

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCE: HUNGARIAN CIVIL SECTOR EFFORTS TO AID THE ROMA MINORITY

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The European Commission identifies the Roma situation as “among Europe’s most pressing human rights and social inclusion priorities,” and, since the end of Communism, it is “an area in which the governments of new Member States must focus policy attention” (2004:6). As such, in recent years the European Roma have received considerable attention in the form of conferences and study sessions, increased funding to Roma organizations, a proliferation of people and establishments working for and with the Roma population, and the initiation of numerous government and nongovernmental programs to provide “aid” to Roma such as college scholarships and job training. In the efforts to address the needs of this minority group, they are consistently and systematically constructed as a “problem population” that is external to and incongruous with the majority. Even the most engaging and thoughtful assessments do not question the existence of a discrete group known as the “Roma” or “Gypsy” and rarely do they question the natural “ethnic” boundaries that exist between Roma and non-Roma (c.f. Barany 2002; Cahn 2002; Crowe 1996; Fonseca 1995; Guy 2001; Hancock 2003). Roma are discursively constructed as a population external to majority society and “too different” for there to be successful interaction. In this paper, I critically examine how this process occurs in Hungary. I argue that any attempt to aid this minority group must in some way address the division between minority and majority, and I propose four models Hungarian civil sector organizations (CSOs) use to mitigate this division in their efforts to make successful education interventions.

Who are the Roma?¹

Social identities are not matters of fact, but rather “are processes, possibilities, contingencies or conceptual frameworks that organize thought and action;...they are never ‘formed’ but always in the process of formation and reformation that is never complete” (Ford 2005:61; see also Goffman 1963). That is, identities are not incontestable givens but are in constant flux being reified and reimagined both internally and externally. However, national and ethnic

identities such as “Hungarian” or “Roma” are often taken to be clearly delineated with specific historical, cultural, and biological markers. For the Roma, the evidence for this is presented in a multitude of texts titled simply “The Gypsies” (Clébert 1967; Fraser 1995; Liégeois 1986; Tong 1998; Yoors 1967) which rely on what I call the “Gypsy trope” – the story of a people who migrated from India in the fourteenth century to settle in Europe, are nomadic, make their living by horse trading and fortune telling, and now, due to innate “cultural differences” or as a result of historic isolation and discrimination, are societal outcasts, thieves, and vagrants.

This image of the Roma is one that is based on an essentialized and inherent *difference*. While the recognition of differences may not indicate racism or degradation, the valuation of them often does (Memmi 2000). This is the case for the Roma who are, in many accounts, defined by presumed innate, observable, and measurable differences that make them external to and incompatible with the majority. For example, in an almost 1400 page volume that presumes to cover the entirety of European history (from prehistory to reunification in 1990), the Roma warrant less than two pages in an insert box within a chapter titled “Pestis: Christendom in Crisis.” The author concludes his truncated overview with the observation, “It is perhaps inevitable that the conventionally settled population of Europe will always feel a mixture of phobia and fascination for a lifestyle which is so fundamentally different from their own” (Davies 1996:388). In an episode of *Nightline* (ABC News, 2001) entitled “Gypsies and the Freedom to Hate,” a young Roma woman was interviewed who claimed that in order for persecution of the Gypsies to end, both Roma and non-Roma need to see that they *are* the same people. Immediately following this statement, the voice of the narrator countered, “They are *not* the same people in so many ways and respecting those differences may be the biggest challenge of all.” These were the final words of the broadcast.

Despite repeated claims that the Roma are different, in the scholarship there is little consensus as to what these differences are. Some refer to their ancestral homeland of India from which their language

¹ In this paper, I alternate between using the reference terms “Roma” and “Gypsy.” Generally, Roma is taken to be more polite, and Gypsy is considered to be a pejorative term. However, in Hungary, most people who work with and are members of this ethnic group, use the term Gypsy with no ill-will intended.

and contemporary culture derives (Beissinger 2001; Davies 1996; Moreau 2002), but increasingly scholars question this connection or consider it to be inconsequential since they have been a fixture in Europe for so many years and are relatively unconcerned with this supposed heritage (Okley 1983; Pogány 2004; Stewart 1997). Others maintain that it is a specific lifestyle based on nomadism and fortune telling that defines the Roma,² but this assertion has also been highly contested. Ian Hancock (2003), for example, argues that in most cases the Roma are nomads because they have never been allowed to settle in one place (see also Crowe 1997; Fonseca 1995). The most common claim of difference is a decidedly racialized one. It is the argument that Roma are different because they look different. It is impossible, however, to match a group to a set of biological characteristics, and furthermore, to an untrained eye it is often not possible to see these phenotypical differences. Finally, they may be defined by a set of “delinquent” behaviors such as begging, thievery, and poor personal hygiene that may be more attributable to a life in poverty than to ethnic group membership (Cahn 2002; Pogány 2004). It is a common belief that the Roma are not a separate ethnic group but make up the criminal fringes of society³, and this belief is so pervasive that it is internalized by self-identified Gypsies as well. For example, in a community newsletter written by Gypsy youth the authors of one article claimed, “Many young people will become thieves because that is what they learned.”

Although the differences are poorly understood, the belief that they exist have very real and very severe negative impacts. Those identified (externally or internally) as Roma are overwhelmingly unemployed or underemployed. Roma children are overrepresented in schools for the mentally disabled and are often considered to be “unteachable,” mentally disabled, or socially inept (IECRE 2003; ERRC 2004). They are the target of violent attacks and degradation and have little opportunity to advance or improve their situation. A loose conceptualization of “difference” enables the continuation of practices that marginalize and degrade the Roma because it maintains them as always external. Without being able to clearly define why the Roma are so different, everyone can make their own judgments and this perception hinders any possible efforts of peaceful integration.

Externalizing Discourses

Everywhere the solution to “the Gypsy problem” has at some stage included expulsion. And again, the punishment engendered the crime. Kicking them out – for being outsiders – confirmed the Gypsies as vagrants and vagabonds (Fonseca 1995:217).

Much of Hungarian identity rests on being unique and different in a way that is positive and desired. Paul Lendvai begins his history of the Magyar (Hungarian) peoples, “The existence, the very survival, of the Hungarian people and their nation state in the Carpathian basin is a miracle of European history.” He further writes, “...except for the Albanians, the Magyars are the most lonely people of Europe with their unique language and history” (2003:1). For Sándor Rot, the Hungarian language is the miracle. He claims that a “linguistic miracle,” enabled the Hungarian language and culture to survive “in spite of the immense pressure of linguistic interference, resulting from its interrelations with other languages” (1994:49-50).

Hungary and the Hungarian language are considered to be miracles because they are inherently unique and different from the rest of Europe. The Hungarian peoples have been able to maintain their Magyar culture despite pressures to change and assimilate. Regardless of whether the culture or the language is in anyway more different than that of any nation, the manner in which Hungarians identify with this sense of uniqueness is a significant factor in the Hungarian popular imaginary. However, in maintaining an identity based on different-ness, it is necessary to rely on homogenizing practices which summarily exclude some people or groups of people from the national imagined identity, in this case the Roma. Therefore, while they may be legal citizens of Hungary, they are not members of the nation, and, in fact, they are not members of any nation. This nationlessness has been at the root of much anti-Roma sentiment. A lack of a national identity is a way of distinguishing the Roma and a defining attribute of their identity. “If you could not say where you came from, you were nobody, and anyone could say anything about you” (Fonseca 1995:85).

The manner in which the Roma are differentiated is of particular salience in Hungary, because there is no standard for defining ethnicity. Under socialism rule, ethnic minorities simply did not exist. Class

² This assertion is so common in written and verbal discourse that I do not provide a list of citations. One very good example of this portrayal of the Roma is a media presentation by *National Geographic* called “Gypsies: The Outsiders” available online at <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0104/feature4/media.html>.

³ Again, this belief is so common that I do not provide citations. Almost everyone who writes about the Roma has examples of this sentiments and it is one I came across often in my own work.

membership was the basis for identity and in the goal regarding the Gypsies was “to assimilate them and to transform them into productive, cooperative, and supportive socialist citizens” (Barany 2002:114). Following the regime change, Roma were designated as an official ethnic minority and classified in terms of ethnicity rather than social status. In 1992, the Data Protection Act was enacted to safeguard data related to ethnic or racial origin, and in 1993 the Hungarian Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities (Minorities Act) made ethnic classification the right of the individual and made self-identification the sole legal ground for defining ethnicity. These acts have had the unintended consequence of resulting in a great misrepresentation of the size of the Romani population. In the 2001 census, 190,046 people identified themselves as Roma (approximately 1.8 percent of the total population), but the number is estimated to be closer to 550,000-600,000 or 5.3-5.8 percent of the population (ERRC 2004:25). Therefore, other methods need to be used to “get at” ethnic identity.

The reality is that although self-definition is supposed to be the main method of ethnic identification, many Roma do not want to reveal their ethnic status because of a long history of discrimination. However, rather than being accepted as Hungarian, they are thought to be “denying” their true identity. The language of a denial of identity is common in scholarship (cf. Barany 2003; Simon 2001), government officials, and CSO workers. These acts are also a cause of frustration for CSOs. Without knowing who is and who is not Roma, it is difficult, if not impossible, to put into place measures that directly target this population or to conduct effective monitoring of anti-gypsism. The European Commission argues that it is a misconception to believe that collecting data on the Roma and other ethnic minorities is a violation of data protection and human rights laws, and make the recommendation, “The European Union should continue to address and remedy the deficiencies in its ethnic data collection frameworks” (2004:47).

To address the problem of identity, CSOs have developed a number of strategies to identify who is and who is not Roma. The head of the Public Foundation for Gypsies living in Hungary claims that the question of identity really was not a huge problem:

You can always tell who is Roma by the way they look. They have brown skin, but a lot of people don't show these features. According to law, a Roma is anyone who says they are Roma. Because of discrimination, it is rare that someone who is not a Roma will say that they are. There are cases, but they are rare.

The director of the Roma University Scholarship program of the Open Society Institute (OSI) disagrees with the above sentiment. She says that the question of identity is actually one of the biggest problems. She explains,

The only legal way we can find out about Roma identity is by directly asking the applicant, “Are you openly Roma?” The key word here is openly because the goal of our program is to promote education for people that are openly Roma who upon graduation will stand for Roma rights, will carry Roma pride, and who will represent Roma in society.

In order for CSO interventions to have any sort of success they must first be able to identify their target population and set them apart from the majority who are not in need of aid. The next step is to devise a solution to “handle” the division between minority and majority, which they unintentionally helped to create and/or strengthen.

Education Interventions

Most working in the field of Romani aid and research report that the lack of access to education is the foremost difficulty facing this population. While approximately 90 percent of majority Hungarians start secondary school, only one-third of Gypsy students do. Five or six percent complete secondary school and a mere 0.22 percent study in higher education (Woodard 2004). In addition, Roma regularly receive a much lower quality of education than white Hungarians, are tracked in vocational schools that remove the possibility of continuing on to higher education, and often study in a segregated environment. The most egregious form of segregation is the practice of sending Gypsy children to schools for the mentally handicapped. Other types of segregated schooling include separate schools known as “Gypsy ghetto schools,” separate classrooms in the same schools where Roma receive remedial education, and in-class segregation in which Roma children receive little to no attention from the teacher (ERRC 2004).

As the education situation of the Roma represents the biggest barrier to social inclusion, education reform is the primary activity of many CSOs. This work stems from the ideology that universal education leads to greater understanding, respect, and empowerment, and can provide individuals with the tools necessary to improve their livelihoods and break the cycle of poverty (Friere 1968). There are a number of CSOs working towards educational reform and arguments ensue among them as to which is the best approach to

take. In this section I assess four models used by educational CSOs in Hungary: assimilation, integration, and negative and positive segregation. I propose that education CSOs work to fight against assimilation and negative segregation and support positive segregation and integration.

Figure 1: Models used in educational interventions in Hungary

	<i>Combat</i>	<i>Promote</i>
<i>Inclusionary</i>	Assimilation	Integration
<i>Exclusionary</i>	Negative Segregation	Positive Segregation

Assimilation

Assimilation refers to the absorption of the minority's cultural practices, values, and language into the majority. In Hungary, this was the policy regarding the Gypsies for many years. After the failure of the 1848 Revolution against the Austrian empire, the Hungarian Parliament attempted to strengthen national pride through the creation of a vernacularly imagined community (Anderson 1991). As a result, measures were put into place that led to a dissipation of the Romani language and the number of people identifying themselves as Roma dropped. Assimilation, or magyarization, efforts were incredibly successful such that between the 1893 and 1910 census the population defining themselves as Roma dropped by 46 percent (Crowe 1996:85).

Although Hungary has done a good job of eliminating the use of the Romani language, there still is a very present and visible Gypsy minority. In the view of many Hungarians, the only reason the Roma have not been seamlessly assimilated into society is due to their own refusal to abandon objectionable or problematic behaviors and their desire to keep to themselves. A Hungarian teacher of mine recalled attending a music festival where Gypsy musicians "wanted nothing to do with white Hungarians." He questioned how they could be accepted by society if they still wanted to remain separate. Indeed, when people are "made

equal" through assimilation, differences are not tolerated, and, as I have previously discussed, strong discourses are in place to assure the other-ness and different-ness of the Roma. Therefore, any assimilating techniques are sure to fail.

Many CSOs actively fight against assimilating practices and instead strive for "living together" and focus on desegregation of schools and neighborhoods and integrated education, which will be discussed later. This is aided by the fact that there is a growing recognition that assimilating policies for the Roma have failed and is not of dire concern. At the same time, however, I was privy to many whisperings from CSO workers that were in some ways in favor of practices that were assimilating, which came directly from dealing with certain behaviors not deemed conducive to successful integration and education reform. I spoke with several people actively involved in working towards education reform for the Hungarian Roma who articulated the idea that the best solution was to take the children out of their home environment. This is reminiscent of residential schools for Native American populations and Australian aboriginals which were advocated as a means to "save" and assimilate indigenous groups, produce cultural conformity, and ensure "a homogenous body of 'educated' men and women who would be well-suited for their particular social roles" (Kelm 1998:58). My research assistant claimed that despite the ramifications on culture, taking kids out of their homes had the greatest potential for learning. To their credit, most interventions that focus on taking children from the home attempt to be more culturally sensitive by providing Roma culture classes and employing Roma teachers. A teacher at one of the most well-known Roma educational facilities compared the children to plants. "They need to be taken out of the home environment, fostered, and then 're-planted'." In this way, not only will the students receive education and nurturing, they will pass it on to the others in their community. In some cases, this has been successful. I spoke with a woman at a residential school for disadvantaged students who had been a student there and now is a pedagogical assistant. She explained,

I come from a small village. It was difficult to make my family accept that I was going to come here...Now parents are sending their children, so it has changed and it is not because of money. Parents want their children to study. I have become a positive model. Now my younger sister has just finished school here in my younger brother will finish next year. I had to pave the way.

However, despite some successful examples such as this, other Gypsy students have had difficulties returning to their home communities. Because of the education they received, they feel isolated from and ostracized by their family and friends. One student who is completing her PhD at the University of Pécs put it best:

Families value other things. Studying is another world. Higher education represents a choice. Those in higher education are floating between two worlds. You can't be in both the village and the university – you have to make a choice. They are like feathers in the wind and don't belong to either world.

This creates challenges for CSOs. While many organizations strive to promote pride in a “Gypsy identity” there is no consensus on what a “Gypsy identity” entails. Often “Roma culture” or behaviors associated with a Gypsy identity are cited as obstacles to educational equality. Therefore, the reality is that CSOs and educational programs are trying to encourage students to be proud to be Roma while molding them to act in a certain way that fits within the parameters of an acceptable identity in the Hungarian mainstream, which may be at odds with the identity in which they are meant to have pride. This creates a disconnect between the stated goals and expected outcomes of education programs. Additionally, it causes problems for students who often find they have to break ties with their families in order to pursue their education.

Negative Segregation

Education CSOs are also actively involved in combating against negative segregation, which is the process through which Gypsy students are educated separately and the separation comes from a place of discrimination. According to a researcher at the Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research, approximately 20 percent of Roma are diagnosed as “special needs” and sent to special schools or remedial catch-up classes, and “despite all the best efforts” this practice continues. Even when Gypsy students are not purposefully segregated in this manner, segregation occurs through the creation of Gypsy ghetto schools. This is a trend by which white Hungarian parents move their children to other schools as a school's Romani population increases (Virág 2006).

This is possible because of Hungary's practice of free choice in which parents can freely choose where to send their children to school. A lawyer at the Chance for Children Foundation (CFCF) asserts that this should not be considered a racist act. Rather, it is known that there is a strong correlation between high proportion of Roma students, low quality teaching, and poor educational achievement. Therefore, parents are making decisions in their child's best interest.

The general view among many teachers and white parents is that the situation is “separate but equal” and that the division must exist because Hungarians and Gypsies are simply too different. Those working in educational CSOs argue that the “separate but equal” mentality does not work, is harmful to a peacefully functioning society. Furthermore, the education is anything but equal, as it was well-known that majority Roma schools employed under qualified teachers that rarely want to work with disadvantaged populations. One aid worker commented, “[The teachers who work at Roma schools] can't get a job anywhere else and they don't really want to work there. They consider it lesser than them and it is not a good job.”

To fight negative discrimination, CSOs have found the legal system to be the best approach. The lawyer from CFCF explained,

We take a legal approach because it is the best way to have a conversation about the plight of the Roma. You can't have an individual discussion and the court provides a rational discourse. The court still has some respect, not much but still some. If the court says something it still has weight in public discourse. Therefore, the courts serve as a tool.

CSOs that focus on legal battles include CFCF, the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), and the Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI).⁴ Their successes have been limited in the field of education because of local government autonomy and the lack of legislation sanctions. However, recent successes have provided motivation and inspiration to continue. In one notable case, for example, CFCF made the claim that the Miskolc Municipality was segregating Roma and socially disadvantaged (poor) children. Roma children attended school in a separate building and received a significantly lower quality of education and this was done by the use of different “catchment areas” which reflected the residential segregation around the schools. The County

⁴ The websites for these organizations are www.cfcf.hu, www.errc.org, and www.neki.hu respectively. The Equal Treatment Authority (www.egyenlobanasmod.hu) also tries discrimination cases, but is a government organization. Here, I am concerned with civil sector activities.

High Court rejected the claim of CFCF, but they appealed and won, which represented a major victory. A lawyer working on the case, however, explained that it was a qualified win. "It was not a complete success, and will probably not directly lead to changes in the education system." However, he also acknowledged that based on this case, they have learned what they need to do in future court battles.

Positive Segregation

Some CSOs take the position that it because of the accumulation of disadvantages and the wide spread prevalence of discrimination, the best approach is positive segregation. Whereas when segregation is negative parents may continue to send their children to the "Gypsy ghetto" schools out of fear of discrimination they would receive at the integrated school, in the case of positive segregation parents and students choose the school because of the potential to receive a quality education that is sensitive to the specific needs of Gypsy students. With this in mind, many CSOs and civil sector workers have opened schools specifically for Roma students. The oldest and best known of these is the Gandhi Secondary School which was opened in 1994 in Pécs. Its primary focus is minority-based education and therefore provides language training and Roma culture classes. Other examples include Kis Tigris ("Little Tiger") Secondary School and Vocational School located in a 100 percent Gypsy village in southern Hungary and Dr. Ambedkar Secondary School opened in 2007 in northeast Hungary. One person was involved in the establishment of all of these schools as well as several other educational programs.

The goal of all of these organizations is for the students to complete their secondary schooling and receive their diploma (*érettségi*). In Hungary, relatively few Roma go beyond primary school and those that do are often tracked into vocational schooling which closes off the possibility of continuing on to higher education. When I asked the founder of Kis Tigris about his goals he responded, "Well, I can only say what I have been saying for twenty years now: *érettségi, érettségi, érettségi...* When I say '*érettségi, érettségi, érettségi*', what I mean is: not vocation, but graduation... We need to push for *érettségi* everywhere."

These schools have had some success in that 1) several students have been able to successfully finish secondary school, 2) a good number of them have continued on to university, and 3) it has inserted the idea of education and "*érettségi*" into the minds of parents and students who before did not see education as an option. I did intensive ethnographic field research

at Kis Tigris and I found that as the students progressed in school, they became better able to articulate goals that include graduation and university. When asked "Where will you be in 5 years?" many of the students had goals of completing high school, going to university, and getting a job. For example, one 10th grader wrote:

My intention is to continue my studies 5 years from now. I would like to see and get to know the world. Hollywood too. In 5 to speak perfect English and Italian. To travel to Italy and get a job there. I would like to be a lawyer, but first I need to graduate from high school. To get straight As.⁵

Despite the apparent success of this and similar schools, positively segregated schools have received harsh criticism. For example, in the town where Kis Tigris is located, there is an ongoing conflict between the founder of the school and the religious leader, whose goal is to send children to integrated secondary schools in nearby cities. In an article in the *Népszabadság* newspaper (Ungár 2007), the religious leader complained that Kis Tigris kept students in the "ghetto" instead of encouraging them to go to integrated schools outside of the village. The founder responded in a *Népszava* (Millei 2007) article and to me:

There were twelve students who successfully graduated in [the village]. The population of the whole village is 1200, so that's a ratio of 1 percent. That's not much, is it? So although the priest says that his goal is integration, his strategy involves no more than twelve people. And in the meantime we have 120 pupils in our high school. And that's not one, but ten percent.

In comparison to schools integrated schools or white minority schools, positively segregated schools cannot compare. Many teachers at Kis Tigris admitted to passing students that normally should have failed and in the national competency exams the students of Kis Tigris placed last. The headmaster of the school was not worried, however, and said, "This is where we want to be." Kis Tigris, and schools like it, is able to provide an education free from discrimination to students who would not be able to thrive in integrated schools. In fact, when a student showed high potential, they were encouraged to attend Gandhi (still considered lower quality, but better than Kis Tigris) or the integrated secondary school in the nearest large town.

⁵ This was part of an English class assignment.

Integration

Since the early 21st century, the policy of the government⁶ and most CSOs is that of integration. Integration is the promotion of “living together” in such a way that cultural differences are not eliminated. It is a two-way process in which both minority and majority make a commitment towards tolerance, learning, and understanding. While throughout the 1990s, the Hungarian government and CSOs focused on special segregated schools or remedial “catch up classes” (Farkas and Heizer 1996), the largest nongovernmental funder for Roma programs in Europe, George Soros’s OSI, has long supported integration. According to the director of the Roma Participation Program of OSI, “We were the first to come out and say that segregation would not work and promoted desegregation. At the time, all resources went to improving segregated schools.”

The individual who was the primary force behind many of the segregated institutions, has recognized the limitations of positive segregation. He said, “Instead of advocating the integrated education of children of different ethnic origin, we thought that it was best if all ethnic groups had their own school. The thing simply didn’t occur to us. The idea hadn’t arrived to Eastern Europe.” After visiting several schools in the United States, he worked to open Collegium Martineum, a dormitory for motivated Gypsy students that would allow them to attend integrated schools.

There are three ways in which CSOs promote integration. The first is through teaching Roma culture classes or providing teaching materials about Roma culture or history. The Debrecen Roma Community House, for example, focuses on integration by holding events to celebrate Romani traditions and teaching non-Roma about these traditions. A social worker there explained to me,

It is not just about keeping traditions but also about teaching non-Romas about Roma traditions. So we go to local radio station, television station, newspaper. We published a magazine and we will do it again. In some schools, there are classes about knowing Roma culture. Employees who work here go to the school and give lectures about Roma traditions, origin, and religion. In the spring, from February to May, we give lectures to the police about police-Roma

communication in order to try to diminish prejudice.

When integration is the goal, interventionists recognize that Roma hold different beliefs and have a different history and social situation than the Hungarian majority, but realizes that this difference should not keep one from being a member of society. The drawback of the teaching method, there is not a large scale movement to promote Roma culture education. It tends to be geared towards self-identified Roma themselves. For example, Roma activist and educator Ágnes Daroczi created a film about Roma history that was televised but only during a weekly showed geared toward Roma viewers called “Roma Magazin.” There is no standardized national curriculum that includes information on Roma culture and history, and most white Hungarians are largely uninformed. The second is the promotion of integrated classrooms, which is largely supported by international nongovernmentals such as OSI and International Step by Step Foundation. This is the eventual goal of all integration efforts, but current efforts focus largely on integrating those with learning disabilities. For instance, the mission statement for EcPec Foundation (the Hungarian chapter of the International Step by Step Foundation) is, “To promote integration of disadvantaged children and children with special needs into the public education system” (www.issa.nl). While this approach targets those Gypsy students who were streamlined into special schools or classes, it misses those who are segregated in “ghetto schools” or are isolated due to geography.

Finally, integration efforts are achieved through the establishment of after school or tutoring programs (tanoda). In these programs, Gypsy and/or disadvantaged students receive tutoring so that they will be in a better position to succeed in white majority or integrated schools. The problem with many tanodas is that they don’t coordinate with the schools and therefore may create parallel systems. One aid worker who started a tanoda program worried that her activities actually helped to support a faulty education system. She complained, “In the tanoda the first problem is that the children are going to very bad schools with bad teachers... By running the tanoda and helping the kids do their homework assignments which are poorly designed, we are supporting a bad school system.”

Conclusion

⁶ In regards to education, current government policies support integration. There is no real policy for Roma; rather, they are targeted as disadvantaged. Schools that meet the definition of being integrated receive a extra funding called an integration normative.

Regardless of the tactic taken, all of these efforts are hindered because for the most part the interventions target their activities solely at the Roma students and rarely seek to work in a broader social sphere even though all the CSO workers I spoke with in Hungary considered the education system as a whole to be broken. Problems with the system which affect Gypsy students include, but are not limited to, residential segregation, free choice of schools, tracking at an early age into vocational education, and poor teacher training. Furthermore, because the interventions are targeted to the minority and do not seek to intervene in the majority, negative perceptions persist. In fact, recent studies have shown that intolerance and racism towards Gypsies has increased in recent years (European Commission 2007; Balassa, personal communication). This means that in order to be effective, civil sector activities have to expand their efforts and work to change wide spread public opinion. One aid worker commented that one of the biggest barriers to her work was discrimination:

Discrimination is still very bad in Hungary. There are still those who think the Roma should be killed off and don't understand why anyone would want to help them. For example, we are building a house and Gypsies stole some of the building materials. My husband said, "And you are helping them!" I said that I was helping them so that in 50 years they wouldn't be stealing. They would be working or going to school.

It will be a long process to bridge the gap between minority and majority that will require coordinated efforts from activists, the government, and CSOs. While many CSO workers express pessimism in what the future holds for the Roma, the earliest efforts began less than 20 years ago and progress has been made. There is reason to be optimistic that sustainable change can come from well designed civil sector interventions.

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