Desegregation that took place in several waves might be perceived as an important sign of the erosion of the caste-like systems.

Table 2. Number of Roma households in all-Roma neighbourhoods and in “non-Roma” parts of the settlement

	All-Roma neighbourhoods		“Non-Roma” (mixed) neighbourhoods
	Low prestige	(Relatively) high prestige	
(1) Large village (<i>Ojdula</i>)	255	-	12
(2) Large village (<i>Zagon</i>)	280	-	18
(3) Village (<i>Cozmeni</i>)	74	-	33
(4) Village (<i>Simonesti</i>)	17	83	13
(5) Village (<i>Atid</i>)	72	25	30
(6) Small village (<i>Agristeu</i>)	78	-	4
(7) Village (<i>Bahnea</i>)	158	-	67
(8) Small town (<i>Huedin</i>)	One ethnically mixed neighbourhood was investigated with 119 Roma and 95 non-Roma households		
(9) Village (<i>Suatu</i>)	42		7
(10) Large village (<i>Turulung</i>)	52	33	18
(11) Village (<i>Tiream</i>)	Approx. 69*		Approx. 40*
(12) Small town (<i>Sacuieni</i>)	An all Roma neighbourhood was investigated with approx. 310 Roma households		
(13) Big city (<i>Oradea</i>)	An all Roma neighbourhood (urban Roma ghetto) was investigated with 116 households		

* No more clear-cut territorial delimitation between “Roma” and “non-Roma” neighbourhoods

Several scholars also highlighted that a very asymmetrical use of space governed by rigid regulations was (and in some cases it still is) an important characteristic of Roma-non-Roma relations in Transylvania and especially in the Székely area. Not only definite residential segregation but also limited Roma presence in public spaces was (and in some places still is) an important element of the asymmetry. In some localities visiting non-Roma parts of the village, entering the bars, participating at community events is still heavily restricted and this used to be the norm during state socialism or during the 1990s. One might argue that in caste-like organization of Roma-non-Roma relations it is not that segregated Roma areas count as “no go zones” for non-Roma, but public spaces in the village are “no go zones” for the Roma.

„[...] It was worse 10 years ago or 15 years ago. When they [Roma youngsters] came down to the disco, all the other wanted to chase them away. Or even more time ago, when they came to watch a movie, well ... how should I put it, there was a screening. They came in and they had to go home unobserved, hiding behind the fences, not to be observed. If they were seen, others ran after them and beat them up. Day or night, it did not count. They were not really allowed to walk in the village. If they came into the village, the others beat them. For example, there was a pub here. Today is an office in it. But when it was a pub, if someone entered the place he was beaten on the spot. They were not allowed in the pub either.”
(Roma interviewee in a Székely village)

Powerful institutional segregation may add up to this severe spatial regulation. The most important implication concerns Roma children who were (and are) in many cases left out from educational system or were (and are) educated separately from non-Roma children. In four of our research sites Roma children practically learn in separate (certainly lower quality) buildings. It was also a common practice, especially in case of Roman Catholics, that religious services were “replaced” in the Roma colony. In some cases this meant that a separate chapel was built for Roma, in other cases only a crucifix was set inside the colony where religious ceremonies were held. This clearly cannot be interpreted as a symbol of turning toward the Roma communities but as a means of limiting Roma access to the village center where the mass for non-Roma was held.

2.2. Rigid segmentation of personal networks and taboos concerning mixing

In order to understand the functioning of the caste-like system a comparison between Hungarian-Romanian and Roma-non-Roma relations might be useful. One might argue that status groups and relevant social distinctions are organized in all of our research sites along ethnic lines. For instance, class-categories do not play an important role in identification and formation of social groups in villages and small towns in Transylvania.³¹ In ethnically mixed settings both Romanian-Hungarian and Roma-non-Roma oppositions are important markers of local social differences, however, in rather different ways.

Between Romanians and Hungarians an important and politically salient ethno-national cleavage exists and this cleavage organizes political and symbolic competition in all of our ethnically mixed research sites. In these settings, actors of the local political field are Hungarian and Romanian interests groups organized in Hungarian and Romanian political parties. Symbolic competition over the ethnic ownership of public spaces and certain institutions is also pronounced. Nevertheless, social closure – operationalized by Andreas Wimmer as ethnic homogeneity of personal networks – plays a less important role in defining the Hungarian-Romanian cleavage.

On contrary, the Roma-non-Roma distinction is politically less salient and it has less symbolic consequences but it organizes what Arjun Appadurai called “neighbourhoods” even after the dissolution of rigid territorial segregation.³² This difference concerns all symmetric relations the most important consequence being the very low frequency of intermarriage between Roma and non-Roma. Hungarians and Romanians are engaged in boundary policing vis-à-vis each other, however the tools of boundary policing are relatively soft. This softness becomes evident when compared with the mechanisms operating in Roma-non-Roma relations. In rural areas and small towns marrying with Roma in many cases implies not only excommunication at the level of the ethnic community, but also exclusion from personal networks, including the close family. The following interview fragment describes such a case in one of our research sites, a village inhabited by Hungarians and Hungarian-speaking Roma:

³¹ Note that this is not the case of large urban centers where one can witness manifestations of making class boundaries and the emergence of a pronounced (and in some instances trans-ethnic) identity of professional middle classes. On classificatory struggles and group identification see Boudieu, Pierre: *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991. 229-252

³² Appadurai distinguished between places in a geographical sense, neighbourhoods (meaning social networks and relations), and localities (meaning the symbolic meaning and discourses concerning the places). See Appadurai, Arjun: *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis – London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, 178-183.

It was a very strong family. His parents live in a pretty house in the center of the village. The young man moved to the Gypsy Colony. The children go [there] sometimes to their grandmother. One of the little girls said that they go when the old man [their grandfather] is not at home. Their grandmother gives them some milk on these occasions. She tries to help them. The [grand]father was the one who opposed [this situation] categorically [his son marrying a Roma woman]. The little girl also said that neither does Grandma like it if they go there together. Maybe by themselves... You can imagine how it is if four or five Gypsy kids appear suddenly. I can understand why they do not like it if they all go there together. (Non-Roma interviewee, interview conducted by the author in July 2015).

In Hungarian-Romanian relation ethnic intermarriage might be disapproved and sanctioned by “third parties” but exclusion from personal networks and denying the recognition of the mixed couple as socially equal is practically unimaginable.

2.3. Ethnic division of labour and patron-client type relations

Next to the ethnic selectivity of policies concerning internal migration, a more general ethnic selectivity of employment was characteristic during the former regime. This meant that Roma not only had fewer chances to move towards urban centers but they also were underrepresented among those employed in the industrial sector.

Szelényi remarked that the Eastern European state socialist social regimes, compared to other parts of the world, were characterized by severe under-urbanization.³³ This meant that the demand for labor force of urban/industrial workplaces exceeded by far the number of those moving from rural to urban areas. In the 1970s and 1980s, the phenomenon of commuting was widespread in Romania, and a significant part of the rural population was employed in urban units of production. From an external perspective, under-urbanization and commuting could be evaluated as an anomaly. However, from the perspective of the majority of the interviewed villagers the period of commuting is represented (at least today) as a “golden age” of material accumulation. The majority of them were engaged in a sort of dual strategy based on simultaneous industrial employment and small-scale agricultural production. On the one hand, industrial employment granted consistent and regulate money income. On the other hand, the engagement in agricultural production (crop production and stock-farming) made possible to avoid the consequences of the food shortage characteristic in the 1980s. The accumulation materialized in the construction of new houses, acquisition machines and durables. Many villagers reported the existence of money deposits in the savings bank (CEC in its Romanian usage).

As we perceived it of central importance, we included a question concerning employment in the former regime in our quantitative household survey. The following tables summarize the forms of employment during state socialism. As one can observe, we received the answers of 1024 Roma and 1041 non-Roma born before 1971.

³³ Szelényi, Iván: *Cities under Socialism and After*. In: Andrusz G. – Harloe M. – Szelényi I. *Socialism: Urban and Regional Change and Conflict in Post-Socialist Societies*. Cambridge Mass.: Blackwell, 286–318.

Table 3. Where have you been employed before 1989 (both men and women born before 1971)

	Roma					Non-Roma				
	N*	Industry **	Agriculture ***	Other ****	Has not been employed	N*	Industry **	Agriculture ***	Other ****	Has not been employed
Bahnea	99	54,5	14,1	1,0	30,3	46	39,1	47,8	6,5	6,5
Secuieni	85	52,9	20,0	4,7	22,4	81	56,8	6,2	7,4	29,6
Huedin	87	47,1	19,5	8,0	25,3	125	68,8	9,6	11,2	10,4
Oradea	49	42,9	12,2	0,0	44,9					
Turulung	73	30,1	24,7	8,2	37,0	103	38,8	23,3	17,5	20,4
Zagon	217	24,9	56,2	2,3	16,6	96	53,1	22,9	9,4	14,6
Tiream	68	16,2	52,9	0,0	30,9	103	33,0	36,9	6,8	23,3
Suatu	19	15,8	52,6	5,3	26,3	50	20,0	38,0	12,0	30,0
Șiminești	105	14,3	43,8	21,0	21,0	100	44,0	16,0	34,0	6,0
Cozmeni	64	7,8	39,1	4,7	48,4	104	58,7	12,5	17,3	11,5
Ojdula	105	7,6	71,4	1,0	20,0	122	53,3	24,6	10,7	11,5
Agrișteu	53	5,7	56,6	0,0	37,7	111	45,9	33,3	6,3	14,4
Total	1024	27,5	40,6	4,9	27,0	1041	49,6	22,9	12,0	15,6

*Number of cases

** In the settlement or outside the settlement

*** Collective farms

**** Services, administration etc.

Differences are spectacular even at first glance. The majority of the Roma employed before 1989 worked in agriculture, while the majority of non-Roma worked in the industrial sector. Industrial employment was more widespread in case of non-Roma compared to Roma in all settlements included in the investigation, with the notable exception of Bahnea.

If we look at the distributions separately by gender, differences are even more obvious. Taking into consideration the dominant form of employment of Roma men, two clusters can be distinguished. In the first category the majority of Roma men were employed in industry. Here enter the three urban settlements, namely Oradea, Săcuieni and Huedin, respectively two of our rural locations, namely Bahnea and Turulung. In the second cluster the dominant form of employment for Roma men was in agriculture (while in case of non-Roma industrial employment was more widespread).

Table 4. Where have you been employed before 1989 (men born before 1971)

	Roma					Non-Roma				
	N*	Industry **	Agriculture ***	Other ****	Has not been employed	N*	Industry **	Agriculture ***	Other ****	Has not been employed
Bahnea	52	75,0	5,8	1,9	17,3	25	40,0	44,0	8,0	8,0
Oradea	14	71,4	7,1	0,0	21,4					
Secuieni	43	62,8	20,9	2,3	14,0	39	69,0	7,7	2,6	20,8
Turulung	32	62,5	15,6	9,4	12,5	44	65,9	4,5	18,2	11,4
Huedin	44	61,4	15,9	6,8	15,9	60	76,7	8,3	10,0	5,0
Suatu	6	50,0	33,3	0,0	16,7	23	34,8	26,1	13,0	26,1
Zagon	103	29,1	54,4	1,9	14,6	46	56,5	23,9	13,0	6,5
Tiream	30	20,0	60,0	0,0	20,0	48	37,5	35,4	4,2	22,9
Cozmeni	33	15,2	54,5	3,0	27,3	50	60,0	22,0	12,0	6,0
Ojdula	50	12,0	72,0	2,0	14,0	60	63,3	16,7	11,7	8,3
Agrișteu	28	10,7	57,1	0,0	32,1	52	61,5	19,2	7,7	11,5
Șiminești	44	9,1	36,4	38,6	15,9	51	70,6	15,7	9,8	3,9
Total	479	37,6	39,0	6,1	17,3	498	59,4	18,9	10,0	11,6

Two of our settlements do not fit in either of the clusters. In Suatu very few (only 6) men employed in the former regime were interviewed, while in Şimoneşti the majority of men were employed in “other” forms/sectors, meaning handcraft activity (basketwork) exercised through the “Cooperative for Consumption”. However, next to basketwork, a significant number of Roma men (belonging to the poorer segment of the Roma population) in Şimoneşti were employed in agriculture, while only a few worked in industry.

As for women, the lower proportion of those employed among Roma should be highlighted. At an overall level, 35% of the Roma women were not employed. In Cozmeni, Turulung and Oradea the majority of Roma women did not work. The agricultural employment was a bit higher, while the industrial employment far lower compared to Roma men. Compared to non-Roma women Roma women were also concentrated in higher proportion in agriculture. In case of Roma women working in agriculture was dominant (among those employed) in Cozmeni, Agrişteu, Suatu, Ojdula, Turulung, Şimoneşti, Tiream and Zagon (meaning in all of our rural fields except Bahnea). Industrial employment was dominant in Secuieni, Huedin, Bahnea and Oradea.

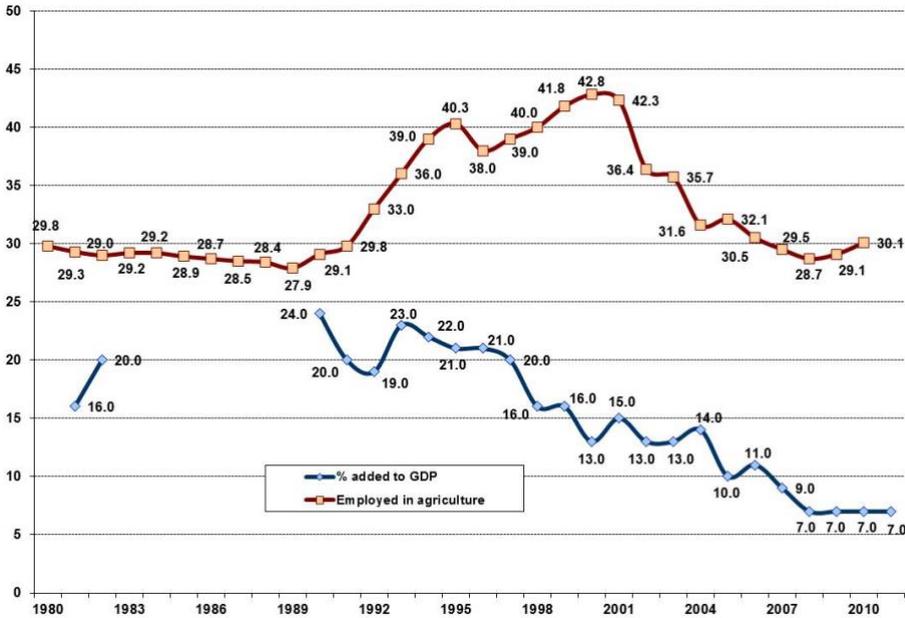
Qualitative fieldworks revealed that the overrepresentation of those employed in agriculture among Roma was not accidental at all but at local level a well-established ethnic division of labor was in function. The ethnic division of labor was the most obvious in the case of Székely villages of Ojdula, Zagon and Cozmeni but was also characteristic in Tiream, Agrişteu and to a lesser extent in Şimoneşti and Suatu. I discuss the case of Ojdula in greater details in order to illustrate these developments.

Ojdula is at a 10 km distance from the town of Târgu Secuiesc and it is connected with it by a good quality main road. The industrialization of Covasna county (established in 1968) was taking place following the administrative restructuring, between 1968 and 1975. Târgu Secuiesc (even if not a county seat) was the most important territorial pole of the industrialization of the county. The screw factory, the textile manufactory and the amyllum factory were established in 1969. In 1975 45% of the county’s industrial production was concentrated in Târgu Secuiesc. Given the short distance and the good infrastructure only a few non-Roma decided to move to the town. However the vast majority of the non-Roma commuted, as men worked in the screw factory and women in the textile manufactory. The trajectory of the local Roma (the vast majority of them living in the segregated area of Kishilib) has evolved totally different. 70% of the women and 72% of the man born before 1971 who answered our questionnaire reported that they worked in agriculture. In the majority of the cases this meant the local collective farm, in some cases the state owned silviculture (called “okol” by the Hungarian speaking Roma after the Romanian *Ocol Silvic*). The employment of the Roma by the collective farm and the silviculture was due to the acute labor shortage following the industrialization of Târgu Secuiesc. The director of the collective farm tried first to employ women; however, as less and less non-Roma women were willing to work in agriculture (given the incomparably higher incomes in textile industry), he restored to the employment of Roma labor force. The ethnic division of labor in Ojdula was almost complete. To be considered Roma meant almost certainly to be employed in agriculture and employment in the collective farm was considered by locals (both Roma and non-Roma) as “work for Roma” and undesirable for non-Roma. A few non-Roma also worked in agriculture; however, they were employed in higher ranks or (in case of men) as tractor drivers or machine operators. It should also be added that the majority of Roma were not employed formally, but both the collective farm and the silviculture payed them as daily laborers. As a consequence, today the majority of them does not receive pension. Another observation concerning the position of Roma in Ojdula is that during summertime a part of them was in fact traveler laborer and worked also for other collective or state owned farms in the region. In these occasions, entire families migrated temporarily.

Following the regime change the break-up of agricultural cooperatives and (partial³⁴) deindustrialization of the region reshaped the strategies of both Roma and non-Roma. We can describe labour market positions after regime change taking into account three dimensions: integration into formal labour market, participation in informal agricultural sector, and working abroad. As a factor sustaining and strengthening caste-like systems of stratification the participation in informal agricultural work played a crucial role, as it became interwoven with patron-client type relations and asymmetric reciprocity.

It is worth noting that the ethnic division of labour in the informal agricultural sector is the direct (even if not intended) consequence of macro policies that addressed deindustrialization. The fact that a substantial part of the population withdrew in agricultural production is hardly a spontaneous or an unavoidable process. Land reform and support for subsistence farming and agriculture worked as an important safety valve for the state after regime change. It was a way to handle the dismantling of the one hundred percent employment rate characteristic to state socialism without having to build a serious social safety net (Horváth-Kiss 2015). The ethnic division of labour with Roma working as daily labourers for non-Roma is the consequence of the way land reform distributed agricultural land. The Land Reform Act retroceded land to former landowners, while workers in the agricultural cooperative were entitled to no more than 10 acres of land.³⁵ In addition, the state did not even distribute the latter claiming lack of available land. In some of our settlements, Roma were not officially and legally employed in the agricultural cooperative, therefore they were not eligible as beneficiaries of the reform. One should also memorize the graph below. It shows the proportion of those employed in agriculture and the value added by agriculture to the Romanian GDP. One might observe that the drastic increase of agricultural employment was parallel with the drastic contraction of the agriculture as value added to the national economy. In other words, (non-Roma) “post-socialist peasants” and their “Gypsy” laborers were enclosed (unintendedly or intendedly) by state policies into a system characterized by contracting resources.

1. Figure. The proportion of those employed in agriculture and the value added to Romanian GDP by the agricultural sector



³⁴ Heavy industry and chemical industry practically does not exist anymore, while in some area garment industry has grown and extended.

³⁵ See the 1991/18 land reform act on retroceding land.

Daily labour and employment in agricultural sector was represented in all of our research sites as “Gypsy work”. Farmers are in fact not keen on employing non-Roma for these kinds of work, and taking up this work is a shame for non-Roma (despite the fact that in many places they are relatively well paying jobs³⁶). There are few poor non-Roma families willing to work as day labourers, but villagers treat them with contempt.³⁷

„There are Hungarians too [working as daily labourers], but I would not sit next to them, I don’t know why. They are just worthless, stinky people.” (non-Roma interviewee)

2.4. Majority control over political field and elite recruitment

Majority control over the political field including the recruitment of Roma elite is another important characteristic of caste-like arrangements in Székely and Transylvanian villages. This is even more interesting, as in all of our investigated localities local politics is basically ethnic politics. I will highlight first several general characteristics of ethnic politics in Székely Land and in ethnically more mixed areas of Transylvania and then I mention some techniques and tools through which majority elites control elite recruitment among Roma.

Local politics is of course the terrain of rivalry between different local power groups. In many cases neither this rivalry is ethnic in its essence nor are local interest groups organized along ethnic lines. It is typical, for instance, that such interest groups are formed around the leadership of the technological managers of the former Collective Farms. In other cases owners of the largest firms or large scale farmers are in the center of such power groups. Nevertheless, macro- and meso-level structures clearly facilitate party formation along ethnic lines and the ethnic organization of local political fields. The most important aspect is that a kind of informal and asymmetric ethnic power sharing exists between Romanians and Hungarians³⁸ and the most important consequence of this is the ethnic segmentation of political patronage networks in Transylvania. This patronage networks might be perceived as multi-level power structures playing a pivotal role in the distribution of public funds. Mainstream parties have certainly their own (more or less efficient) patronage networks but RMDSZ,³⁹ the dominant ethnic party representing Hungarians, was particularly successful in creating such power structure. This “political machine” has a three level structure linking local level, county level⁴⁰ and central leadership of RMDSZ.

From the perspective of local elites, party structures and “political machines” are opportunities or possible linkages through which they can mobilize resources for their projects and in order to gain ground in local political battle. The ethnic segmentation of patronage networks means that local Romanian elites can chose between linkages between different mainstream parties, while Hungarian elites chose automatically RMDSZ. Several aspects should, however, be emphasized. First, the major

³⁶ The pay for a day worth work was 50 lei in 2015, which could not be considered an insignificant amount in rural Transylvania and Székely Land.

³⁷ Villagers attribute the cause of downward mobility in case of these families and persons to moral reasons. The typical case is that of alcoholic older men living alone, without women who would look after them or supervise them. Some of them live in material condition that is worse than the material condition of Roma living in extreme poverty.

³⁸ This was called

³⁹ Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség (Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania).

⁴⁰ In Harghita there is no county level RMDSZ organization but this meso-level structure is organized along the traditionally existing territorial units, the Székely seats (*szék* in Hungarian or *scaun* in Romanian). Three such territorial organizations exist in the county.

parties that act at national level as mainstream parties are from a local perspective titular ethnic parties (are called Romanian parties by both Hungarians and Romanians). This means that they aim to defend the interests of local Romanians and are reserved for the local Romanian elites. Second, this also involves that in Székely Land mainstream/Romanian parties practically do not have local branches below the county level (or outside the county seat and some Romanian inhabited localities). The situation is rather similar in Hungarian dominated micro-regions and settlements in Bihor and Satu Mare counties (represented by Turulung and Săcuieni in our investigation). In these areas competition among local (basically Hungarian) interest groups takes the form of rivalry between RMDSZ and smaller Hungarian ethnic parties. In Satu Mare, where the Hungarian speaking (non-Roma) population is of mixed Hungarian-Schwabian ancestry, the German Democratic Forum is also a possible alternative.⁴¹ However, these smaller Hungarian parties (similarly to many less powerful mainstream parties) do not have the multi-level power structure and are far less useful in mobilizing resources. Third, it is also important that in this structure local Hungarian elites (at least ideal typically) have few direct contacts and alliances with either mainstream/Romanian actors. This means that they lobby for resources through RMDSZ via county level organization and then central leadership. Local Romanian elites are in a rather similar position with their mainstream parties.

From our perspective, the most important aspect of this structure is that neither RMDSZ nor mainstream parties take into account Roma as ethno-political actors in spite of the fact that they make up 10-11 percent of the population of the Székely area and even more in the Hungarian inhabited areas of Bihor and Satu Mare. Hungarian-speaking Roma are (usually implicitly but in some cases explicitly) considered as part of the Hungarian community and, as already mentioned they really have multiple institutional links toward the Hungarian community. Local “regimes of not counting” (Rallu et al. 2006) are also linked to this representation and to the fact that under the circumstances of informal power sharing the ethnic homogeneity of “their” areas is vital for the Hungarian political class.

Under functioning ethnic caste-systems, Hungarian elites can expropriate the political representation of Hungarian-speaking Roma even without creating some kind of “Hungarian-Roma branch” of their organization, without coopting Roma elites in ranks and without having substantial institutional programs targeting Roma living in Székely Land or in other Hungarian speaking areas of Transylvania. In this situation the question of electoral mobilization of Roma is left on the hands of local Hungarian elites (evidently taking into account the fact that on local ethnic relations are caste-like). On their turn, local elites mobilize Roma using different forms of clientelistic networks and connections ranging from direct redistribution of food and souvenirs to using certain mediators.⁴²

In this respect the position of “*cigánybíró*” („Gypsy judge”) should be mentioned. During the former regime Romanian authorities routinely used such mediators (called in other areas as *bulibasa*, *voievod* etc.) to deal with marginal Roma communities. This also happened in the majority of the investigated localities:

„We have here a president, named B. He chose my father. He came down here, talked to him. Or when the police came and they didn't know someone's name, or where they lived, my father gave the police directions. Whoever came, he could tell, who it was, where did they live” (former „Gypsy judge” and councillor).

⁴¹ To complicate the puzzle: German Democratic Forum is perceived as a “Hungarian” alternative by locals in both Turulung and Tîream.

⁴² Political mobilization among Roma including both mobilization by majority actors and Roma elites will be analyzed in a separate study.

Stewart (1997) and Voiculescu (2016) also analyse the position of such mediators. They emphasize that their source of legitimacy was based on two pillars since local authorities appointed/nominated them, but they also needed community recognition. Stewart (1997) described a case when (Hungarian) authorities could not force a voivode on an egalitarian Vlach Gypsy community. In our research sites the success of appointing a community leader and mediator was context dependent and the internal stratification of the Roma community was certainly an important factor.

3. The erosion of caste-like systems

The erosion of caste-like systems of ethnic classification and stratification can be traced back to several factors and one might distinguish between ideational and structural factors. Ideational factors eroding ranked systems of groups were mentioned already by Donald Horowitz (1985) who emphasized that the spread of the human rights discourse and commitment to equality and dignity of all human beings is basically incompatible with the “premise of inequality” sustaining ethnic caste systems. In a broader perspective, the general institutional and discursive context also facilitates the intrusion of norms and values of international organizations (such as the European Union) that are in odds with this kind of inequalities. In this respect the concept of developmental idealism coined by Arland Thornton (2005) should be mentioned. Thornton defined developmental idealism as a culture and as the cultural foundation of many transnational organizations and projects. It is a set of values and beliefs suggesting among others that all societies could and should develop and that the major characteristics of development are universal. From our perspective, it is of key importance that the belief in the equality of all human beings is key component of developmental idealism, a cultural project deeply embedded in Romanian and all Eastern European societies.⁴³

Developmental idealism and the spread of the human right discourse are institutionally sustained and have some visible impacts on the ground. Steps toward the desegregation of schools constitute an element of the Romanian educational policies. In Ojdula the separate school for Roma children was abolished in 2008 in the framework of a Phare project entitled *Inclusive school – inclusive education* and, consequently, Roma children are educated today in the school building located in the village centre. This step had important consequences on use of public spaces by both Roma children and their parents. In Turulung a process against intra-institutional desegregation was initiated by local Roma elites in 2010 and as a consequence mixed Roma-non-Roma classes were established. School desegregation is not only a policy forced by the state but it is also sustained and desired by the majority of Roma meaning that in this respect they no more accept the “premise of inequality”.

It is also important that according to our results – and contrary to some previous accounts (Stewart 1997; Engebrigsten (2007) – the majority of Roma (at least the socially mobile ones overrepresented among our interviewees) basically accepts and embrace the concept of development and interpret their own emancipation or social mobility as a process of “civilization” or development. One should also emphasize that (desire for) development is a core component of the self-representation of Eastern-European societies in general and our results mainly emphasize that Roma do not constitute an exception in this respect.

While ideational factors play an important role in altering patterns of ethnic classification and stratification, I consider structural factors even more important. In this sense, developments are not unidirectional are not synchronic in all of our research sites and in some cases there are major

⁴³ See Melegh et. al (2013); Kiss (2017).

who lost their job and meanwhile Cortorari Roma succeeded to “transnationalize” their trafficking activities. Following 1990, many Cortorari purchased houses and plots in the Western part of the town, where today stand the famous multi-story “Gypsy palaces” of Huedin. In case of Hungarian Roma an inverse process of territorial mobility could be noticed. Namely, many families who had moved in blocks of flats sold their apartments and moved back into the Fildului colony.

Another settlement which was affected by territorial relocation during state socialism was Bahnea. As already mentioned, the majority of Roma worked in industry, mainly in the nearby small town of Târnăveni. Roma of Bahnea were particularly well-integrated into the industrial sector during the former regime. Many of them succeeded to finalize vocational training and consequently they were employed as skilled workers. The dissolution of rigid territorial segregation had begun during the 1970s and continued during the 1980s.

Map 2. Spatial processes affecting the Roma communities in Bahnea



This also meant that in Bahnea territorial desegregation had begun earlier compared to other localities and this trend did not turn over following 1990. However, the general context of desegregation was the out-migration and demographic decline of non-Roma population and the massive depopulation of non-Roma parts of the village. According to the 2011 census almost 10 percent of the houses were uninhabited in Bahnea, while in some of the surrounding smaller villages this proportion is higher than 30 percent. In Bahnea without the relocation of Roma in central and traditionally non-Roma parts of the village a total of 20 percent of the houses would be empty, while in the (formerly) non-Roma parts of the village this proportion would surpass 30 percent.

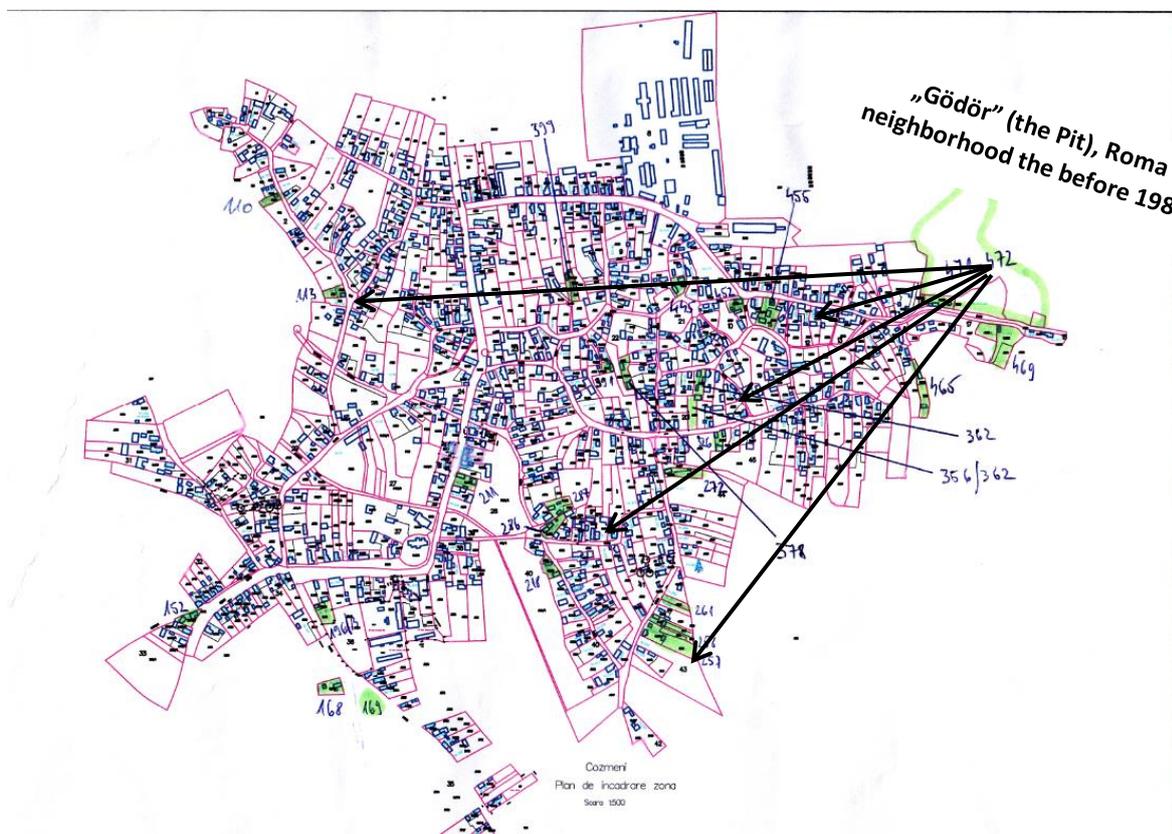
In the case of some villages where Roma employment was dominantly agricultural during the former regime, industrial employment of some Roma was a factor conducting to internal differentiation of the Roma community. This was the case of the Székely villages of Ojdula and Cozmeni. In these villages the vast majority of Roma were employed as daily laborer in agriculture. However, a few of them succeeded to gain employment in industrial sector. For them (similarly to non-Roma) this period was characterized by material accumulation:

“Some bought cars already during the former regime. The first one was my brother-in-law. He bought a car in 1984. I was the second. I bought a Dacia 1300 in 1987. I was progressing nicely. But I had to work hard” (one of the present day leaders of the community, Pentecostal pastor)

Another important aspect was that some of the (few) Roma men who were allowed to work in the industry also were active in the organization of Roma working brigades of Roma in agriculture. As such, they were simultaneously employed in industry and in agriculture, as foremen of the Roma working groups. These positions of foremen played a central role in the formation of local Roma elites not only in Ojdula and Cozmeni but also in Bahnea, Zagon, Agrișteu and Tiream.

Cozmeni is an interesting case, as during the former regime a marked process of desegregation has occurred as a consequence of the internal differentiation of the Roma community. Those few Roma employed in industry (in Miercurea Ciuc) left the original Roma colony at the edge of the village (named *Gödör* in Hungarian, meaning the Pit). Following 1990, however, the process of desegregation has slowed down considerably.

Map3. Spatial processes affecting the Roma communities in Cozmeni



3.2. Contraction of subsistence farming, transnational Roma migration, and desegregation following the turn of the Millennium

In spite of the fact that in some cases Roma were integrated in industrial labour and this might also lead the dissolution of rigid territorial segregation, policies of the former regime mostly preserved and not eroded caste-like stratification and classification. The most important drift toward the erosion of such systems was only after the regime change and most importantly after the turn of the

Millennium. The most important structural factors in this respect were the contraction of the subsistence farming in the Romanian (including Transylvanian and Székely) countryside on the one hand and the intensive participation of Roma in transnational migration on the other.

One should emphasize that during post-Communism the informal agricultural sector played a pivotal role in “keeping bright” ethnic boundaries, as the social and labour market consequences of “Gypsiness” seemed to be obvious. During state socialism (and especially during 1970s and 1980s), being employed in the lower paid and lower prestige agricultural sector was associated with Roma. During post-Communism, the association between seasonal agricultural work or being daily labourer on the one hand and Roma on the other was even closer. The taken-for-grantedness of this overlap between ethnic belonging and labour market position was the main condition assuring the maintenance of ranked systems of ethnic relations. As already mentioned, Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) proposed to use under-caste as a historically specific form of exclusion that describes the position of Roma before state socialism. They also emphasized that this caste-like arrangement required and presupposed and asymmetric economic cooperation between Roma and non-Roma. In this respect accepting the “premise of inequality” is of key importance and an element that lets asymmetric reciprocity to work. Following Bourdieu (1985), we can interpret acceptance of the premise of inequality as an internalization (or incorporation into the habitus) of existing social inequalities and distinctions. According to Bourdieu (1991), it is more accurate to speak about “class unconsciousness” instead of speaking about the Marxian notion of class-consciousness. Habitus, formed by social structure, is not conscious; it is a hard to verbalize interpretation of a situation expressed in gestures, non-verbal expressions, intonation, and posture. Gestural subordination is obviously an expectation of those in power in relations of cooperation. On the other hand, the habitual acceptance of the “premise of inequality” constitutes the essence of accepting an asymmetric situation. In the incorporation and reproduction of such habitual acceptance of inequality engagement in informal agricultural sectors has played and still plays a vital role.

To be completed

Table 5. Employment status of the 18-64 aged Roma and non-Roma population

	Roma				Non-Roma			
	Formal employment	Informal work	Unemployed	Inactive	Formal employment	Informal work	Unemployed	Inactive
Cozmeni	1.5	51.5	2.9	44.1	36.8	14.3	6.8	42.1
Turulung	7.0	42.1	15.7	35.1	40.2	20.1	8.6	31.1
Şimoneşti	17.5	38.9	7.1	36.5	54.4	11.7	2.2	31.7
Tiream	7.4	37.6	10.3	44.6	57.3	14.7	3.2	24.8
Ojdula	6.1	33.6	10.5	49.8	36.2	11.8	7.7	44.3
Suatu	19.0	33.0	16.0	32.0	35.9	21.6	10.5	32.0
Zagon	9.4	32.5	12.6	45.5	40.9	13.8	6.9	38.4
Huedin	16.9	25.8	22.1	35.2	56.3	8.4	7.4	27.9
Agrişteu	3.3	23.2	17.9	55.6	51.2	5.9	8.9	34.0
Săcuieni	12.8	17.3	11.4	58.5	69.6	2.2	4.4	23.8
Bahnea	4.0	15.3	30.3	50.4	39.6	1.5	23.1	35.8
Oradea	16.7	9.7	12.8	60.9				
Total	10	28.7	14.6	46.8	47.6	11.7	7.8	33

4. Roma identity political alternatives after the dissolution of caste-like systems

In caste-like systems actors belonging to the subordinated groups have fewer chances to define the characteristics and consequences of ethnic boundaries. This is not to say that under these circumstances they would lack agency. On the contrary, the reproduction of the ranked order of ethnic groups needs their actions and presupposes that they in a way accept subordination. To deal with this kind of structurally constrained agency, one might use the agency definition coined by Emirbayer and Mische.⁴⁴ The authors distinguished between three aspects of human agency, namely the “iterational”, the “projective” and the “practical-evaluative” ones. It is important that in their concept habitual elements (or iteration, as Emirbayer and Mische call it) are an important part of human agency. Moreover, under usual circumstances habitual (non-reflected, routinized, not conscious) elements dominate human agency and this aspect leads to the reproduction of existing institutionalized and structural settings. The projective elements (meaning the aspirations concerning a desirable future), respectively practical-evaluative elements (meaning a deliberative orientation) come to the forefront only in problematic situations. Nevertheless, these aspects of the human agency are responsible for the change of the existing structural settings. Emirbayer’s and Mische’s concept of agency is particularly useful for our purposes as it can be used both in order of explaining the stability of ethnic caste systems and to interpret changes that have occurred recently. In this framework one might argue that structural changes leading to the contraction of subsistence agricultural production and mass-migration created a new and problematic situation that undermined the previously taken for granted and habitualized acceptance of subordination and of the “premise of inequality”. This might also be seen as opening the possibility for projective and deliberative aspects of agency concerning ethnic relations.

As already mentioned, in my argument it is central that the erosion of cast-like system open up the possibilities of multiple identity politics employed by Roma actors. In classifying these identity-political alternatives the work of Lamont et al. (2016) is particularly useful. They investigated through qualitative methods strategies of people belonging to oppressed categories to situations where they faced discrimination. Their empirical question was what people living in different societies (United States, Brazil and Israel) do when they face discrimination. They investigated individual level reactions but in fact they were interested in social factors shaping these individual level reactions. The researchers differentiated between different sets of explanatory variables, namely the structural constrains, the available repertoires and the degree of groupness. In our typology of Roma identity politics these sets of variables are also rather important. On the one hand we distinguish between those strategies that require groupness and those that do not, while on the other hand we focus on meso-level institutions that sustain different alternatives of Roma identity politics.

Wimmer’s (2013: 49–63) typology of strategic moves vis-à-vis existing ethnic boundaries is also of central importance here. Roma identity political alternatives can be perceived as such strategical moves. If the Roma category is at the intersection of ethnicity and class, successful attempts to escape marginality will inevitably lead to the questioning of subordination and rigid system of ethnic classification. In what follows I will discuss the following identity political alternatives (or strategic moves to alter caste-like classification and stratification): (1) self-isolation; (2) individual crossing; (3) boundary blurring; (4) ethno-political mobilization.

⁴⁴ Emirbayer, Mustafa – Mische, Ann: “What is Agency?” *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 103, No. 4 (1998), 962-1023.

4.1. Self-isolation

The term of self-isolation appears in the work of Michelle Lamont et al (2016: 10-11), as an individual response or “technique of self-management” of people facing discrimination and subordination. According to the authors, self-isolation or autonomy is a strategy of making the group more self-sufficient and less dependent on the majority institutional system. Even if Lamont and her collaborators use self-isolation as an individual strategy, they emphasize that it is based on the accessibility of collectivist repertoires and narratives, such as autonomist, nationalist or segregationist movements (Lamont et al 2016: 100-101).

In our typology self-isolation is conceptualized as an identity political alternative that might be available for some of the Roma communities. In fact, self-isolation and struggle for autonomy of Roma communities is the most pregnant narrative that appears in the anthropological literature concerning Eastern European Roma. In this narrative it is central that Roma established a whole range of cultural practices in order to isolate themselves from the consequences of rank-ordered ethnic classification and that through this practices they value self-sufficiency and try to avoid the control of “Gadje” institutions and society.⁴⁵

Self-isolation proved to be less frequent among Roma we investigated: it seemed to be the dominant strategy of two “traditional” Roma communities, namely that of Cortorari in Huedin and Gábori in Atid. These communities were not in the very focus of our investigation; however, we collected some indirect and direct information concerning their strategies. In case of Gábor families in Atid we conducted interviews, while in Huedin we interviewed an “atypical” Cortorar Roma who moved to the Fildului area during state socialism. The following aspects should be emphasized in case of this strategy:

(1) Self-isolation clearly requires a high very degree of groupness and relies on internal solidarity. These Roma self-label themselves proudly as Roma (most precisely as *cigány/țigan*) and tend to keep their personal networks ethnically closed. Endogamy is a rather strict and rigid norm, and in case of Gábor Roma this is secured through arranged marriages.

(2) Self-isolation is available culturally only for some Roma subgroups sharing a powerful group ideology. However, in their cases this group ideology and solidarity does not concern Roma as such but only the definite Roma subgroups such as Cortorari or Gábori. In the following interview segment the interviewee not only marks the differences between Roma subgroups but denies the belonging of Roma outside his subgroup to the Roma community:

“To be completed...”

(3) Self-isolation has little to do with political mobilization that is (as we will see) another strategy requiring collective efforts, groupness and internal solidarity. The two self-isolated Roma communities are interested neither in ethnic mobilization through Roma movement neither in local politics in general.

“To be completed...”

45

4.2. Individual crossing

In the typology elaborated by Wimmer (2013) individual crossing is a positional move aimed to change the position of individuals (or groups of individuals) through relocating them on the other side of the boundary. This strategy does not require collective efforts and requires relatively low level of institutional support. Moreover, it works against collective efforts and institutions reproducing groupness among Roma. Further, individual crossing neither questions the relevance of the distinction between Roma and non-Roma nor intends to alter the ranked character of ethnic classificatory system. Individual crossing is a simple positional move through which members of the subordinated groups relocate themselves on the other side of the boundary and (in a fortunate situation) are recognized as members of the dominant group.

Table 6 reveals that strategies of self-labelling of Roma differ significantly by local context. Next to the results of our quantitative survey the table also shows the estimated census identification of the Roma populations under investigation. According to our results, Roma as the first identity option is almost exclusive (above 95%) in four settlements, namely Bahnea (98%), Tiream (95%), Oradea (99%) and Săcuieni (96%). In Bahnea and Tiream the exclusive Roma identification is predominant. In Săcuieni 78%, while in Oradea 28% of the Roma assumed Hungarian as a secondary identity option. The majority of respondents also assumed the Roma identity in Suatu, Cozmeni, Agrişteu and Turulung. In this latter locality many Roma also assumed the Hungarian identity, while 18% of the Roma identified themselves exclusively as Hungarian. In Huedin Roma were almost equally divided between Roma, Romanian and Hungarian identity options and this fact mirrors also the mixed background of the Roma living in that territory. The majority of the “native” Hungarian-speaking Roma identified themselves as either Hungarian or Hungarian-Roma. Lingurari and Cortorari assumed the Roma identity, while Roma originating in the neighboring villages declared Romanian or Romanian-Roma identity. In Şimoneşti and Ojdula, respectively among Hungarian-Roma in Zagon the Hungarian identity option was dominant, while Lingurari of Zagon declared themselves almost unequivocally as Romanian.

Table 6. The self-identification of respondents identified as Roma by external experts

Source	Identity option		Bah- nea	Tire- am	Su- atu	Ora- dea	Coz- meni	Agriş- teu	Turu- lung	Hue- din	Săcu- eni	Oj- dula	Şimo- neşti	Za- gon
	1 st	2 nd												
(N)			617	430	168	495	316	298	743	403	536	375	389	764
Census		-	97,9	70,0	83,6	99,2	13,5	57,6	67,8	?	61,1	95,2	1,2	0
Integro	Roma	Tot	97,9	95,0	76,8	99,2	78,1	85,2	66,2	34,2	95,7	35,7	12,3	7,1
		No	97,5	90,7	75,0	68,9	67,0	65,1	44,7	27,0	17,6	14,9	9,4	0,9
		Ro	0,2	0,2	0,6	2,4	0,0	8,1	0,9	1,0	0	0	0	0,0
		Hu	0,2	3,7	1,2	27,9	11,1	12,1	20,5	6,2	78,1	20,8	2,9	6,0
Census		-	1,7	?	?	0,2	0	33,8	0	?	0	0	0	74,0
Integro	Romanian	Tot	1,7	2,6	8,3	0,2	0,3	4,7	1,1	33,3	0,6	2,9	2,1	74,6
		No	1,7	0	8,3	0,2	0,3	1,7	0,6	23,3	0,6	1,6	1,8	74,3
		Rr	0	0	0,0	0	0	0,0	0,2	8,9	0	0,5	0	0,3
		Hu	0	0	0,0	0	0	0,0	0,2	1,0	0	0,8	0,3	0
Census		-	0,2	?	?	0,6	86,5	7,5	32,2	?	38,9	4,8	98,8	26,0
Integro	Hungarian	Tot	0,2	2,8	14,9	0,6	21,6	8,4	32,3	32,5	3,5	61,1	85,7	20,7
		No	0,2	2,8	10,1	0,6	17,5	7,7	18,2	20,1	3,5	41,6	81,0	12,3
		Rr	0	0	4,8	0	0,0	0,7	13,9	12,4	0	18,4	2,6	8,4
		Ro	0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0,0	0,2	0,0	0	1,1	2,1	0

In some cases self-labeling that was measured quantitatively in our investigation might be an indicator of efforts of individual crossing; however, in other cases it might also indicate the acceptance of the local regimes of not counting mentioned earlier.

In several cases, moving away from the segregated Roma neighborhoods is parallel with attempts crossing individually ethnic boundaries. This is often marked by symbolic dissociation from the Roma category, especially from marginal Roma. The most visible linkage between territorial replacement and individual crossing was noticed in Turulung, where mobile Roma working in Germany moved away toward a newly established (also dominantly Roma) neighborhood. According to the narratives of Roma moving away, territorial replacement also meant a radical change in their way of life and aspirations. Indeed, the aspect of the old and the new neighborhood was markedly different. Through the arrangement and decoration of the house and of the courtyard perceived and presented as “Hungarian-like” or “even” “German-like” Roma dissociated themselves from their former neighbors and kin remaining in the old colony. As for the aspirations, adopting the strategies and mentalities of the “peasants” was characteristic through which they emphasized that they left the “Gypsy way of life” behind them. Mobile Roma from the new colony even reproduced stereotypes of the majority when referring to marginalized Roma. This further group was associated with irresponsibility, living from one day to another and so on.

Majority categorization and recognition (as equal) of mobile Roma is critical regarding the success of attempts of individual crossing. One should emphasize in this respect that majority reactions to individual crossing and therefore the permeability of boundaries between Roma and non-Roma vary greatly depending on local context. In the above mentioned example of Turulung ethnic boundaries are relatively permeable and non-Roma tend to recognize mobile Roma as their fellow villagers (while marginalized Roma remain strongly stigmatized). Nevertheless, recognition is context dependent and debated. The most important terrain of classificatory struggles is the educational system, where in 2010 non-Roma parents put the school director and the major under pressure to separate children (studying in Hungarian) along ethnic lines. This was followed by a rather strong counter-reaction of the local Roma representative, member of the mobile segment of the Roma population moving away from the old colony. It is worthy to cite her, as the case is rather illustrative concerning the relation between different segments of the Roma population.

„ [– We have heard that there was a case that Roma and non-Roma children were separated. Can you tell me about it?]

– *How do you know about that? I was Roma representative during that time. It was that Roma children were picked up and put in a separate class. My daughter had already finished school by then. But the daughter of my neighbor [in the newly constructed high prestige Roma neighborhood] came crying. She said that she could no more learn together with their classmate. Her classmate was a Hungarian girl. They cannot stand together because a separate Roma school was established. And they are now only with the Gypsy kids. And Gypsies are bully, Gypsy kids are aggressive. Smelly and dirty people exist among Gypsies and exist among Hungarians too. And these genteel Roma girls were put next to the smelly and noisy kinds from the colony. This was what that poor girl said. That they are smelly, they are dirty and that they stole her snack. That was the situation and there was a tension between the children. I went to the major and I asked him. What did you do? Are you sound of mind? You put those children next to those from the colony? And he said that it is not my business. I answered, let's see whose business is. Let's see! I went to Satu Mare and I asked the leader of the Roma party about what to do. I also went to the prefecture. Ultimately, the party leader*

came together with the school inspector. They came by car and they of course resolved the problem. But I asked the mayor several times previously: put them back next to their classmates, cause I do not want to bring here people from Satu Mare, I do not want to bring here people from Bucharest.” (Former Roma representative)

Rigid educational segregation would have institutionalized rather impermeable ethnic boundaries where mobile Roma had been placed unequivocally on the Roma side and this would have been unacceptable from the perspective of mobile Roma. The Roma representative revealed in fact this perspective, while, on the other side, she used a more “standard” non-discrimination discourse and procedure in order to modify institutionalized ways of boundary making to a proper end.

Attempts of individual crossing are frequent in Székely villages. Lingurari in Zagon tend to self-label themselves as Romanian, while Roma in Şimoneşti as Hungarians. Indeed, Roma-non Roma boundaries in these villages are relatively permeable. Attempts of individual crossing are present in Ojdula and Cozmeni too. However, in these villages ethnic boundaries are far more rigid and non-Roma employ powerful counter-discourses in order to counterbalance these tendencies.

To be completed

4.3. Boundary blurring

Boundary blurring and individual crossing have some important elements in common. Neither Roma engaged in crossing ethnic boundaries nor those trying to deemphasize them invest in institutions underpinning group solidarity. As already mentioned, Alba and Nee (2003) and Alba (2005) conceptualized individual crossing and boundary blurring as two (ideal) types of assimilation. They argue that it depend on the very characteristics of boundaries whether assimilation takes the form of individual crossing or boundary blurring. They distinguish “bright” and “blurred” boundaries and argued that when boundaries are bright, individuals will always know on which side of the boundary they are (2005, pp. 21-25). In contrast, blurred boundaries allow for zones where multiple or ambiguous forms of identification are possible. The characteristics of the boundaries affect the form and the likelihood of assimilation. If boundaries are bright, assimilation takes the form of individual crossing; psychologically it is similar to conversion, and induces a departure from the original ethnic group. In the case of blurred boundaries, the process of assimilation is less dramatic. Individuals who undergo this process are not forced to choose between minority and majority identity and can take part simultaneously in minority and majority social circles. Importantly, assimilation is not only less pleasant but also less likely across bright boundaries as the costs of assimilation are higher and benefits lower. Those trying to assimilate across bright boundaries may find themselves in a difficult situation as they simultaneously risk exclusion and discrimination by the majority and forms of excommunication by their co-ethnics. In the typology elaborated by Wimmer (2013, pp. 49-63) individual crossing and boundary blurring are distinct positional moves. In the case of individual crossing, individuals reposition themselves or are reclassified by others; however, without altering the very characteristics of the boundary itself. Conversely, boundary blurring touches upon the characteristics of the boundary: it de-emphasizes opposition between minority and majority and thus makes the boundary more porous and fluid.

According to Wimmer, de-emphasizing ethnic boundaries is parallel with emphasizing other types of distinction as socially relevant.⁴⁶ In this respect, two major sources of boundary blurring should be mentioned. First, in some of our cases, namely where Roma were integrated in industrial production,

⁴⁶ See also Bourdieu 1991.

the division of labor offered them an alternative identity, that of worker, miner etc. Second, if ethnically mixed congregations were formed neo-protestant religious movement would serve as incubators or greenhouses of boundary blurring through emphasizing community in God and creating more symmetric relations between Roma and non-Roma.

In the literature concerning Eastern European Roma boundary blurring is particularly significant. Ladányi and Szelényi (2006: 14) argued that societal macro-processes as such had effects of boundary blurring or, on the contrary, “boundary brightening” in certain periods. Most importantly, they argued that during state-socialism caste-like divisions between Roma and non-Roma were weakened and Roma were redefined as members of the lower class or of the working class. As mentioned already, the efforts of the former regime to include Roma in the working class was interpreted by many authors as attempts to assimilate them. However, it is equally legitimate to interpret these attempts as creating the structural conditions for boundary blurring, where being Roma has less consequences for one’s social conditions and life chances.

Our investigation, however, does not interpret boundary blurring as a direct effect of structural conditions but as an individual or collective strategy of Roma to deal with rigid ethnic boundaries and ranked systems of ethnic classification. The possibility of industrial employment, of course, might have facilitated this strategy and in several localities, most importantly in Huedin, Bahnea, Turulung and Săcuieni autobiographical narratives of Roma interviewees revealed a strong sense of nostalgia toward the former regime that was evidently connected to the possibility of becoming worker, miner under the circumstances of more closed connections with non-Roma co-workers:

“[During state socialism] everybody got it that we are all humans. We were humans irrespective of the language we talked, irrespective of our skin color. Until the revolution we lived together with Romanians and Hungarians. We drunk together, we ate together and we of course worked together. And all this changed following the revolution. You know. It was the revolution in Timișoara, in Bucharest, in Târgu Mureș and then happened all this [bad] things.” (Focus group discussion with Roma in Bahnea)

“We worked together in the mine: Gypsies and Hungarian in mixed brigades. They were not disdained like today because we were Gypsy. For instance, once a neighbor of mine broke his leg. Hungarians took him off the bus. They carried him in their arms. Today this could not happen” (Roma interviewee, Turulung)

We already mentioned the changing hierarchies between Cortorari and Hungarian Roma in Huedin. During the former regime factories and integration into the industrial production played an important role in solidifying the situation of many Hungarian Roma families. It is more important, however, that industrial employment had a long lasting effect on their identity construction and sense of desirable social order. Phrases like *“we are a working class family”, “everybody should work, I like working”* suggest that work ethic plays central role in sustaining their self-esteem and that work is the domain through which they struggle for recognition. The majority society in Huedin also tended to hierarchize Roma groups according to their work ethnic and availability to work and it seems that Hungarian Roma deeply internalized this evaluative scheme. Following the regime change, however, their social conditions are no more congruent with their position demanded in the local social hierarchy.

Another possible way through which boundary blurring became possible were neo-protestant religious movements, in case they were organized in ethnically mixed (Roma-non-Roma)

congregations. One might observe (table 7) that neo-protestant movements were present in the majority of our field-site.

Table 7. The religious distribution of Roma in the investigated communities

	N	Traditional denominations				Neo-protestant movements		
		Roman Catholic	Romanian Orthodox	Hungarian Reformed	Hungarian Unitarian	Pentecostal	Baptist	Adventist
Bahnea	616	0,8	26,1	1,1	0,0	66,7	2,4	0,0
Săcueni	536	33,2	0,6	2,8	0,0	0,0	55,6	2,6
Oradea	495	40,6	2,6	6,5	0,0	0,2	43,6	0,0
Suatu	158	12,0	7,6	31,0	13,9	5,7	23,4	0,0
Tiream	430	42,8	25,3	2,1	0,0	5,3	16,5	0,0
Ojdula	375	64,3	1,9	0,5	0,0	20,0	0,0	7,2
Agrișteu	295	11,9	63,1	4,1	0,0	15,3	0,0	0,3
Huedin	401	12,5	50,1	23,4	0,0	11,0	0,0	0,0
Simonești	389	0,8	0,8	13,4	82,3	1,5	0,0	0,3
Zagon	764	1,6	72,3	21,9	0,0	0,4	0,0	0,0
Cozmeni	361	98,3	0,3	0,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Turulung	473	89,4	3,4	3,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Total	5293	32,2	23,9	8,6	6,5	11,7	12,0	0,8

A tool of boundary blurring is emphasizing religious membership or the belonging to the universal community of believers. “Traditional” denominations, like the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Hungarian Calvinist Reformed Church or the Roman Catholic Church are less inclusive toward Roma. Under these circumstances being part of a universal religious community is possible through the conversion to one of the neo-protestant denominations. One should emphasize that Roma are highly overrepresented among members of this neo-protestant churches, especially among Pentecostals and in some regions among Baptists. In some of our fields we noticed a strong presence of the neo-protestant denominations. In Bahnea there are three rival Pentecostal communities, two with exclusively Roma members, and one with ethnically mixed membership. In Săcueni rival Baptist communities exist. In Suatu and Tiream there is one Baptist community with almost exclusively Roma membership. In Agrișteu and Ojdula Pentecostals are exclusively Roma. Numerically the denominations are not dominant, however the Roma elites and the well-off Roma are who converted to this religion. In Ojdula there are two rival Pentecostal communities and additionally a mixed (Roma and non-Roma) Adventist community.

To be completed

4.4. Political mobilization

We intend to present patterns of political mobilization of Roma in a separate paper including their mobilization by majority actors and successful attempts of ethnic mobilization. Now I will focus narrowly on this latter aspect and will discuss some conditions of successful ethnic mobilization. In this respect, we should turn back to what I presented regarding the ethnic organization of politics in Transylvania and majority (meaning non-Roma including Hungarian) dominance of the political field in caste-like systems. The question is under what circumstances are local elites interested and capable to break out from this majority domination?

Table 8 might be a good starting point in this respect. As we see, successful ethnic mobilization is relatively rare among our cases. In Oradea, Șimonești, Atid and Zagon no Roma candidate run for

positions in the local council, while in Tiream, Turulung and Agriștiu Roma candidates were not successful at all. Their success was very moderate in Huedin, Săcuieni and Cozmeni (even if in this latter locality one Roma candidate entered the local council in 2012). In fact Bahnea, Ojdula and Suatu are the cases where ethnic mobilization of the Roma community proved to be sustained and relatively successful.

Table 8. Results of Roma candidates and local Roma councilors elected in 2012 and 2016

	2012			2016		
	Number of votes	Proportion	Mandates obtained	Number of votes	Proportion	Mandates obtained
Bahnea**	388	25.2	3	188	20.1	3
Ojdula	177	13.5	2	105	8.1	1
Suatu*	137	15.1	1	68	8.2	1
Cozmeni	41	5.1	1	-		
Tiream	60	6.7	0	28	2.9	0
Turulung	61	3.5	0	-		
Săcuieni	243	4.3	0	-		
Huedin*	207	4.6	0	105	3.8	0
Agrișteu	21	1.3	0	-		
Oradea	-			-		
Șimonești	-			-		
Atid	-			-		
Zagon	-			-		

The following preconditions, factors and characteristics of successful Roma mobilization might be mentioned.

First, general strategies followed by socially mobile segments of the local Roma population. None of the strategies presented earlier helps or is compatible with Roma ethnic mobilization. The strategy of self-isolation represents an exit from the local public affairs and from mainstream society in general, including politics. Gábori in Atid or Cortorari in Huedin are rather self-sufficient and autonomous but show no interest in local politics. Neither their group ideologies referring solely to their own “tribe” or “clan” is compatible with the ideology of the Roma movement and Roma parties. The strategy of individual crossing is even less compatible with political mobilization, as this means that mobile segments of the local Roma population are reclassified as non-Roma, while the Roma community remains without its own elites. In this respect Turulung is the most telling example, where a large segment of the local Roma population is socially mobile but where socially mobile Roma are interested in Roma movement only very sporadically and accidentally. Boundary blurring might be more compatible with ethnic mobilization, as it occurs in other contexts than the political field and leaves more room for socially mobile Roma to maintain their linkages toward their co-ethnics. However, generally speaking, neither de-emphasizing ethnic boundaries helps mobilization along ethnic lines.

Second, in more structural terms, successful ethnic mobilization requires local Roma elites who are in a middle-man position, meaning that they provide something for the Roma community and at the same time they use its resources for their strategical goals. Money loaners and loan sharks, pastors of separate Roma congregations, foremen of Roma working brigades, entrepreneurs organizing the

work of Roma abroad are typically in such position but implementation of different projects and policies might also create such middle-man positions.

Third, operative linkages toward the Roma party are also vital. In this sense, remember that I conceptualized linkages to party structures (or “political machines”) as valuable resources for local elites in order to push forward their projects and gain ground in local political battles. The ethnic organization of such linkages means that “casting” has been already done and, as Romanian elites are connected to powerful mainstream parties and Hungarians to RMDSZ, Roma elites remain with only a few available alternatives. They might choose between the Roma Party (more precisely between different Roma parties, Patrida Romilor “Pro Europa” being the most viable alternative) and less embedded mainstream parties having no effective “political machine” in the given county. Among these alternatives the Roma party is evidently more favorable for local Roma elites compared to (practically inexistent) mainstream alternatives. That is why in some cases, such as in Bahnea or Suatu, there is a real competition between different factions of the Roma elites to capture the local organization of the Roma party.

Fourth, ethnic mobilization and connections to the Roma movement are helped by existing “trans-local” institutional networks. The Pentecostal Church in Covasna and Mureş counties is evidently such a trans-local network and in these counties institutional structures of the Pentecostal Roma Congregation and of the Roma Party overlap to a great extent. This might also be said about the Baptist Church in Satu Mare and Bihor, however to a far less extent. Here the Hungarian Baptist Congregation is active among Hungarian speaking Roma and even if separate Roma Baptist communities exist the position toward Roma ethnic mobilization of the church is rather ambivalent. Nevertheless, one might note that, while mixed congregations are greenhouses of boundary blurring, separate Roma congregations are incubators of Roma ethnic mobilization.

To be completed

5. Conclusions

Conclusions might be formulated on two levels. First, we briefly discuss the general lessons one can draw from our in country comparative study on ranked systems and their dissolution. Then we discuss the wider relevance these lessons have regarding ethno-political struggles in Székely Land and in Transylvania.

We have seen that the dissolution of ranked systems transforms mechanisms of ethnic boundary making and the very characteristics of the boundary itself. In ranked systems, dominant groups have the decisive role in boundary making. Exclusion and discrimination maintain ethnic differences without the support of institutions that produce internal cohesion and solidarity in subordinate/dominated groups. This is more difficult to imagine in unranked systems. In these systems, institutions producing group solidarity and elites who keep these structures alive have a much more relevant role. It is important to observe that with the dissolution of ranked relations, the dominant group loses its ability or power to control mobility channels and elite selection in the subordinate/dominated group. This way, ethnicity can acquire political relevance.

In the same time, results of classification struggles following the break-up of ranked system can vary. One of the probable outputs is ethnic mobilization, but boundary blurring or individual crossing are likewise probable. In the latter cases, members of the subordinate/dominated group change their ethnic identity, or the importance of ethnic boundary itself decreases. Our study shows that two main occurrences limit strategic opportunities of minority elites and mobile segments of the

subordinate/dominated groups. The first one is the reaction of the dominant majority. In our cases, the dissolution of the ethnic systems led to a mixed situation. In some cases it made the members of the dominant groups to renounce earlier forms of control regarding the Roma, and made them allow the Roma in the public spaces. However, but it also gave rise to radical anti-Roma discourse. These counter-discourses severely limit the chances and opportunities for the two groups to come closer to each other. Powerful majority racism reduces the chances of blurring ethnic boundaries and makes individual boundary crossing more difficult. The fact that success of mobile Roma depends in some cases on their role as “middle men” between majority society and marginalized Roma also works against individual boundary crossing.⁴⁷ Secondly, locally and institutionally available alternatives also limit strategic opportunities or strategies. Lamont et al. (2016) use the notion of cultural repertoire to emphasize that meso-level structures (institutions and discourses) shaping the reactions of those facing discrimination. In our cases, Pentecostal and Adventist churches play a prominent role. They are “incubators” for strategic repositioning. Mixed congregations may contribute to blurring ethnic boundaries, as they offer opportunities for developing more symmetrical relations between Roma and non-Roma. Separate Roma congregations, especially the Pentecostal Church are quite on the contrary an „incubator” for Roma ethnic mobilization. This is not surprising since the Roma Party relies greatly on this religious network.

One might also summarize in four paragraphs the lessons learned in relation to the ethno-political struggles in Székely Land and Transylvania.

1. *We think that caste-like systems that have structured (and in many settlements they continue to structure even today) relations between Roma and non-Roma are not tenable in the long term.* The discursive environment that links non-discrimination and social development does not support this, but more importantly, a series of prevalent macro-structural transformations erode the economic base of caste-like social organization. Policies fostering social modernization in the former regime were ethnically selective. Thus, an ethnic division of labour emerged that maintained the ranked systems. Land reform after regime change worked in the same direction steering non-Roma toward small-scale agriculture and Roma toward informal service provisioning for re-created peasant farms. The system of social benefits also works toward ethnicization of social differences in many settlements (Schwarcz 2012) and embeds Roma in a system of patronage (rooted in politics in the present). However, the retreat of the peasant farms and the contraction of informal agricultural sector are the most important processes rural areas have known after the turn of the millennia. It dismantles asymmetric reciprocity and patron-client relations that have formed the base of caste-like systems.

2. *Dissolution of ethnic caste-system does not necessarily mean decreasing economic inequalities.* Because of the contraction of informal agricultural sector, Roma might experience even more severe, unfavourable material condition. It is important to note, however, that the “premise of inequality” has come to an end with the contraction of subsistence farming. The reason is that the system does not offer them anymore the benefits and limited protection (which existed despite the asymmetrical relations) provided before by the patron-client relationships. Dismissing the “premise of inequality” carries substantial potential for conflict, if expectations of non-Roma regarding subordinate/dominated habitus remain the same.

3. *Strategies the Roma elite follow are dependent on majority reactions and on institutionally available alternatives regarding identity politics in the same time.* Neo-protestant churches and political organizations might have a leading role in this respect. While relaxing opposition between

⁴⁷ See Laitin (1995; 1998).

Roma and non-Roma, mixed congregation may foster a “Hungarian orientation”. On the contrary, the Pentecostal church and the Roma party may represent a sort of Roma nation building.

To be completed