

## **Press discourses on Roma in the UK, Finland and Hungary**

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### **Abstract**

This article analyses the political and media discourses on Roma in Hungary, Finland and the UK, in relation to both the local Roma in these countries as well as those who migrated from and to these countries following the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe.

To do so the authors have analysed left-wing and right of centre major newspapers in these three countries, focusing on specific case studies which were foci of public debates during the last twenty years. In addition they examined a common case study in 2013 ('Blond Maria') that was discussed throughout Europe. The article examines the constructions of Roma, both local and migrant, in each newspaper and how these have changed over the period studied in this research. The conclusion of the article examines the multi-layered processes of social and political borderings which dominate discourses on Roma, 'indigenous' and migrant, and the extent to which they constitute a coherent 'European' construction of 'the Roma'.

**Key words: Roma, Hungary, Finland, UK, Bordering, press analysis**

### **Introduction**

In much of the literature on racism, it is colour and religion which seem to be constructed as the most important signifiers of racialization. And yet it is the Roma people who have emerged repeatedly in various studies as the most stigmatized and racialized grouping in Europe (Aluas and Matei 1998; Levine-Rasky et al. 2014). Following the expansion of the EU in 2004 and the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, the diverse Roma groups can be seen as forming the largest ethnic minority within EU boundaries (EERC 2010).<sup>1</sup> This article analyses the political and media discourses on both migrant and local Roma in Hungary, Finland and the UK, as illustrative of the range of histories and policies to which Roma people have been subjected to in different parts of Europe.

As elsewhere in Europe, these countries have long-standing ethnic groupings that contemporarily come under the umbrella name of Roma.<sup>2</sup> These groups underwent a history of persecution and racialization as well as differing degrees of welfare and integration policies and attempts to transform them into a sedentary population. There are an estimated 650,000 Roma (Bernát 2014) living in Hungary who are diverse, but usually seen as composed of three main Roma communities. The largest group is Romungro who speak Hungarian. The Vlach (Oláh in Hungarian) speak Hungarian and mainly Lovari, while the Beás/Boyash speak Hungarian and Romanian (see a more detailed account in Kemény 2000).<sup>3</sup> In Finland, the *Kaale* Roma are conventionally estimated to number around 10,000 individuals, with an additional 3-4,000 living in Sweden after migrating in the 1960s-80s, making it a small minority both in absolute and proportional terms (The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009). In the UK there are around 4-500,000 Roma (Brown et al. 2013:7). It is a heterogeneous population with different cultural identities and lifestyles. The major older groupings are the Gypsies (British Roma), Irish Travellers, the 'New Age Travellers'.

In Finland and the UK, there has been a migration from Central and East European Roma communities since the fall of the Soviet Union. The migrants who arrived first as asylum seekers, and later as EU migrants, have been at the centre of public and political debates. In the UK, the immigration of Irish Travellers has also been a debated issue. Despite the tiny size of the arriving groups, this has reactivated anti-gypsyist stereotypes<sup>4</sup>, producing, at times, full-fledged moral panics. Meanwhile, in Hungary, the debates have dealt with the *emigration* of Roma, with conflicting explanatory narratives pointing either to problems within the Roma communities, within the Hungarian society as a whole or to external actors such as the EU.

This article examines press discourses both in relation to the 'indigenous' Roma and those who migrated from and to these countries following the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe. In this, the article contributes to a growing body of literature on the situation of Roma in contemporary Europe (eg. Grill 2012; Picker 2013; Sigona and Trehan 2009; Ryder, Cemlyn and Acton 2014; Vitale and Legros 2011) as well as specific media and press studies (e.g. Bernáth and Messing 2013; Balch and Balanova 2014; Clark and Campbell 2000). The main focus of the analysis in this paper, however, is the ways in which these press discourses on Roma have been used

to construct bordering processes to differentiate between those who belong and those who do not.

## **Methodology**

The analysis in this article is embedded in the theoretical and methodological framework developed by the Work Package 9 team of the EUBorderscapes project on situated intersectional everyday bordering (Yuval-Davis 2014; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2017, forthcoming). Like many other scholars in Border Studies (eg. Brambilla 2015; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007) and the other contributors to this special issue, we understand borders – social, political, geographical - not as territorial, static, naturalized, social and political ‘lines’, but rather as continuous, dynamic and contested processes. We also argue, however, that bordering processes themselves need to be understood as grounded in differing social positionings. In order to do so we have combined the methodological tools of what Lesley McCall (2005) calls inter-categorical and intra-categorical analyses, by exploring the shifting and contested constructions of the categories of analysis across space, time and normative political approaches.

We have chosen to apply these types of analyses to the press coverage of Roma/bordering issues because the mass media continues to be a key site in European societies where forms of knowledge struggle to achieve the status of ‘common sense’ (Gramsci 1971). Media analysis can reveal the major ways that key social groups make sense of political issues such as this. As Emil Edenborg (2016) argues, the media, by controlling and constraining visibility of particular groupings in particular ways, plays a crucial role in the construction, reproduction and contestation of borders and boundaries in specific political projects of belonging.

We began the analysis with a preliminary examination of the press in the three countries, focusing on several generic analytical categories which seemed to best reflect the ways Roma have been constructed in our chosen newspapers. These were: discourses, categories and/or stereotypes used to describe and/or racialize the Roma; the extent that all Roma were homogenized or differentiated into sub-categories; and how they were positioned vis a vis other ethnic minorities as well as the hegemonic majority in the country. We

were also interested to find out whose voices were used in the press discourses, especially the extent to which Roma voices were included in the articles if at all.

We analysed the specific meanings of these categories in one left of centre and one right of centre newspaper in each country, at particular moments of time during the last twenty years. In Hungary the analysis focused on the left of centre *Népszabadság (NSZ)*, and the right of centre *Magyar Nemzet (MN)*, both daily newspapers. In Finland the selected newspapers were the 'quality'<sup>5</sup> *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)* and the 'evening press' newspaper *Iltalehti (IL)*. In the UK the newspapers selected were *The Guardian*, a left of centre daily broadsheet and the right of centre *The Sun*, the largest circulation daily tabloid in Britain.

In each country we measured the amount of yearly coverage of Roma issues in each left of centre newspaper to discover 'peaks' of interest. The stories that produced these peaks became the case studies in this article. We also chose one common case study, 'Blond Maria', the girl seized by the police in Greece in 2013 from Roma people on suspicion of kidnapping.

In Hungary, using the Parliament Library database, we found a total of 2719 news items on Roma groups in *NSZ*. The items given the most coverage were: (1) a housing issue relating to 13 Roma families in Székesfehérvár (in 1997-98)<sup>6</sup>; (2) a news story relating to a number of Roma families' migration from Zámoly and their refugee claims in Strasbourg (2001)<sup>7</sup>; (3) coverage of increasing racism and attacks against Roma (2009)<sup>8</sup>.

In Finland we identified 965 relevant articles in *HS*. The three identified peaks related to: (1) the arrival of Roma asylum seekers from Slovakia, Poland, Latvia and Kosovo (1999-2000)<sup>9</sup>; (2) debates on Finnish Roma culture, initiated by 'dissident' Roma activists and writers in (2007)<sup>10</sup>; (3) debates on the circular EU-migration of Roma from Romania and Bulgaria and the initiative by a group of MPs to ban and criminalize begging (2010-2011)<sup>11</sup>.

In the UK we identified more than 3000 articles in *The Guardian*<sup>12</sup>. The identified peaks were: (1) the increase in Czech and Slovak Roma migration to Dover in 1997<sup>13</sup>; (2) the Conservative Party's use of Roma issues in their 2005 election campaign which corresponded to a public campaign against 'illegal'

Roma squatters initiated by *The Sun*<sup>14</sup>; (3) the highly publicized eviction of a Roma community from the land they owned in Dale Farm, Essex in 2011<sup>15</sup>

Exceptionally we also added a fourth UK case study focused on the remarks that ex-Home Secretary David Blunkett made about the alleged tension that Roma migrants were causing in Sheffield in 2013<sup>16</sup>, as this happened around the same time of the debate on the issue of 'Blond Maria'<sup>17</sup>.

In the following section, we report our main findings regarding the constructions of Roma, both local and migrant in each newspaper and how these have changed over the period studied in this research. In the concluding discussion we examine the multi-layered processes of social and political borderings which are constructed in the studied countries between the hegemonic majority and Roma, 'indigenous' and migrant, paying also attention to the extent to which we can observe a 'European' construction of 'the Roma'.

### **The Hungarian case study**

Although the Roma in Hungary belong to three main linguistic and cultural groups, the press discourse homogenizes and racializes them into a single subject. While stereotypes and discourses on Roma have been changing over the period we analyzed, Roma remained a homogenous category in the press coverage. The only significant difference made in the press between the Roma is either specifying where they live in Hungary or from which countries they have migrated from and to.<sup>18</sup>

In 1997-98 the main discourse in the press about Roma was the Székesfehérvár story. The local government of Székesfehérvár decided to demolish a run-down blockhouse where Roma were living and move them into container houses, then into cheap houses in the surrounding area of the city. This policy encountered fierce opposition from two different sources - a Roma civil-rights organisation and people living in the local neighbourhood. In the eventual solution, the mayor agreed with the Roma activists to settle the Roma in rented flats in the city rather than container houses, and the local people prevented the settlement of Roma families in the neighbouring villages.

The story of Zámoly<sup>19</sup>, which also began in 1997, became a hot issue in the press in 2000. Roma families were forced to leave their rented accommodation, which had been condemned by the local government as a result of storm damage. They were first settled into public housing, then moved into other settlements and finally, several years later, the National Roma Government<sup>20</sup> built wooden houses for them in Zámoly. However, the evacuated Roma families did not want to move into these houses, because of their fear of racism from the local population. Finally, led by a former local Roma representative, the families migrated to Strasbourg and claimed political refugee status.

Both of these cases focus on the issue of adequate social housing for Roma people as well as the racialized fear that local people have of the Roma moving into their neighbourhoods. In both cases the main public debates were around who was responsible for the issue, what caused it in the first place and who should provide the solution. While *MN* blamed the Roma in these stories, *NSZ* focused on the solution. This difference can be seen in the titles of the coverage.<sup>21</sup> The rhetoric of discrimination – with political context – was strong in the Zámoly case in 2001, especially in *NSZ*, as a critique of the Orbán government's Roma policy.

The analysis of the press during the peak in Roma coverage in 1998-99 reveals a contestation between a construction of Roma issues as part of 'standard' social problems such as quality of life, housing problems, segregation and discrimination and a specific discourse focusing on 'minority rights' for Roma. However, in relation to the latter, it was often argued that the Roma are more privileged than other Hungarian 'official' minorities, or even the hegemonic majority. This argument was most often heard in relation to the possibility of Roma representation in the Hungarian Parliament and appeared differently in the analysis. In the *NSZ*, the ombudsman of minority rights (16 February 2009) appeared voicing concerns of everyday racism towards the Roma. A week later (25 February 2009) *MN* made an interview with the ombudsman, challenging his position: 'Does defence of ethnic rights mean that only minorities have rights? Does the majority of the society have ethnic rights?'

The 'Anti-Ghetto Committee'<sup>22</sup>, established in 1989, is usually referred to as the starting point of Roma self-organisation. The following decade is the era when Roma politicians tried to find their way and used public media appearances as a strategy for their political careers. The 'career-building' stereotype was often cited, especially by the right wing newspaper in the Zámoly migration (and the former Székesfehérvár housing) cases<sup>23</sup>, in relation to the families' leader, József Krasznai. He represented the Roma in the Székesfehérvár housing issue too. As the story became a political issue on a national level, several other Roma representatives also started to be involved and were vilified for it in the right wing press. *NZ* did not use this type of rhetoric.

During the 2000s, the appearance of voices of Roma people, leaders and politicians in the press decreased significantly. At the same time, Roma organisations and the presence of a few former Roma representatives in mainstream politics became routine. However, by the end of 2000s, discourses on Roma had changed significantly. With the strengthening of radical right wing, violence against Roma (including serial killings), racism and Roma's criminalization<sup>24</sup> increased significantly in the media representation. The rhetoric regarding this issue within the two newspapers, however, was quite different. While *NSZ* described the racism and violence, *MN* constructed a racialized boundary of belonging between Roma and Non Roma people in Hungary:

'There are two types of society in Hungary today. People in the first know the rules of living together... The second society skipped the socialization, persons in it live on their instincts...most of the members of the second society are Roma' (*MN*, February 2, 2009).

Most of the press coverage on Roma relates to local Roma or, at times, their emigration from Hungary to France, Canada and the UK.<sup>25</sup> However, there are some articles that relate to Roma also in other Central and East European countries, discussing their migration to the West as a result of an all-European racism against Roma.<sup>26</sup>

However, the case of 'Blond Maria' did not fall into this category. It received little press in Hungary and where it was covered, the people involved were described as Bulgarian as opposed to Roma or Bulgarian Roma.<sup>27</sup>

Overall, it is often difficult to isolate discourse on Roma in the Hungarian press from more general political debates on the policies of particular parties and governments. The stories about Roma are often used to highlight the failed general politics and/or Roma policies of the political party the newspaper opposes, whether on the right or left of the political spectrum (although, as a rule, *NSZ*'s discourses were more moderate than those of *MN*).<sup>28</sup>

Everyday Romani people's voices are under-represented in the analyzed articles. Most of the time they were represented by Roma local government officials, human rights organizations and the minority ombudsman. Overall, however, while in 1998, the voice of at least one Roma is present in about half of the analysed articles, in 2009, it had decreased to about a quarter.

Roma groups are constructed, especially but not exclusively in the left wing *NSZ*, as both part and outside of Hungarian national society. Their emigration is viewed as an outcome of this racialized ambiguous belonging, both by the local Roma and by the hegemonic Hungarian collectivity. This perspective is shared by the two newspapers although one is more sympathetic to the plight of the Roma than the other that tends to discredit their grievances.

### **The Finnish case study**

Throughout the studied material, a consistent distinction is made in *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)* and *Ilta-lehti (IL)* between the Finnish Roma and the Roma migrants from Eastern Europe. The discourses on the former connect to a history of discussing the Roma as a domestic 'other', and to the increasingly sensitive minority politics in the context of the welfare state (Tervonen 2012). There are evident tensions in the studied articles on what can and should be written in relation to the Finnish Roma. Most noticeably, the ethnonym *romani* replaces the word *mustalainen* ('Gypsy') in the 1990s.<sup>29</sup> Although both newspapers seem cautious in writing on the Finnish Roma culture during the debates in 2007, individual articles particularly in *IL* portray Roma 'cultural rules' as a source of problems, alleged to cause difficulties in allocating public housing<sup>30</sup>, family feuds and discrimination against women, for example.<sup>31</sup>



Meanwhile, debates on the migrant Roma are connected to a politicization of humanitarian and low-skilled immigration, as well as to older anti-gypsyist and racial discourses. A narrative of borders threatened by unwanted newcomers is clear in relation to the mostly Slovakian asylum seekers who arrived in 1999-2000. Despite a recognition of discrimination and human rights violations<sup>32</sup>, they are nevertheless not considered as ‘real’ asylum seekers<sup>33</sup>. Both papers specify the Roma ethnicity of the migrants from the start, with *IL* evoking exoticizing stereotypes of dark-eyed wanderers.<sup>34</sup> In the substance of the editorials and op-eds, there is no significant difference between the newspapers.<sup>35</sup> A hierarchy is built between ‘real’ asylum seekers and the ‘uncontrollable torrent’ of arriving Roma, and the authorities are presented as ‘unable to manage the situation’ because of overly liberal asylum laws.<sup>36</sup> The migrants are pointed to as an argument for more restrictive asylum policy. Both *IL* and *HS* voice support for the authorities’ urge for stricter legislation.<sup>37</sup> When a temporary visa requirement on Slovakian citizens was imposed, this was termed ‘inevitable’ by both papers<sup>38</sup>, and greeted by the *IL* as a ‘solution’ to ‘the problem of Roma arriving to the country’.<sup>39</sup>

In comparison, the debate on the EU migrants and the begging ban in 2010-2012 brings to the surface more political contestation and critical discussions. There is a division into ‘pro’ and ‘con’ editorials and columns, and a corresponding tendency to conceptualize the Roma migrants as ‘victims’<sup>40</sup> or ‘criminals’.<sup>41</sup> The ‘victim’-perspective, representing the Roma migrants as structurally discriminated against, recurs particularly in the *HS*<sup>42</sup>, and occasionally in the *IL*.<sup>43</sup> The EU is implicated; for example, an op-ed published in 2010 argues that “the Roma who flee from a vicious cycle of poverty are the flipside of the European integration process – an image of European poverty painful to look at”.<sup>44</sup> However, the conclusions drawn from the victim-perspective vary, with the idea that “they should be helped in their home countries” used to argue against inclusive policies in Finland.<sup>45</sup>

The Roma migrants are presented as potential or actual criminals in roughly a quarter of the *IL* coverage studied. Unsubstantiated references to human smugglers and Mafioso organizers of begging rings appear also in the *HS*.<sup>46</sup> With no ethno-specific crime statistics, *IL* makes implicit claims by

collapsing the categories 'Roma' and 'Romanian' and presenting crime statistics on the latter to delegitimize the former.<sup>47</sup>

The distinction between domestic and foreign Roma means that there is no straightforward lumping together of all Roma into one racialized group. However, *within* the main groups written about, there is little internal differentiation. They are written about as a singular homogenous group, constituting a 'Roma problem'.<sup>48</sup>

From 2014 onwards the 'Roma beggar' issue seems to become 'normalised' to a degree. The volume of writing in *IL* and *HS* decreases, and the framing less ethnicized. In a number of articles the situation of EU migrants is related to wider migration issues, e.g. access to health care<sup>49</sup>, homelessness<sup>50</sup>; or politics of free movement in Europe.<sup>51</sup>

There are no direct references to 'race' (*rotu*) in the studied texts, and little explicit references to anti-Roma stereotypes. In *IL*, however, 'neutral' general news items are frequently coupled with headlines, images and captions which play much more directly with racialized stereotypes.

The most direct racial references occur in *IL* related to 'Blond Maria'. Between 18<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> October, a series of articles created a moral distinction between dark-skinned child kidnappers on the one hand, and police, child care agents and Nordic parents of missing children on the other. *IL*'s piece on the 18<sup>th</sup> October ('Has she been kidnapped from Scandinavia? A blond girl found in a Roma camp') cites Greek police and portrays Maria's host parents as kidnappers and/or human traffickers.<sup>52</sup>

*HS* was more cautious and started publishing more on the case only after evidence started mounting against the initial narrative of child-snatching Roma. Still, also there was a persistent ethnic framing of the reporting, with the Romani ethnicity of the host parents/kidnapping suspects mentioned in every article on the issue.<sup>53</sup>

Overall, there is a persisting difference with regards to Finnish Roma and Eastern European Roma migrants in *HS* and *IL*. The Finnish Roma are given a relatively more positive and diffuse coverage. While NGO representatives and 'ordinary' Finnish Roma are frequently given voice, Roma migrants are seen

and discussed but seldom heard. The discourse is dominated by authorities, with human rights NGOs as a countervoice.

The Finnish press discourses on the Roma migrants do not show any clear pattern of a right-wing press pushing for 'othering' discourses. We found that, as Horsti (2007) argued, the Finnish press seems not very politically polarized, and developed (up until 2015) relatively little politically challenging debate in relation to immigration. The authorities are regularly unquestioned as a source of information.<sup>54</sup> To the extent that wider immigration dilemmas are discussed via the case of the Roma migrants, the 'bordering out' seems to follow in the Finnish case a distinctively bureaucratic logic.<sup>55</sup>

### **The UK case study:**

The major finding from the UK data is the way in which different Roma groups are homogenized in order to function as a sign onto which anxieties around perceived threats to the law abiding 'British way of life' are drawn, whether in terms of anti-nomadism or in terms of the perceived threat of the European Union to the UK's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This projection is achieved through the deployment of a multiplicity of discourses such as welfare, planning policies, cultural traditions, racial constructions and human rights. These discourses change emphasis in relation to different case studies but all relate in some way to an EU policy being introduced to the UK. The overall effect is the 'othering' of these different Roma groups.

In 1997, the major discursive framework used to make sense of the recently arrived Roma in Dover is that of welfare. This is achieved through the persistent use of three related discursive figures: the gypsy beggar, the welfare scrounger and the bogus asylum seeker.<sup>56</sup> *The Sun* constructs these figures in its own voice whereas *The Guardian* critiques *The Sun* and other right wing newspapers for doing so as part of its coverage.<sup>57</sup> The policy background at the root of the anxieties being projected onto the Roma in this news story, is the Dublin Convention's attempt to standardize asylum processes across the EU.

*The Sun* uses the terms Czech, East European<sup>58</sup> and Gypsy<sup>59</sup> interchangeably with homogenizing effect. *The Guardian's* coverage constructs a pro-migration, anti-racist reader/self.<sup>60</sup> The 'other' is the sympathetically portrayed persecuted Roma. This othering is softened somewhat by the inclusion of

quotes from Czech Roma teenagers.<sup>61</sup> These quotes, however, often reinforce racial stereotypes<sup>62</sup>. The self in *The Sun* is the hard working taxpayer who is opposed to the 'chancers' and 'con-merchant' Gipsies [sic] who are falsely claiming asylum in order not to work but to scrounge off the welfare state. In a *Sun* political cartoon an alien representing Czech and Slovak Gipsies (sic) lands at the foot of the white cliffs of Dover asking "Take me to your... benefits office".<sup>63</sup>

In 2005 the press discourse focuses on the legality of the traveller's way of life. Issues of public spending remain significant though are secondary to the legal questions raised. The policy background to this story is the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into British law. Both the Conservative campaign and *The Sun* accuse the travellers of abusing the new legislation.<sup>64</sup> *The Guardian* uses its principles in the traveller's defence.<sup>65</sup>

The Roma in this story are homogenized as an "invasion"<sup>66</sup> or a "plague" for example.<sup>67</sup> At the same time an important distinction is made between the 'real' 'good' Roma, living in authorised sites and 'fake' nomadic travellers.<sup>68</sup> Exceptionally, the settled communities are aligned with the British self which, in *The Sun*, is described in various places as "law-abiding"<sup>69</sup> "hard working citizens"<sup>70</sup>, "peaceful"<sup>71</sup> and as "tax-payers"<sup>72</sup> There are no 'good' Roma in *The Sun's* coverage of the other stories. The 'bad' Roma other is constructed as privileged in comparison to the hard-working British tax-paying citizen, exploiting as well as breaking the law<sup>73</sup>, benefiting from state services that 'ordinary' citizens are not entitled to.<sup>74</sup> Significantly many of the 'bad' Roma are identified as being of Irish origin, who escaped to the UK in order not to comply with the caravan legislations there.

The Dale Farm story concerns a long-running legal debate over an Irish Traveller community's right to live in an encampment on land they had owned for 10 years but did not get planning permission to do so, as their site was seen as a threat to the surrounding community. *The Guardian's* coverage of the eviction was both nuanced, sympathetic in tone and included a range of different views including that of the travellers. Nevertheless it still deploys the racially objectifying discourses historically associated with the right wing press, primarily depicting Dale Farm as squalid.<sup>75</sup> *The Sun* adopted a different

representational strategy, depicting Dale Farm as a site of both undeserved privilege for the travellers that live there and as a drain on state resources.<sup>76</sup>

The Sheffield story focuses on the moral panic generated by David Blunkett's<sup>77</sup> remarks which appeared to suggest that the worst imaginable outcome of the easing of migration to the UK from Romania and Bulgaria is the arrival en masse of Roma from these countries<sup>78</sup>. Discursive frameworks of law and welfare do not disappear entirely from this story but they are superseded by explicitly racialized discourses in both newspapers.

*The Guardian* does this in a contradictory fashion. While it published an explicitly anti-racist feature,<sup>79</sup> it also published an in-depth feature from the anti-Roma perspective of a multi-ethnic vigilante group who police the streets of Sheffield.<sup>80</sup> The effect is a peculiarly racialized construction of a super-diverse, yet still racist, British self, constructed against an homogenized, potentially criminal Roma migrant Other. *The Sun* reproduces the same discourses but includes even more crude racial stereotypes of the recent Roma migrants. They are 'filthy'<sup>81</sup>. They have 'reputation for industrial-scale begging and theft'.<sup>82</sup> They also attempt to sell babies to multicultural shop owners.<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, unlike in previous years, *The Guardian* offers no space for Roma voices while the Sun does include a Roma voice in its coverage.<sup>84</sup> This pattern repeats itself also in the 'blond Maria' story.

In the UK coverage of the 'blond Maria', discourses of biological constructions of race predominate almost entirely, focusing on hair colour and skin pigmentation.<sup>85</sup> In *The Sun*, crude representations of Roma portray them as fairy tale villains, swarthy child snatchers who force children to dance for money and enter into forced marriages.<sup>86</sup> *The Guardian's* coverage is more nuanced and reflexive, running a range of different types of feature on the story, including an opinion piece by a self-identified blond Roma man.<sup>87</sup> Despite the heavily racialized construction in both papers, they both also refer to how economically and racially discriminated Roma are, *The Guardian* more so than *The Sun*.<sup>88</sup>

In the main, then, *The Guardian* has tended to have more self-reflexive and multidimensional coverage than *The Sun*. However, throughout this historical period *The Sun* appeared to set the news agenda, with *The Guardian* often

reacting to it and other right wing tabloids. At the beginning of the period *The Guardian* included more Roma voices in its coverage and was more sympathetic to their situations than *The Sun*. In 2013 *The Guardian* allows space for fewer Roma voices and produces more troublingly racialized representations of Roma. *The Sun* consistently produces cruder racial stereotypes of different Roma groups throughout.

During this period two clear trends of change develop in Roma representations across both newspapers. Firstly, different Roma groups are frequently constructed as a sign onto which anxieties re EU policies that are perceived as threatening Britain's sovereignty and territorial integrity are projected. Secondly, in the unfolding of this process, a multiplicity of discourses the general trend has been a move towards a racialized representation that assigns Roma groups a fixed inferior identity similar to the (post-)colonial representation of black and Asian people. As such, it is implied, they can never belong to British society.

### **Concluding discussion**

This examination of discourses of both 'left' and 'right' main stream newspapers in Hungary, Finland and the UK has clearly shown that Roma people have been racialized and 'othered' in all three countries, although the historical specificity of each country means that these discourses are constructed around differing policies, practices and everyday borderings.

An essential part of these racialized discourses is the process of homogenization. Although in the UK and Hungary the 'indigenous' Roma belong to more than one cultural and linguistic group, these differences do not usually appear in the media narratives. While country of origin might be specified, in Finland and the UK, the two countries with migrant Roma, the only significant distinction is between the local and the migrant Roma. This duality overlaps with a more or less subtle distinction made between the 'good' and the 'bad' (or 'accepted' and 'problematic') Roma, and works to reproduce racialized discourses on the alleged criminality of the latter.

The discourses on the Roma are caught in the basic ambivalence of the politics of belonging which are applied, in somewhat different ways in different countries, towards the local Roma. They are constructed as part of the national

citizenship body, subject to welfare and integration policies but they are also framed as being apart. The recognition of their 'otherness' operates both as a means of collective empowerment and self-representation and as means of exclusion, hierarchization and discrimination. In Hungary, we can see in the different case studies the effects of the shifts in policies and practices towards the Roma where, during the Soviet period, forced assimilation policies were enacted to obliterate traditional nomadic and other traditional ways of life. The post-Soviet period saw the rise of self-representation and governance of Roma, but these policies of collective recognition were placed in a socio-economic context of rising unemployment, collapsing public housing and rising racialized violence that acted as a major factor pushing Hungarian Roma towards emigration as well as transnational travel to Western countries.

In Finland, the press discourses reveal racialisation of the immigrant Roma, who appear overwhelmingly as anonymous and problematic 'others'. Meanwhile, the local Roma are recognized as a national ethnic minority. Despite persistent ethnic framing and instances of racialization, their belonging and citizenship are rarely questioned, and the hegemonic political project of belonging towards the Finnish Roma seems inclusionary.

Racialization and othering in the UK have been operating in different ways towards local and migrant Roma. The exclusionary discourses towards the former are often connected to the sedentary people's fear of the nomads. Unlike in Hungary and Finland where post-war transformations forced Roma to find permanent housing, major sections of UK Roma continue to live semi-nomadic lives in mobile homes. Although British multicultural policies have been aimed at migrants from the former empire,<sup>89</sup> British traditions of patronage, acceptance of and provision for different ways of life were applied also towards the Roma, requiring local councils to provide official caravan sites where Roma could collectively live. This provision was never sufficient in space and often lacked appropriate amenities of education and health and with the neo-liberalization of the British state the legal space available to Roma became progressively more scarce. Much of the debates in the press, as in the Dale Farm case, focused on the criminalization of all those who could not or would not live on these sites, including those who managed to buy private land and wanted to live there on their own terms.

The similarities as well as differences in the construction of everyday borderings towards Roma in the three countries are also expressed in the different extent to which they participate in the public media discourses concerning them. In Hungary, Roma voices are heard, but usually only those few who are considered the official representatives of the Roma community, especially around the period in which Hungary joined the EU and had to demonstrate a positive human rights record.<sup>90</sup> In Finland, Roma voices are part of public debates concerning them, but this recognition is mostly limited to 'indigenous' Roma. In the UK, there is less differentiation in this sense between local and migrant Roma but the ratio of their voices being allowed to be part of the media representation is the lowest of all.

An interesting difference between the ways Roma are racialized in the different countries came to light in the case study of the 'blond Maria' examined in the press of all three countries. In Hungary the Bulgarian Roma involved were constructed as Bulgarian seasonal workers. In Finland and even more so in the UK, the narratives of the press involved shift from a racialized culturalist construction of the Roma into a biological one.

Overall, from the analysis of press representations of Roma communities in the three countries, with all the differences among states, times and political persuasions, it is clear that Roma are constructed as 'Others' in shifting and contested ways. While we found significant differences in discourses towards 'indigenous' Roma and migrant Roma, these differences go hand in hand with the general direction in which constructions of social and political borderings have been developing in Europe towards Roma in recent years which affect all Roma, migrant or not. These changes can be linked to more general changes in European politics of belonging, the rise of 'autochthonic' constructions of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011) and the neo-liberalization of the relationships between civil society and the state.

The racialization and criminalization of Roma migrants serve, however, also another purpose. They have become a rhetoric and illustrative devise for those in Britain who fear free people movement from expanded EU. The moral panics concerning migrant Roma, as described in the press of all three countries, are closely associated with the more general anxieties connected to westward mobilities from Central and East Europe (as well as from the global



South). In Finland and the UK, the Roma are constructed as the most problematic or even dangerous of the Eastern European migrants. As a result, additional bordering practices concern the attempts of non-Roma migrants from these countries to differentiate themselves from the Roma so as not to be conflated with them.<sup>91</sup> Most significantly, these migrations, as a result of the expansion of the EU and vital for its neo-liberal economy, have undermined the sense of closure and security of 'Fortress Europe' and reinforced xenophobic movements all over Europe that refuse to recognize EU citizens as entitled to national welfare provisions.

The most alarming – although not surprising – finding of our comparative study is that with time, the trajectories are towards more racialization and criminalization, more exclusion and less collective recognition, rather than more. The 2013 biological racialisation discourse of the 'blond Maria' case in Finland and the UK, unlike the more culturalist one used in most of the articles discussing the Roma during this period, is a sobering reminder that racialized discourses usually encompass, rather than simply substitute, earlier hegemonic ones.

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<sup>1</sup> While an estimate of 8-12 million Roma people in Europe is often cited (eg. Tanner 2005), other estimates vary between 4-14 million, pointing to a substantial uncertainty about the category (Guild and Carrera 2013, 4-7).

<sup>2</sup> As in the rest of the special issue we use the term Roma as a generic term while being aware of the multiple and contested labels in which the subject of the analysis in this article are named by themselves and by others.

<sup>3</sup> The distinction is very rare in the media and scientific literature does not always differentiate them either.

<sup>4</sup> We are using the term anti-gypsyism following the Special Report by R. Izsák (2015) for the Human Rights Commission.

<sup>5</sup> There are no mainstream 'left of centre' daily newspapers in Finland as such.

<sup>6</sup> *NSZ*: 67 (38 news, 13 features, 1 letter, 15 op-ed)articles; *MN*: 19 (11 news, 3 op-ed, 5 features).

<sup>7</sup> *NSZ*: 73 (57 news, 10 op-ed, 6 features); *MN*: 60 (36 news, 7 features, 4 letters, 13 op-ed).

<sup>8</sup> *NSZ*: 126 (79 news, 27 features, 20 op-ed); *MN*: 72 (37 news, 2 letters, 14 features, 19 op-ed).

<sup>9</sup> *HS*: 148 articles (82 news, 13 letters, 10 op-eds/editorials, 43 features). *IL*: 31 articles (21 news, 1 editorials, 4 letters, 5 features).

- <sup>10</sup> *HS*: 47 articles (17 news, 9 op-eds/editorials, 11 letters, 10 features). *IL*: 6 articles (3 news, 1 letter, 1 editorial, 1 features).
- <sup>11</sup> *HS*: 149 articles (77 news, 14 op-eds/editorials, 23 letters, 35 features). *IL*: 24 articles (19 news, 5 features).
- <sup>12</sup> The Nexis database used to find these articles cannot return more than 3000 search results.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Guardian* had 16 articles (10 news, 6 letters), *The Sun* 11 (7 news, 12 op-ed) .
- <sup>14</sup> *The Guardian*–24 (14 news, 1 letter, 7 op-ed, 2 features) *The Sun* – 64 articles (47 news, 4 letters, 12 op-ed)
- <sup>15</sup> *The Guardian* – 50 articles (33 news, 4 letters, 8 op-ed, 5 features). *The Sun* – 111 (90 news, 16 op-ed, 5 features).
- <sup>16</sup> *The Guardian* – 11 articles (6 news, 5 op-ed). *The Sun* – 13 (9 news, 4 op-ed).
- <sup>17</sup> The articles which appeared in October 2013 relating to the ‘blond Maria’ story in the newspapers we studies in the three countries were: Hungary– no articles in *MN*; 3 in *NSZ*. Finland: 13 in *IL* and 7 in *HS*. The UK: 12 in *The Guardian* (8 news, 4 op-ed); 23 in *The Sun* (22 news, 1 op-ed).
- <sup>18</sup> E.g. Roma from Mohács (and often from Miskolc) who often migrated to Canada, were identified as ‘Canadian’ Roma.
- <sup>19</sup> Village in Hungary.
- <sup>20</sup> ‘National Roma Government’ was organised as an NGO, representing Roma on national level, the ‘official’ partner of the government in Roma issues.
- <sup>21</sup> *MN*: ‘Obsession of ‘Fehérvár’; *NSZ*: ‘Radio street: the story of a compromise’. November 29, 1997
- <sup>22</sup> It was established In February 1989, in Miskolc and is seen as ‘the starting point of Roma self-organisation Roma civil right movement’ (*NSZ*, February 21, 2009)
- <sup>23</sup> E.g.: ‘...the behaviour of the leader of local minority government is very close to corruption...István Hell, József Krasznai ...and Aladár Horváth (*Roma representatives*) tried to make political capital unfairly in the period of election.’ (by another former Roma representative: *MN*, January 10, 1998).
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. Bernáth and Messing 2013
- <sup>25</sup> e.g. ‘They came back’ *MN*, May 15, 2009
- <sup>26</sup> e.g. ‘Asylum seeking’ *NSZ*, June 8, 2009
- <sup>27</sup> *NSZ*, short articles on the 22,23,25&26th of October, 2013
- <sup>28</sup> e.g. ‘French refugee status for Zámolyans’ *NSZ*, January 6, 2001 ‘Two politicians from the opposition (left-wing, MSZP) went to Strasbourg to meet with Roma migrants and discuss their main problems (to make political benefit from the situation).’ *NSZ*, March 14, 2001; ‘We should see how this campaign was organised: these people departed from a small village and arrived into the middle of the EU. It would be worth to ask: Who did pay for the whole action?’ *MN*, January 10, 2001
- <sup>29</sup> The word ‘mustalainen’ practically disappears in *HS* but appears occasionally in *IL*; e.g. in a story published 27 October 1999, *IL* refers to Romani culture throughout, but concludes that there are approximately 10,000 ‘mustalaista’ in Finland.
- <sup>30</sup> *IL* October 27, 1999
- <sup>31</sup> *IL* August 25, 2007; *IL*, January 10, 2009
- <sup>32</sup> E.g. *IL*, July 2, 1999; *IL*, July 5, 1999; *HS*, June 30, 1999
- <sup>33</sup> *IL*, July 5, 1999
- <sup>34</sup> E.g. referring to the flights taken by the asylum seekers as ‘wandering’ or ‘nomadism’ (*vaellus*) *Romanien kansainvaellus*, *IL*, July 5, 1999; or, to childlike migrants with ‘dark eyes’ and to the Emil Kusturica movie *Queen of the Gypsies*; (*IL*, June 30, 1999).
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. *IL* July 7, 1999; *HS*, July 7, 1999.
- <sup>36</sup> Citation from *HS* July 7, 1999; compare to the article on the same day in *IL*.
- <sup>37</sup> The two newspaper use strikingly similar rhetoric derived from the authorities. According to the *IL*, “The world’s refugee problem is not solved by opening the borders of Finland; and it is doubtful whether those in the biggest need of help ever even appear on our airports” (*IL*, July 5, 1999). Meanwhile, *HS* claims the “Law has to be changed quickly” and that “The loopholes in the present law do not serve anyone’s interests, least of all of those in genuine need for an asylum. The welfare refugees enabled by the present law only stoke xenophobia” (*HS*, July 7 1999).
- <sup>38</sup> *IL*, July 7, 1999; *HS*, July 7, 1999
- <sup>39</sup> *IL*, July 7, 1999
- <sup>40</sup> E.g. *HS* December 7, 2009; *IL* July 9, 2013.
- <sup>41</sup> E.g. *IL*, June 20, 2011; *HS*, March 22, 2008.
- <sup>42</sup> An early example of this dominant narrative in *HS* is a story titled “The Roma are victims above all” (*HS*, January 14, 2008).

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- <sup>43</sup> *IL*, July 9, 2013.
- <sup>44</sup> *HS*, August 20, 2010
- <sup>45</sup> As stated by an MP interviewed by *HS*, December 21, 2010. Besides discrimination, a victim-perspective is evident in articles which consider the arrival of first the asylum seekers and later EU-migrants as a result of a hoax by organized criminals, who 'tricked the Roma in order to make money'. Eg. *IL*, July 8, 1999; *HS*, November 27, 2009.
- <sup>46</sup> E.g. *HS*, March 22, 2008.
- <sup>47</sup> E.g., by accompanying an article on the Roma migrants with statistical findings on crimes committed by *Romanians* in Finland. *IL*, June 20, 2011.
- <sup>48</sup> E.g. 'Roma problem' solved by Visa restriction (*IL*, July 7, 1999); 'Roma problem' requires European efforts (*HS*, October 12, 2010).
- <sup>49</sup> E.g. *IL*, March 18, 2014; *HS*, March 8, 2014.
- <sup>50</sup> E.g. *HS*, September 4, 2014.
- <sup>51</sup> E.g. *HS* May 24, 2014.
- <sup>52</sup> On October 19, *IL* shifted focus to Maria's neglected state, praising the 'safe children's home' she's was admitted into. While the conditions provided by her host parents are described as "crammed and unhygienic", no worry is expressed for the children remaining in these conditions who were *not* blonde and blue-eyed. *IL*, October 18, 19, 22, 24, 25 & 26, 2013.
- <sup>53</sup> The same was true of the two subsequent Irish cases: the focus was on ethnicity rather than on poverty or child welfare. In contrast to national reporting, *HS* and *IL* referred to "the Roma", whether the context was Ireland, Greece or Bulgaria.
- <sup>54</sup> As an example, a news reportage published in *HS* (July 6, 1999) cites Finnish secretary of state; commander-captain from Finnish passport inspection department; reception centre planner; and chief inspector of the Finnish immigration service; as well as several Slovakian authorities.
- <sup>55</sup> E.g. *HS*, January 6, 2000
- <sup>56</sup> *The Sun*, October 21, 1997; *The Sun*, October 24, 1997; *The Guardian* October 22, 1997.
- <sup>57</sup> 22 October 1997.
- <sup>58</sup> 22 October 1997.
- <sup>59</sup> 28 October 1997.
- <sup>60</sup> 22 October 1997; 25 October 1997.
- <sup>61</sup> 13 November 1997.
- <sup>62</sup> 'Yes, we're noisier and more temperamental, but that's the way we were born. When I celebrate my birthday, I like to drink and sing, but the Czechs find that hard to deal with.' Arnost Kotlar, roma. (ref)
- <sup>63</sup> 23 October 1997
- <sup>64</sup> 23 October 2005
- <sup>65</sup> 17 March 2005.
- <sup>66</sup> *The Sun*, March 21, 2005
- <sup>67</sup> *The Sun*, March 22, 2005
- <sup>68</sup> *The Sun*, March 10, 2005.
- <sup>69</sup> 21 March 2005
- <sup>70</sup> 14 March 2005
- <sup>71</sup> 11 March 2005
- <sup>72</sup> 19 March 2005.
- <sup>73</sup> 11 March 2005
- <sup>74</sup> 14 March 2005
- <sup>75</sup> 'on an island of gravel surrounded by a sea of mud, Michelle Sheridan closes her caravan door against the stench of raw sewage and makes a cup of tea.' (4 November).
- <sup>76</sup> 26 September 2011.
- <sup>77</sup> A former Labour government minister
- <sup>78</sup> Race row boiling in borderless Britain; LABOUR WARNS OF TENSION..."(17 November 2013 – 28 and 29)
- <sup>79</sup> 18 November 2013
- <sup>80</sup> 16 November 2013
- <sup>81</sup> 17 November 2013
- <sup>82</sup> 30 December 2013
- <sup>83</sup> 15 November 2013
- <sup>84</sup> 17 November 2013

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<sup>85</sup> *The Sun*, October 23, 2013; *The Guardian*, October 21 2013

<sup>86</sup> 22 October 2013; 24 October 2013

<sup>87</sup> 26 October 2013

<sup>88</sup> *The Guardian*, October 22-25, 2013; *The Sun*, October 24, 2013.

<sup>89</sup> what used to be known as NCWP countries

<sup>90</sup> For ways in which these formal voices have been challenged please see the article by Scott et al. in this issue.

<sup>91</sup> See the paper by Cassidy and Wemyss in this issue.