



Edited by

ZSUZSANNA VIDRA

ROMA MIGRATION TO AND FROM **CANADA**

THE CZECH, HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK CASE



CENTER FOR POLICY STUDIES
CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY

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Nádor utca 9
H-1051 Budapest, Hungary
cps@ceu.hu, <http://cps.ceu.hu>

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAT	Convention against Torture
CCR	Canadian Council for Refugees
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
CETA	Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DCO	Designated Countries of Origin
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
ECHR	European Convention of Human Rights
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
IFHP	Interim Federal Health Program
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
UN	United Nations
WRS	Worker Registration Scheme

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Arhin, Antonela PhD, is the Executive Officer at the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies and a Visiting Junior Fellow at the Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies at the University of Toronto. She holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University Business Academy in Novi Sad, Serbia, and an M.A. in International Economics and International Affairs from the Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C. Her research interests include: human rights; transnational labor exploitation; crime and migration; child migration, child rights and trafficking; global security and policy analysis; citizenship, identity and globalization; corporate social responsibility. Dr Arhin is the recipient of the Ron Brown Fellowship for Public Policy and Administration conferred by the U.S. State Department.

Chudžíková, Alena graduated from the University of Sussex and has been working as a Research Fellow at the Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) in Slovakia since 2009. As a social psychologist she is concerned with prejudice, stereotypes, racism, issues of national identity and political discourse on national minorities, particularly Roma and Hungarian minority. She is currently pursuing her PhD degree at the Comenius University in Bratislava.

Durst, Judit PhD, was Bolyai Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy of Corvinus University, Budapest. She is also an Honorary Research Fellow at UCL, Department of Anthropology. She has a PhD degree in Sociology and writes about exclusion, poverty and

ethnicity in some rural Hungarian ‘ghetto’ villages in the region of Borsod. She has participated in some international comparative research projects, such as ‘The Ethnicity, Poverty and Gender in transitional countries’ (led by prof. Ivan Szelenyi, Yale, US) and the Repro Project (Max Planck Institute of Demography, Rostock). Her main research interests are ethnicity, poverty, reproductive decision-making, anthropological demography and economic sociology.

Gallová Kriglerová, Elena is the director of the Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK) in Slovakia. As a sociologist she has led or participated in research projects addressing the situation of minorities and migrants in Slovakia. She was a member of the team that conducted sociographic mapping of Roma communities in 2003 in Slovakia. The main outcome of this research project was the Atlas of Roma Communities (2004), which remains a major source of information on Roma. Her main research area is inclusive education of Romani and migrant children..

Grill, Jan PhD, is Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. He has carried out ethnographic fieldwork with Slovak, Czech and Hungarian Roma/Gypsies, researching issues related to different forms of migration from Central Eastern Europe to Great Britain and Canada (and back). His research interests include migration, ethnicity, nationalism, multiculturalism, marginality, and the ethnography of the state and borders.

Tóth, Judit PhD, Dr jur. is a lawyer and associate professor of constitutional law at Szeged University. She was a senior research fellow at the Centre for Migration & Refugee Studies (1991–2000) and Minority Studies (2000–2012) at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She teaches courses on citizenship law, minority and migration rights, rules on non-profit sector, and she is the leader of the Legal Clinic in Szeged. She has worked in international research teams on migration and human rights issues since 1991. Tóth has been involved in legislative preparatory work as adviser in various ministries, Prime Minister’s Office and in the Parliament (1986–

2008). Recently she was the legal adviser of the Ombudsman (2008-2011). She represented Hungary in expert committee for refugees and stateless persons (CAHAR) in the Council of Europe (1990–1996).

Vidra, Zsuzsanna PhD, is a sociologist. She is a Research Fellow at the Center for Policy Studies, Central European University in Budapest. She holds a PhD in Sociology from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Her area of research is ethnicity, poverty, educational inequalities, labor market discrimination and media representation of minorities. She has worked in various international cooperative projects on ethnic differences in education (EDUMIGROM), on identities and modernities in Europe, on Roma migration, and on tolerance and social cohesion (ACCEPT PLURALISM).

Virág, Tünde PhD, is a sociologist with a PhD from the Institute of Sociology and Social Politics, ELTE, Budapest. She has been a Research Fellow since 2005 at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Research Center for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute of Regional Studies. She is an Associate Professor at Eszterházy Károly College, Eger, Hungary. Her field of research is social and spatial inequalities, social exclusion, ethnicity, rural issues, poverty and ethnicity.

PREFACE

Most research initiatives on Roma migration focus on Roma migrating from non-EU to EU or EU-to-EU countries. In our project we aim to look at another sub-component of the migration process: transatlantic, Canadian migration. The migration and asylum seeking of Central Eastern European Roma to Canada started in the 1990s when several thousands of Roma moved to Canada. The dynamic face of discrimination and the racist climate in their home countries, as well as the Canadian state's shifting immigration and refugee policies and the bilateral diplomatic relations between Canada and the CEE countries were all factors in the emigration of Roma and the eventual return back to their home countries. Most Roma immigrants were from the Czech Republic and Hungary though some came from Slovakia as well.

The collection of papers presented here is the outcome of a pilot project that aimed to look at various aspects of Roma migration to Canada. Judit Tóth's paper discusses Roma migration from a legal standpoint, enumerating and analyzing the various European and international laws and regulations that aim to protect the Roma but, evidently, fail to satisfactorily do so. Antonela Arhin gives insight into how Roma migration is perceived in Canada while also attempting to suggest a context for understanding the shift in Canada's refugee policy which ultimately put an end, at least temporarily, to Roma migration from CEE countries. The following four papers are country case studies based on exploratory fieldwork conducted by Jan Grill (the Czech case), Alena Chudžíková and Elena Gallová Kriglerová (the Slovak case), Zsuzsanna Vidra and Tünde Virág (the Hungarian case). The last chapter is Judit Durst's piece on migrant experiences in Canada.

The aim of our pilot project was to present a multidimensional picture of Roma migratory trends to Canada as well as to juxtapose this against the home country experiences, given that there have been important out-migration waves from all three countries at different periods of time and at different volumes. As for the case studies, they are based on exploratory research in three sending and in one receiving community. Additionally, the pilot project attempted to present new perspectives on how 'Roma migration' might be conceptualized. It is also our hope that, given the comparative nature of the project as well as the specific focus on Canadian migratory trends, some of the insight gained from this pilot study will inspire the development of future projects.

Legal and political perspectives

In her paper, Judit Tóth considers the legal aspects of Roma migration. She illustrates how constant attempts by various international organizations and bodies (like the UN and the EU and national governments) to regulate the status and situation of Europe's estimated 10-12 million Roma citizens, often producing unsatisfactory results, actually fuel migration itself. The fact that instruments of Roma integration/inclusion/legal protection have been inapt is mainly attributed to the absence of political will on the part of CEE countries' national governments, who fear alienating too many (the majority of) their constituents. She rather convincingly argues that Roma have long been categorized as 'irregular' – be it as citizens of the EU or their nation state, as migrants or minorities. Tóth analyzes the 'five pillars of regulation', which are anti-discrimination legislation, right to asylum and international protection, free movement of persons, EU work policy, affirmative action and minority rights. These aim to 'regularize' the situation of Roma as much from a legal point of view as from a social integration one. Indeed, the author argues, there is evidence enough that none of these tools are working properly. Despite national and international efforts to improve the situation of the Roma from both legal and social aspects, no significant advances have been made in the last few decades. The fault lies with both

the implementation of the related measures or, as Tóth asserts, the fact that the tools themselves are inadequate and inept to change the situation. Thus, she concludes, these system failures significantly contribute to the ongoing push towards Roma migration.

Antonela Arhin presents Roma migration from CEE countries from the Canadian perspective. She briefly introduces Canada's immigration regime, pointing out that – although it has been, through the course of time, a very open and welcoming system – it has had periods of exclusion. Although the spirit of immigration and the resulting multicultural society are embedded in the very sense of Canadian nationhood, the reverse in asylum policy in 2012 (Bill C-31) was not unprecedented. The Bill was passed as a reaction to the prior massive influx of Roma refugees and was intended to stop 'bogus' and 'unfounded' refugee claims. According to the new regulation, countries with democratically elected parliaments, independent judiciaries, and civil society organizations are deemed as 'safe' and refugee claims from the citizens of these states would be deemed illegitimate. Providing us with unique insight, Arhin also discusses how some civil and political actors in Canada perceive the new refugee law.

Research in the field – country case studies

Whilst the first two studies investigated the legal and the political components of the push and pull of Roma migration, the rest of the papers are based on qualitative, empirical studies that were conducted in three CEE countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia – as well as in Canada. The three country case studies were designed to consider Roma migration from a micro perspective using the same methodology and the same conceptual framework. Researchers in the three countries did fieldwork in villages and towns in which there had been a significant out-migration of Roma, presently or in the past. The selected communities all had a significant proportion of Roma inhabitants and had similar dynamics of social inclusion and exclusion. They interviewed families and individuals who had emigrated and then returned as well as individuals whose families,

relatives, or acquaintances were still in Canada. The project covered a small scope – about 5-10 family interviews per country – and did not attempt to give profound insight on, or a full-fledged understanding of the migration process of Roma families as a whole. Rather, it sought to raise new questions and formulate a more coherent conceptual framework in which to facilitate future inquiries into the ‘Roma migration theme’. The three case studies on the home countries are supplemented by a fourth fieldwork study made on the receiving end, in Toronto, Canada, a place where many of the migrants have settled and live. These empirical snapshots constitute our pilot project. We see all this as a starting point, a first step towards further inquiry and an inspiring attempt at developing a new conceptual framework for the study of Roma migration.

1. INTRODUCTION THEORIZING ROMA MIGRATION TO CANADA

Zsuzsanna Vidra

Central European University, Center for Policy Studies, Hungary

The original conceptual framework in which the phenomenon of Roma migration has been traditionally analyzed is based on the currently adopted, scholarly definition of this process; considered a combination of refugee and either labor or economic migration (Klimova and Pickup 2003). Given the fact that Roma migration from the Central Eastern European countries, following the democratic transition, took the form of asylum seeking (into other EU countries and into Canada), the occurrence of these specific migratory movements became a political battlefield notably between states and human rights activists. CEE state governments saw Roma asylum seeking as an impediment on their EU accession and the start of trouble in terms of their peaceful bilateral relationship with Canada. The main public and political argument in the 1990s and early 2000s (before the EU accession) was that emigrating Roma were ‘bogus’ refugees and should simply be considered economic immigrants attempting to take advantage of the welfare systems in their host countries¹.

- 1 Table 1. shows the trends of Roma migration – both asylum seekers and labor/economic migration – before and after EU accession. In the pre-accession period, emigration into EU countries primarily took the form of asylum seeking and with, basically, only negative results. In contrast, the asylum seekers in Canada had a better chance of receiving a positive verdict. After accession, economic migration to the EU replaced asylum seeking, although it is estimated that the volume of this type of migration from these three countries has been rather limited.

Table 1. Roma migration trends, before and after EU accession, from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary

	EU ²	Canada
Pre-accession		
Cz	Mass migration ³ (asylum)	Mass migration (asylum) till 1997 (visa in 1997)
Sk	Mass migration (asylum)	Non significant
H	Non significant	Mass migration (asylum) till 2002 (visa in 2001)
Post-accession		
Cz	Non significant labor migration	Mass migration (asylum) between 2007-2009 (new visa in 2009)
Sk	More significant labor migration	Started in 2009
H	Non significant labor migration	Mass migration (asylum) from 2009 (visa lifted in 2008)

Source: compiled by the author of the paper based on the country case studies

Research focus and theoretical framework

It was essential for civil rights activists and Roma organizations to construct a counter argument to the ‘economic migrant’ conjecture by emphasizing that, indeed, ethnic discrimination continued to be the major impetus for migration. Yet, in terms of scholarly discourse – from an analytical point of view – making an artificial distinction between migrations fuelled by ethnic discrimination or social deprivation was nonsensical. Any meaningful analysis would have to take into account these motivations as inseparable. Indeed, most studies conducted on Roma migration found

- 2 The asylum seeking of Roma in Western European, EU member states before accession had been a continuous process, nonetheless, except for few exceptions, all Roma claims had been turned down.
- 3 “Mass migration” is a relative term: “only” a couple of thousands of people emigrated, but the process had important political consequences.

that individual reasons given for migration encompass both dimensions, as they are hard to separate and, even if you focus on one or the other, actually there are traces of both in the migrants' accounts (Vašečka and Vašečka 2003, Kováts et al. 2002).

Even we took for granted that Roma migration should be understood and posited as being motivated by various factors that include both discrimination and social deprivation in the course of our project. However, we decided to engage in creating a conceptualization that focuses on the migration process as a whole, rather than pinpointing the motivations behind Roma migration. Thus, we hope to have found a somewhat different and new way of understanding Roma migration. Our pilot research was conducted with the purpose of exploring the families' entire migratory process: their motivations for leaving, how they find the resources to migrate, life in the destination country, and, in some cases, the process of returning. Besides recording some real life accounts from the migrants (or the narratives from family members who stayed), it was also possible to get insight into how migrant networks formed and how they worked.

In fact, the empirical materials we gathered from these three countries, although limited in scope and volume, provided us with enough information to begin developing a conceptual framework that accounts for migration systems and migration diffusion. We need to emphasize that our exploratory studies have only allowed us to raise hypotheses and collect sets of questions, rather than come to any conclusions or propose answers.

In order to understand how migration processes start and develop in general, we set out on the search for theoretical models dealing with the process. De Haas' (2010) has an influential theoretical work on the dynamics of migration process and when applying his approach we attempted to clarify some aspects of Roma migration by looking at the formation and self-sustainability of migration networks and their diffusion. We posed the questions like: What initiates migration to Canada? How does it perpetuate itself? What kinds of network effects are at play? Besides the macro effects of Canadian refugee policies, what determines migration a success or a failure? (Table 2.)

Table 2. Examples of endogenous and meso-level contextual feedback mechanisms (de Haas 2010)

Type	Level	Domain		
		Social	Economic	Cultural
Endogenous	Immediate (migrant group)	Migrant networks, 'migration industry'	Remittance-financed migration	Transfers of migration-related ideas and information
Contextual	Origin community	Social stratification, relative deprivation	Income distribution, productivity and employment	Social remittances, culture of migration
	Destination community	Patterns of clustering, integration/assimilation	Demand for migrant labor generated by clusters of migrant businesses	Transnational identities, demand for marriage patterns

On the migrant group level, the social feedback mechanism entails the migrant network itself and the migration industry (de Haas 2010) including all actors who form part of the migration process (e.g. travel agents, lawyers, bankers, labor recruiters, brokers, interpreters, and housing agents as well as human smugglers and traffickers). In the economic domain, the remittances financing migration are considered to be the main facilitators of the process whereas what plays an important role in the cultural domain is the information and ideas essential for new migrants. As for the contextual feedback mechanisms, for the origin community we can talk about the social consequences of migration as generating social differences (since migrants become wealthier, this results in a relative deprivation for those who stay behind). This is also related to the economic domain, whereby – as a result of remittances – a change in the income distribution within the origin community could, along with communities' general relative deprivation, raise the desire to migrate. Social remittances (Lewitt 1998) do play a role of inspiring migration. In the destination community, it is

always an essential question if migrants will settle in clusters that end up with a special social arrangement. At the same time, it is also a question - an important one in the migration process - if migrants have the desire or the opportunity to integrate or assimilate in their host country. Generally speaking, assimilated migrants have less incentive to assist new migrants from their origin community. Additionally, migrant clustering maybe the main reason for increased migrant labor demand, since migrant businesses also emerge in these communities. Finally, it is also yet to be seen how transnational identities develop because it may be a factor in the increase of culturally determined migrant moves (such as more marriages between migrants and members of their origin community).

While this model is used to explain the dynamics of the migration process, at least certain aspects of it, De Haas argues that the model remains incomplete because, if all elements are unchanged, then migration would go on “ad infinitum” and the “whole community should end up at the destination” (de Haas 2010: 1599). To account for this weakness, the concept of migration diffusion as well as of weak and strong ties and negative social capital is introduced to explain why migrant networks decline and why migratory trends change in regards to destinations over periods of times.

Using diffusion theory we can identify the ‘pioneers’ or ‘innovators’ - those who migrate first from a community. Given the high risks and costs of migration, these individuals are usually from relatively well-to-do households. They are then followed by the early majority and then by the laggards. The networks evolve, ensuring that the risks and costs become bearable even for those who come from much less affluent households. Migration continues until a certain saturation point is reached; that is, when all households intending to migrate have done so. Alternately, the migration pattern may change as a result of competition for jobs in the destination community.

Further to the point that the migration process may come to an end because there are no more who wish to migrate from a community, that all have gone who could or wanted to, it should also be clarified why it

does not spread across all segments of society or to the wider community. Here, De Haas insists on applying the notion of weak and strong ties, as developed by Granovetter (1973), as well as the concept of negative social capital, as developed by Portes (1998). Normally, strong ties represent a positive influence. However, in the migration process, they might be counter-productive at some point. It is argued that migration information is spread through the weak ties in a community, whereas strong ties play a crucial role in the actual migration process, especially amongst lower status migrants. On the same token, social capital can be paralyzing because it can also be exclusionary. When strong ties only help immediate family members for example, the migration process may be halted or altered as no other members of the community, except those who have strong ties (are related) to the pioneers, can leave.

Roma migration to Canada

Our endeavor entails an attempt to apply these models of migrant networks, migration diffusion, and the role of strong and weak ties to the Roma migration to Canada relying on the interview data collected and presented in the specific country case studies provided here. By undertaking this exercise we hope to come to a more refined understanding of the Roma migration process while keeping in mind the explorative nature of the project. Thus, we will propose some hypotheses that could be worthy of further investigations and testing. The below table (Table 3.) summarizes the findings of the case studies.

Table 3. Endogenous and meso-level contextual feedback mechanisms applied to Roma migration to Canada

Type	Level	Domain		
		Social	Economic	Cultural
Endogenous	Immediate (Migrant group)	Some family members/ acquaintances already in Canada, Including money-lenders, lawyers, interpreters, social workers, health-care workers, human rights activists	Family/relative remittance-financed migration; Selling all their properties, taking loans	Via internet, Village/ community chit-chat transferring migration-related information
	Origin community	Relative deprivation is at play (earlier migrants bought new homes, renovated old homes, etc.)	Minor impact on income distribution (investing in housing or finance remigration)	Evolving culture of migration social remittances: “we were treated as human beings”
Contextual	Destination community	Strong ethnic clustering (accommodation) Lack of social capital: not being able to integrate (not learning English, not having the skills to manage life; strong dependence on migrant network)	Existing migrant business: garbage picking (‘garbicsolás’ in Hungarian) working on construction sites, factory jobs Crucial: success of migration depends on one getting into an ethnic business	Transnational identities are strong

Looking first at the immediate migrant group, we observe similar trends in all three countries. Migration to Canada, while being in different phases for each of the three countries (e.g. the visa requirements for Czech citizens (2009) have resulted in a complete drop in applicants from the country, or the effects of the new refugee reform introduced by Canada as of 2012), shows very similar network characteristics. Migrant networks are usually formed with family members or, to some extent, with acquaintances already in Canada. Migrants get monetary help from their relatives overseas – remittance financed migration – so they can buy the expensive airplane ticket. They are usually expected to pay this back once they arrive and begin to receive social welfare there. Oftentimes, it is the family in the home country that helps to finance the migrant's journey. The network almost always covers the initial costs, however, we have also seen examples of new migrants selling all their property or taking loans in order to have the money required for the move. Risk taking of this kind could be accounted for by a heightened sense of confidence in the success of the endeavor and the belief that the network will be sufficiently effective to help them once they are in Canada. This is a phenomenon characteristic of some, but not all, migrants (e.g. regarding the Hungarian cases, this was more or less the case). Just as the 'rose tinted picture' (see Gallová Kriglerová-Chudžíková in this volume) of the opportunities Canada has to offer, often based on a selective portrayal of Canada and the migration experience (leading to misinformation), as revealed in Slovak and Hungarian interviews, could also be associated with the network effect.

Migrant networks go together with what is called 'migrant industries' (de Haas 2010). In the Canadian migratory process, it was discovered that, in fact, a very effective migration industry has developed in all three countries. For example, in the origin community, migrants are helped by entrepreneurs specialized in booking airplane tickets and driving families to the airport (Slovakia). In the destination community, there is a wide array of official (or semi-official) helpers who attend to the refugees (social workers, teachers, interpreters, lawyers, health care workers, human rights activists, etc.). Cultural domain networks are sustained by intensive communication

between family members via the Internet and migration-related information is spread via Skype and Facebook contacts to immediate group members and then through the village gossip channels to non-immediate group members.

On the origin community level, apparently the most important conditions that increased migration came from all the three domains, that is to say that migration was impelled by social, economic, and cultural factors. Socially, living in a segregated community (as most of our interviewees did) was in fact an important condition that determined the desire to migrate. Roma in all three countries emphasized how negatively they experienced the deteriorating interethnic relations. For example, interviewees in Slovakia often compared their current situation with their socialist past, a time when they had a higher social status and more acceptance in the community. In the Czech Republic, a recent violent incident led to the escalation of interethnic tension. Moreover, the fact that they were confined to live in ‘settlements’ (suburbs, often with the most basic of amenities) without any hope of local improvements or the opportunity to move to the non-segregated parts of the town, constituted further incentive to migrate (Hungary and Slovakia). The rise and spread of violence as well as political racism and fear from racist attacks were also among the socially motivated reasons for migration. In economic terms, deprivation was an overwhelming experience everywhere, even if to different degrees. In Slovakia, it was felt that migrants and their descendents were mainly the “winners of socialism” (that is to say the relatively well-to-do members of the Roma community)⁴. Culturally, the most eminent motivation for migration seemed to be their stigmatized ethnicity, the consequences of which Roma had to face on a daily bases (employment and educational discrimination, verbal and physical racial violence, etc.). In Slovakia, Roma interviewees referenced negative attitudes on the part of the majority society as an important incentive to wanting to leave. One could interpret this as “escaping the (interiorized) stigma,” incidentally further burdened by the majority society blaming them for migrating and accusing them of misusing the welfare system in the destination country, thus, creating a bad image of the home

4 For the sociological analysis of well-to-do migrants, see the section on migration diffusion.

country. Although the general approach of the majority is similar in all three countries – labeling Roma migration as a disloyal, treacherous deed that the home country is negatively stigmatized by – it was the Slovak Roma in particular who discussed migration with a sense of guilt and felt the need to further justify, through various arguments (right to move, etc.), why one would leave.

The original conditions in the sending community change as a result of migration and this, as is claimed by the model, influences what turns the process take. Looking at the Canadian migration process, it is clear that relative deprivation gradually become a factor that spurred further migration. In Hungary, there had been migration in the early 2000s and those who came back invested in their houses, a visible sign of the success of the migration for the whole community. Similarly, in Slovakia, improving housing conditions was one of the major goals all migrants wished to achieve and those who had already gone were sending money back so that their half-built houses could be finished in front of the eyes of the whole community. Meanwhile, the actual economic impact of migration (for instance, on income distribution), could be assessed as minimal for several reasons. First of all, remittances or the savings of returnees are mainly invested, as we have seen, in renovating one's house or buying a new one. This, in itself, does not result in any change in social stratification or income inequalities with regards to the original conditions. Improvement of one's housing conditions will not change one's social status with regards to the majority: this can only change if one moves from the segregated settlement to the center (or mixed areas). However, this does not happen, at least it did not happen in the Hungarian and the Slovak cases we observed. However, the betterment of their housing conditions can lead to a somewhat better social status within one's own community, as in the Slovak example. Also, savings are sometimes used, as in the Czech case, for financing remigration, although that does not in itself result in upward social mobility. It can be concluded that migration, even if it is a success in economic terms, does not result in change in social status: those who had been better-off are usually more successful in

their migration than those who come from somewhat worse situation, and the balance seems to be the same even after a considerable migration has happened in a community.

Concerning the cultural domain, we observe some elements of the ‘culture of migration’ (Massey et al. 1993) evolving in all the three cases. We define ‘culture of migration’ as “migration-affected cultural change *[that]* can further strengthen migration aspirations along established pathways in communities and societies that can become obsessed with migration” (de Haas 2010: 1595). “Social remittances are likely to reinforce these processes and can even lead to a shift in preferences or a ‘culture of migration’, in which increasing prestige is attached to migration” (de Haas 2010: 1608). In general, the context of Slovak Roma’s migration experiences is relatively important given their history: Slovak Roma migration to the Czech Republic in the aftermath of displacement of ethnic Germans and additional migrations throughout socialism. One may argue that the previous migratory experience of some Roma showed the rest of the community that migration abroad is a viable option for improving one’s dire living conditions, to some extent they may have drawn on past experiences for this conclusion. Slovak Roma have migrated to the Czech Republic, other EU countries (before accession), and to the UK (after accession). Although Roma in Hungary and in the Czech Republic have less of a migratory past, the migration experienced in the observed Roma communities suggests an emerging culture of migration. In both these communities, some families had been to Canada or the UK. This can lead us to formulate a question: is repetitive migration an illustration of the emergence of the ‘culture of migration’?

One of the widely shared common experiences in the three countries that we might denote as an important social remittance is the cultural encounter with Canadian multiculturalism and tolerance. All interviewees expressed their amazement that they were “treated as human beings” and felt “safe and respected” without being stigmatized or discriminated because of their ethnicity. This experience seemed to have a great impact for everybody interviewed and may be assessed as an upcoming significant element in the culture of migration, a future core incentive for moving.

In order to account for feedback mechanisms, it is necessary to also study the destination community. Migrant ethnic clustering within destination communities is a well-known phenomenon. Depending on the type of migration, migrants tend to live and work together, thus, creating new communities. Ethnic clustering could be best observed amongst the Hungarian Roma migrants, given their number and the size of the community. Due to the social housing situation and network dependency, many new migrants end up in the same blocks of flats or in close vicinity to one another. Given their low status and the lack of the necessary cultural capitals, many of the low status, late adopters, or laggards, have little or no chance to integrate. Although attending language courses is obligatory, most adults find it very hard to go back to school and they do not learn English at all. This strengthens their dependence on networks and is one reason why ethnic clustering is, in fact, important - especially for low status migrants.

There are several factors that determine whether migration will be a success or a failure. For most migrants, integration is simply not possible. This is not merely due to their instable legal status – whether they can stay or not – it also depends on whether or not their networks help them get access to some ethnic business (garbage or scrap metal collection, construction work, factory jobs, etc.). State welfare can provide enough financial support for sustaining a family, however, it is impossible to building any savings. Migration is only successful if one can return with some savings. This is well illustrated in the Slovak case where those returnees from Canada who came back with nothing were seen as failures by the community and blamed for not working hard enough. External or network effects have not been considered in these narratives.

To understand the dynamics, or changing of migration patterns and migration diffusion, weak and strong ties as well as the negative effects of social capital need to be taken into account. As we mentioned, migration diffusion starts with pioneers or innovators leaving a community. They are followed by late adopters, coming from less well-to-do households. In general, Roma migration is characterized by this pattern. An IOM 2000 study on Roma migration from Slovakia (Vasecka 2003) indicates that

migrants tended to be Roma with an above-average education and social status (the ‘winners of socialism’). A similar trend was likewise observed in Hungary (Kováts et al. 2002); Roma involved in the earlier phases of migration were usually from merchant or musician backgrounds and some segments of these migrant populations tended to be more educated. Considering the Canadian migration diffusion, it was found that people from relatively wealthier households migrated first. In addition, among the early migrants we find more individual or small group migration, whereas among the late adopters there are usually more families migrating together, a pattern noted in all three countries.

Concerning risks and costs, pioneers have the greatest advantages and disadvantages. However, compared to other forms of migration, the risks are relatively low, since social welfare will cover immediate costs. So, it seems that pioneers in Canada had a better chance of succeeding than late adopters did. From all accounts, it can be deduced that job opportunities on the low-skill labor market are scarce and this creates a greater reliance on strong networks. As previously mentioned, these networks do exist and do provide income resources for some people. Oftentimes, it is the pioneers who become the ‘bridgeheads’ (de Haas 2010) of these migrant networks and they can even be the generators of some of the new migration by sending money back or providing loans to aspiring migrants. These networks seem to be rather small and weak and tend to saturate quickly. Thus, ‘bridgeheads’ quickly become ‘gatekeepers,’ sometimes causing further hindrances for new migrants that may slow down their migration process. However, the process does not appear to diminish and die off. Since these networks are based on strong (usually family) ties and are exclusionary towards others (even people from the same community), there could be many of these networks functioning side by side. In fact, as extended families continue to migrate and they join in on the networks of close ties, still more migration could happen.

All this said, however, it is also very easy to be without a network. One may find themselves going to Canada as a result of the weak tie effect – as stated earlier, information tends to flow through weak ties – but end up in

a situation where, once they arrive, they have no strong ties to help them get established. These migrants often become what we might call failed migrants: those who get in a situation temporarily or are worse in the long run than they were in their original situation. Failed returnees in all three countries face very similarly difficult situations. Sometimes they had sold their house, so, they have nothing to return to. They move in with relatives, or move to new localities; sometimes they come back more indebted than they were before. Further, if they did not deregistered from the local welfare system before leaving, they may have to face the legal consequences. In all three countries, the hostility of the community elite (e.g. mayor) can make reintegration difficult. All in all, some of the returnees suffer from multiple disadvantages at the end of their migration journey.

Conclusions

Using a multidimensional approach, this explorative project aimed to raise new questions about the Canadian migration process for Roma from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Our premise was that ‘Canadian Roma migration’ should be understood as a process motivated by a mixed set of factors and, from an analytical point of view, it should be studied as neither refugee nor labor migration but as a compound of both. Based on this premise, the project set out to apply a conceptual framework that accounts for the entire migration process and aims to gain further insight into how it starts, how it develops, and what role networks play in the whole process.

By applying de Haas’ migration system model, we were able to show that this migration displays similar, but sometimes differing, trends and patterns than other migrations. In regards to the similar trends, we observed that the ways in which this migration developed was very much like a ‘classic’ labor migration process: transnational networks were formed and functioned over space and time, remittances were sent (thus, generating more migration), migrant clusters were established in the destination country, etc. On the other hand, there were important differences that are worth pointing out. Most importantly, the way migration started was influenced both by the existence and influence of the migrant networks and by the

fact that welfare was provided for refugees in Canada. This meant that a wider social stratum – including lower status, underprivileged migrants who could not have been able to undertake other forms of migration – had the opportunity to participate in the process.

As a general pattern, we could distinguish the pioneers from the laggards. In all three cases, pioneers were migrants who were from wealthier families and many had earlier migration experiences; they were the ones who would leave, come back, and some would try to leave again. The latter were often the failed migrants, those whose return left them in a more desperate situation than they had been in before leaving.

All in all, it can be argued that the relatively low costs and low risks of migrating to Canada spurred old, and motivated new migrants alike to leave their home country. The effects of this are yet to be seen. We remain, now, with a host of unanswered questions: will some of the failed migrants become recurrent migrants, due to their positive experiences (despite unsuccessful endeavors, some still managed cultural or social accumulation)? Will migrants returning from Canada again set out for other destinations (given their accumulated social, economic, and cultural capital)? Will the impact of migration on the origin communities have a lasting effect in terms of establishing migration patterns?

It is our hope that the research and analysis presented here brings to light a fresh approach to the subject of Roma migration, inspiring a new generation of work to develop around the framework with which we worked. We look forward to future researchers both building on our growing list of questions and finding answers to some of the above-stated ones.

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PART ONE

LEGAL AND POLITICAL
PERSPECTIVES

2. ROMA MIGRATION FROM A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Judit Tóth

University of Szeged, Hungary

The Roma and their cross-border migration has become a major embarrassment for the European Union's legislative bodies, who considered Roma asylum claims to be phony, a fraud. This uncomfortable situation has been draped with the label 'irregularity.' So it is, that those transnational members of the Roma community's some 10-12 million total population would become the symbol of 'irregularity' in Europe, at least in three senses of the word (Tóth 2010a):

- *Irregular (union) citizens* because they are segregated, unemployed, less educated than the mainstream population and they are frequently undocumented (without birth certificates, identity papers, passports, or a nationality);
- *Irregular migrants* because, due to transitional measures resulting from EU enlargement (2004/2007-2011/2014), they are moving both within and across borders, neither as tourists nor formal laborers (job-seekers), while at the same time submitting asylum applications in Europe and/or Canada;
- *Irregular minorities* because they have no compact community. Rather, Roma live in religious, linguistic, cultural, and social diversity throughout Europe, sometimes as recognized minorities with special rights or as equally-treated individuals, but without a kin-state or the recognition of minority status in many of the EU's member states.

What are the main pillars of the legal system that might be leaned on to deal with the complex case of Roma migration? The answer depends on *which stratum of regulation* takes the lead. For instance, take the concept of ‘human rights’; shall we apply universal (international), regional (European standards, Union *acquis*), bilateral, or national legal legislation to define our terms? Taking into account the transnational nature of the community at hand and, specifically, the related international migratory movements, I primarily refer to domestic regulations while exceptionally giving examples of migration theory ‘push factors’. This said, I would like to emphasize that that Roma people’s living conditions and the type of prejudices they face differ in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, while their improper political treatment and rather reluctant legal protection are very similar throughout all these new, fragile democracies.

Combating multiple/racial discrimination

United Nations human rights treaties prohibit discrimination. This includes documents such as the International Covenant on Civil and political Rights (ICCpR), the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention Against Torture (CAT), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the (rather recently created) 2006 human rights treaty the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The right not to be discriminated against is guaranteed by Article 14 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) which states that equal treatment shall be provided in the “enjoyment of the rights set down in the given Convention.”

Protocol No. 12 (2000) to the ECHR, not yet ratified by all EU Member States, expands on the scope of the prohibition of discrimination by guaranteeing “equal treatment in the enjoyment of any right,” including those rights provided under national law. According to the Explanatory Report to the Protocol, it was created in order to strengthen protection against discrimination, which in itself is considered to be a core element to

insuring that human rights are protected. The Protocol actually emerged out of debates over how to strengthen sex and racial equality, in particular. This provision prohibits discrimination:

- in the enjoyment of any right specifically granted to an individual under national law;
- in the enjoyment of a right which may be inferred from a clear obligation of a public authority under national law, that is, where a public authority is under an obligation under national law to behave in a particular manner;
- by a public authority in the exercise of discretionary power (for example, granting of subsidies);
- by any other act or omission by a public authority (for example, the behavior of law-enforcement officers when overseeing a demonstration).

EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, passed in 2000, contains a list of human rights inspired by the rights contained in the constitutions of the Member States, the ECHR, and universal human rights treaties (such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child). When the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force in 2009, it altered the status of the Charter of Fundamental Rights making it a legally binding document. As a result, EU institutions are bound to comply with it. The EU Member States are also bound to comply with the Charter, but only when implementing EU law. Article 21 of the Charter contains a prohibition on discrimination on various grounds. In 2000, two directives were adopted: the Employment Equality Directive, prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, religious belief, age and disability and the Racial Equality Directive, prohibiting employment discrimination (including access to the welfare system, social security, and goods and services) on the basis of race or ethnicity. Under the ambit of the EU, this was a significant expansion on the scope of non-discrimination law.

The Roma community faces prejudice and discrimination across various segments of their everyday lives. Therefore, in regards to

upholding human rights and protection from racist discrimination, legal practitioners now uphold that ‘multiple grounds of discrimination’ apply in Roma asylum cases. The theory of ‘multiple discrimination’ considers the aggregated impacts of social disadvantages and overlapping social roles (e.g. gender discrimination against Roma women, unequal treatment of disabled rural inhabitants seeking employment). There seems to be no legal recourse within a legal dispute that takes into account the multi-faceted social roles of a discriminated person. Relevant handbooks offer to weigh fairly the belonging, affiliation, and membership of victims - differentiating discrimination from persecution - as relevant cumulative elements⁵ or selecting, out of protected statuses, the most relevant grounds to apply.⁶ Still, putting to use the standard definition and terms used to assess multiple discrimination has been encouraged, but not has been accepted.⁷ The European Court of Human Rights summarizes the complex appearance of racial discrimination as follows: “Ethnicity and race are related and overlapping concepts. Whereas the notion of race is rooted in the idea of the biological classification of human beings into subspecies according to morphological features such as skin color or facial characteristics, ethnicity has its origin in the idea of societal groups marked by common nationality, tribal affiliation, religious faith, shared language, or cultural and traditional origins and backgrounds.”⁸ In brief, in explaining the concept of race and ethnicity, according to this opinion, the language, religion, nationality and culture may be in dissociable from race.

Due to this shortcoming in regards to Roma cases, we should apply the already established anti-discrimination law legislation, along with applying the definition of direct and indirect discrimination, harassment,

5 Handbook on procedures and criteria for determining refugee status under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees. Geneva, September 1979, p.55.

6 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights - European Court of Human Rights - Council of Europe: Handbook on European non-discrimination law, 2011, Wien - Strasbourg.

7 Equinet, ‘Dynamic Interpretation: European Anti-Discrimination Law in practice’, volumes I-IV, available at: www.equineteurope.org/equinetpublications.html (loaded 31 May 2012)

8 Timishev v. Russia (No. 55762/00 and 55974/00), 13 December 2005, para. 55

segregation, retorsion and instruction to discriminate in order to determine discriminative behavior on the most relevant ground.

Essentially, those individuals in similar situations should receive similar treatment and not be treated less favorably simply because of a particular ‘protected’ characteristic that they possess. This is known as ‘direct’ discrimination. Direct discrimination, as framed under the European Convention of Human Rights (1950), is subject to a general objective justification defense; however, under EU law, defenses against direct discrimination are somewhat limited. The non-discrimination law stipulates that those individuals who are in different situations should receive different treatment to the extent that this is necessary to allow them to enjoy particular opportunities to the same degree as others. Thus, those same ‘protected grounds’ should be taken into account when carrying out particular practices or creating particular rules. This is known as ‘indirect discrimination’. All forms of indirect discrimination are subject to a qualification known as objective justification, irrespective of whether the claim is based on the European Convention of Human Rights or EU law.

The courts have provided a broad interpretation on the reach of ‘protected ground’. It includes ‘discrimination by association’, whereby the victim of the discrimination is not themselves the person with the protected characteristic. It can also involve the ground in question being interpreted in an abstract manner. This makes it imperative that practitioners embark on detailed analysis of the reasoning behind the less favorable treatment, looking for evidence that the protected ground is causative of such treatment, whether directly or indirectly.

For instance, note the example on indirect discrimination from the European Court of Human Rights case law wherein a series of tests were used to establish the intelligence and suitability of pupils in order to determine whether or not they should be moved out of mainstream education and into special schools. These special schools were designed for children with intellectual disabilities and other learning difficulties. The same test was applied to all pupils who were being considered for placement in special schools. However, in practice, the test had been designed in such a way that students with a strong aptitude regarding Czech mainstream

cultural knowledge would pass and with the inherent consequence that Roma students were more likely to perform badly. Indeed, they did; between 50 and 90 percent of Roma children were educated outside the mainstream education system, many placed in programs for children with intellectual and other learning difficulties. The European Court of Human Rights determined that this was a case of indirect discrimination.⁹

The part of EU non-discrimination law prohibiting ‘harassment’ and ‘instruction to discriminate’ are relatively new developments that were introduced to allow for more comprehensive protection. For instance, in a case before the Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority, a complaint was made about teachers who told Roma students that their misbehavior at school had been notified to the ‘Hungarian Guard’, a (now illegal) nationalist organization known for committing acts of extreme violence against Roma. It was found that the teachers had implicitly endorsed the racist views of the guard and created a climate of fear and intimidation that amounted to harassment.¹⁰

Although the non-discrimination directives do not oblige Member States to use criminal law to address acts of discrimination, a Framework Decision of the European Council¹¹ does oblige all EU Member States to provide for criminal sanctions in relation to incitement to violence or hatred based on race, color, descent, religion or belief, national or ethnic origin, as well as dissemination of racist or xenophobic material and condonation, denial, or trivialization of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity directed against any group. Member States are also obliged to consider racist or xenophobic intent as an aggravating circumstance; however, it has not been systematically transposed into national legislation (e.g. in Hungary). (Tóth 2010b)

9 D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic (No. 57325/00), 13 November 2007, para. 79

10 Decision no. 654/2009, 20 December 2009, Equal Treatment Authority (ETA)

11 Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 55.

Summing up, the results of anti-discrimination dictates in Europe partly depend on case law from the European Court of Human Rights, the European Court of Justice, and the equal treatment of these at local, regional, or national levels. In the absence of judges properly trained in (multiple) discrimination, statistics on ethical and systematic monitoring in administration, and justice in new democracies, latency regarding racial discrimination remains high. Table 4. outlines the 33 cases that have protected discriminated Roma within the last 60 years at the European Court of Human Rights.

Table 4. Cases at European Court of Human Rights, based on violation of Art 14 of ECHR

<p>The 60th anniversary of ECHR – Art.14</p> <p>8 cases: Obligation of Roma/travelers to leave land they had stationed their caravans due to authorities' plans to remove a Roma settlement</p> <p>3 cases: Segregation in schools (e.g. placement of Roma children into 'special' schools)</p> <p>8 cases: Racially biased police actions (e.g. police shooting of Roma and investigations following)</p> <p>5 cases: Attacks on Roma villages and destruction of property (e.g. living conditions of Roma villagers following police involvement in the killing of members of their community and the destruction of their homes)</p> <p>Validity of Roma marriage, refusal to recognize validity of a Roma marriage for purposes of disclaiming entitlement of a widow's pension</p> <p>Barring of Roma from running for election</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases v. UK, France, Bulgaria (1996-2009) • D.H. and others v. Czech Republic (13 Nov 2007) and similar cases v. Croatia, Hungary • Nachova v. Bulgaria (6 July 2005) and similar cases v. Greece, Croatia, Romania, Slovakia • Moldovan and other v. Romania (12 July 2005) and similar cases v. Romania • Munoz Diaz v. Spain (8 Dec 2009) • Seidic and Finci v. Bosnia-Herzegovina (22 Dec 2009) • V.C. v. Slovakia (8 November 2011) and similar vs. Czech Rep.
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5 cases: Alleged forced or coerced sterilization of Roma women

2 other cases: relating to freedom of expression, involving a suspended sentence

- Paraskeva Todorova v. Bulgaria (25 March 2010)
- Aksu v. Turkey (2010)

Cases from the recent past may further illustrate the fragile situation of Roma in the CEE region, in light of case law from the European Court of Human Rights.

CASE OF BORBÁLA KISS v. HUNGARY (No.59214/11) 26 June 2012

The Court concludes that the Roma applicant has been subjected to degrading treatment by the police brutality and that no adequate investigation has been carried out into her allegations. There has, accordingly, been a breach substantially and procedurally of Article 3 of the Convention, but Art 14 was not violated.

CASE OF EREMIÁŠOVÁ AND PECHOVÁ v. THE CZECH REPUBLIC (No.23944/04) 16 February 2012

The Court has found a violation of the substantive limb of Article 2, and also that the subsequent investigation was neither adequate nor independent. The applicants must have suffered gravely as a result of the serious (police brutality) violations, found in the present case, of the most fundamental human rights enshrined in the Convention. The Court notes that the case concerns the death of the first applicant's partner, the father of her child, and the second applicant's Roma son.

CASE OF KOKY AND OTHERS v. SLOVAKIA (No.13624/03) 12 June 2012

A non-Romani waitress, I.S., refused to serve a drink to a person of Roma ethnic origin and a group of at least twelve people went into the Roma settlement in the village where the applicants lived. Some of them were wearing balaclavas and they were armed with baseball bats and iron bars. The incident is a violation of Article 3 of the Convention under its procedural head. The Court finds that the investigation into the

incident at the applicants' settlement cannot be considered as having been effective. The Court considers that these elements, coupled with the sensitive nature of the situation related to Roma in Slovakia at the relevant time (see, for example, *Mižigárová v. Slovakia*, no. 74832/01, §§ 57-63, 14 December 2010 and *V.C. v. Slovakia*, no. 18968/07, §§ 78-84 and 146-9, 8 November 2011), are sufficient for it to conclude that the authorities have not done all that could have been reasonably expected of them to investigate the incident, to establish the identity of those responsible and, as the case may be, to draw consequences.

CASE OF N.B. v. SLOVAKIA (No. 29518/10) 12 June 2012

On 25 April 2001, during the delivery of her second child, the Roma applicant was sterilized. The Court has previously found that the practice of sterilization of women without their prior informed consent affected vulnerable individuals from various ethnic groups. In view of the documents available, it cannot be established that the doctors involved acted in bad faith, that the applicant's sterilization was a part of an organized policy, or that the hospital staff's conduct was intentionally racially motivated. At the same time, the Court finds no reason for departing from its earlier finding that shortcomings in legislation and practice relating to sterilizations were liable to particularly affect members of the Roma community (see *V.C. v. Slovakia*, cited above, §§ 177-178; and also paragraphs 96-97 above). In that connection, the Court has found that the respondent State failed to comply with its positive obligation under Article 8 of the Convention to secure to the applicant a sufficient measure of protection enabling her, as a member of the vulnerable Roma community, to effectively enjoy her right to respect for her private and family life in the context of her sterilization.

The Lisbon Treaty contains a provision mandating the EU to join the European Convention of Human Rights as a party in its own right. Protocol 14 to the ECHR then amends this to allow this to happen. It is not yet clear what effect this will have in practice and, in particular, what the future

relationship between the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights will be, as the EU accession negotiations may take several years. However, it will - at the very least - allow individuals to bring the EU directly before the European Court of Human Rights for failure to observe the ECHR. It remains to be seen how the 'racial protection' of Roma will be affected by this accession into the Union.

The breadth of the grounds for 'racial and ethnic origin' appears to differ slightly between the EU and the ECHR in that the Racial Equality Directive expressly excludes 'nationality' from the concept of race or ethnicity. While the ECHR lists 'nationality or national origin' as a separate ground, case-law has shown that nationality can be understood as a constitutive element of ethnicity. This is not because discrimination on the grounds of nationality is permitted in EU law, but because the way that EU law has evolved means that discrimination on the grounds of nationality is regulated in the context of the law relating to free movement of persons. Apart from expressly excluding the grounds of discrimination against a nationality, the Racial Equality Directive does not itself contain a definition of 'racial or ethnic origin'.¹²

The European Court of Human Rights does not require proof that the perpetrator is motivated by prejudice, thus, there is no need to prove the perpetrator has 'racist' or 'sexist' views in order to prove racial or sexual discrimination. In general, laws cannot regulate individuals' attitudes, since they are entirely internal. Rather, it can only regulate actions through which such attitudes may manifest themselves. Moreover, it is not necessary to show that the rule or practice in question is intended to result in differential treatment. That is to say, even if a public authority or an individual can point to a well-intentioned or good-faith practice, if the 'effect of that practice is to disadvantage a particular group, this will amount to discrimination'. In relation to a case on race discrimination, the European Court of Justice found that there was no need to prove that there is actually an identifiable victim. Presumably this finding has equal

12 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights - European Court of Human Rights - Council of Europe: Handbook on European non-discrimination law, 2011, Wien - Strasbourg.

application for other grounds of discrimination, in similar circumstances. While EU law has no requirement for an identifiable victim, this is not the case at the European Court of Human Rights, where such a claim would not meet the criteria for admissibility (Art. 34 of the ECHR). It seems that it may be possible to prove that a protected group is disproportionately affected even where no statistical data is available, but the available sources are reliable and support this analysis.

The case *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic* provides one example of this. This case is based on the complaints by Roma applicants that their children were excluded from the mainstream educational system and placed in 'special' schools, intended for those with learning difficulties, on the basis of their Roma ethnicity. The placement of Roma children into 'special' schools was based on the use of tests designed to test intellectual capacity. Despite this apparently 'neutral' practice, the nature of the tests made it inherently more difficult for Roma children to achieve a satisfactory result and enter the mainstream educational system. The European Court of Human Rights found this to be proven by reference to statistical evidence indicating the particularly high proportion of pupils of Roma origin placed into 'special' schools. The data submitted by the applicants, including their particular geographical region, suggested that 50 to 56 percent of special-school pupils were Roma, while they only represented around 2 percent of the total population. Data taken from inter-governmental sources suggested between 50 percent and 90 percent of Roma students attended special schools in the country as a whole. The European Court of Human Rights found that, while the data was not exact, it did reveal that the number of Roma children affected was 'disproportionately high' relative to their composition of the population as a whole.

There are a number of other instruments that offer guidance as to how racial and ethnic origin should be understood. Neither 'color' nor affiliation with a national minority are listed expressly in the Racial Equality Directive, however, they are listed as separate grounds under the ECHR. These terms may be able to be dissociated from the definition of race and/or ethnicity and, thus, will be considered here. The EU Council's Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia under the

criminal law defines racism and xenophobia with reference to violence or hatred directed against groups in reference to ‘race, color, religion, descent, or national or ethnic origin’. The Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (Council of Europe) has also adopted a broad approach to defining ‘racial discrimination’, which includes the grounds of “race, color, language, religion, and nationality or national or ethnic origin”.¹³ Similarly, Article 1 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (1966) defines racial discrimination also in reference to the grounds of “race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin”. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, responsible for interpreting and monitoring compliance with the treaty has further stated that, unless justification exists to the contrary, determination as to whether an individual is a member of a particular racial or ethnic group, “shall ... be based upon *self-identification* by the individual concerned.” This prevents the State from excluding protection of any ethnic group that it does not, or has not yet, recognized.¹⁴

The Racial Equality Directive does not, however, define housing discrimination as domain of multiple discrimination. However, it is suggested that this should be interpreted in the light of international human rights law, in particular the right to respect for one’s home under Article 7 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and Article 8 of the ECHR and the right to adequate housing contained in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. The European Court of Human Rights has construed the right to a home widely, including mobile homes such as caravans or trailers, even in situations where they are located illegally. According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adequate housing must satisfy a range of requirements. In particular it should “be of sufficient quality to ensure protection from the elements; reflect the cultural requirements of inhabitants (and so includes

13 ECRI General Policy Recommendation no. 7 on national Legislation to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, CRI (2003)8, adopted 13 December 2002, paras. 1(b) and (c)

14 CERD, General Recommendation III concerning the interpretation and application of Article 1, paragraphs 1 and 4 of the Convention

vehicles, caravans, encampments and other non-permanent structures); be connected to public utilities and sanitation services; and be connected to public services and allow access to work opportunities through an adequate infrastructure.” It should also include adequate protection against forced or summary eviction, and be affordable. This understanding of housing also appears in the approach taken by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).¹⁵

Adopting this approach, access to housing would include not just ensuring that there is equality of treatment on the part of public or private landlords and estate agents in deciding whether to let or sell properties to particular individuals. It would also include the right to equal treatment in the way that housing is allocated (such as allocation of low-quality or remote housing to particular ethnic groups), maintained (requiring upkeep of properties inhabited by particular groups) and rented (providing security of tenure, controlled rental rates, and/or reasonable deposits for those belonging to particular groups).

Right to asylum and international protection

The legal regulation also provides “international protection for persecuted or systematically discriminated or tortured migrants” on various grounds. The exodus of Roma from the CEE region to Canada may illustrate the ineffectiveness of the sending countries anti-discrimination provisions. However the European Union guarantees – with a wide margin of appreciation – the asylum of third country nationals (Art 18 of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights). It is exceptional if a (potential) union citizen is eligible for international protection status, simply due to the measures the Council would have to take should a given member state violate union-shared values. This exclusive principle was passed in the Aznar Protocol (1999) in order to make it impossible for member states to take in separatists or extremists from another member state as refugees.

15 The State of Roma and Traveller Housing in the European Union: Steps Towards Equality. Summary Report (Vienna, FRA, March 2010).

Added to the Amsterdam Treaty, Protocol No. 24, on asylum for nationals of Member States of the EU, institutionalized this exclusion into the *acquis communautaire*. This 'safe country of origin' principle was extended to the nationals in candidate states. Neither the 1951 Geneva Convention on the status of refugees nor the ECHR (Art 3) or the UN Convention Against Torture allows exceptions for persons in need of protection on the grounds of nationality. This limitation on the assessment of Roma applicants has externalized this issue of Roma disintegration from Europe to overseas since the beginning of the enlargement process. (Tóth 2011) This effort is supported by the set of readmission agreements (to send back irregular migrants to the country of origin) that have been signed with an increasing number of source countries. In addition, these agreements discourage in-depth evaluation of applications and/or prohibition of expulsion or return in transit and destination states.

The inflow of Roma asylum seekers was unexpected for Canadian authorities. However, this movement, along with its contradictions, managed to upgrade the reluctant reform in refugee procedural and substantive regulation in Canada. Meanwhile, the social conditions for Roma citizens in the sending (their home) countries - that might readmit them after the (final) refusal - have not further developed. Table 5. demonstrates how the reintroduced visa requirements against Czech travelers can reduce applications and, in parallel, maintain the recognition of Roma applicants. Furthermore, taking into account the great deal of pending cases that were submitted in the prior period, data indicates that Canada was certainly not the only destination for asylum seekers from these three member states in 2010.

Table 5. Outflow of asylum seekers (mainly Roma) from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary (2009-2011)

Nationals of	Refugees and applicants at the end of 2010*			Asylum-seekers in Canada**			Recognized in Canada**			Rejected in Canada**		
	R	A	Total	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011	2009	2010	2011
Czech Republic	817	1,160	1,977	2,202	58	30	90	43	24	76	331	274
Slovakia	158	427	585	331	258	329	2	4	3	6	58	12
Hungary	1,438	3,558	5,006	2,440	2,300	4,423	3	165	22	5	738	72

(*) Source: UNHCR statistical yearbook, Geneva – number of applicants includes the pending cases worldwide

(**) Source: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

As is well known, the size of a diaspora and its cohesion contributes to migratory movements. Canada's largest Roma community is understood to be located in Hamilton, Ontario and is estimated at between 1,500 and 3,000 people. The vast majority of these Roma came to Canada as refugees from Hungary, Slovakia, and Czech Republic and gained extensive support from social workers and supportive community members to find jobs, affordable housing, and to learn English. As the number of refugee applicants from Czech Republic increased dramatically in 2008 and 2009, the Canadian government decided to impose visa restrictions on the Czech Republic and, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, they are considering doing the same for Hungary because it was also amongst the first sources of refugee claimants.

The Canadian government has also argued that, as member states of the EU, the Roma citizens of Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia are free to live in any of the other 26 EU countries and, thus, cannot be considered legitimate asylum claimants. Furthermore, Minister Jason Kenney, the Canadian Minister of Immigration and Multiculturalism at the time, said in June 2009 that they have been "monitoring very closely the rising number of asylum claimants from the Czech Republic, [but] we find it hard to believe that [it] is an island of persecution."¹⁶

Being a hardened skeptic of the merits of claims put forth by members of the stateless ethnic group, Kenney visited the Roma Community Centre in Toronto in November 2011 where he met with claimants that testified to persecution by ultra-right-wing nationalists and neo-Nazi groups in their home countries and across Europe. In 2009, he had called Czech Roma claims "bogus" and in 2010 told the House of Commons that some Roma asylum-seekers are "coached to come to Canada, making a false asylum claim and then registering for provincial welfare benefits." He asserted that most of the 2,298 claims filed in 2010 were "not bonafide" and migration by Hungarian Roma is "very peculiar," "bizarre," and "very well-organized."

16 Why Canada should care about the Hungarian Roma February 10, 2010
On-line: <http://canadasworld.wordpress.com/2010/02/10/why-canada-should-care-about-the-hungarian-roma/>

Kenney went as far as to say that “asylum isn’t about whether you like the country you live in, it’s not about whether life is easy there or not, it’s not even about whether you might occasionally face discrimination”...“If people are interested in Canada because they want to pursue a quality health care system, or economic opportunities, or they don’t like their country of origin, then I would invite them to apply through our immigration system like everyone else.” The number of Hungarian claims increased almost 100-fold after the country’s visa requirement was lifted in 2008, with claims jumping from 34 in 2007 to 2,298 in 2010. The Canadian government has grappled to get a handle on Roma claims since the issue flared with a boom with Czech Republic claimants in 2009, when the government imposed a visa requirement on Czech citizens after 95 Roma landed at Pearson International Airport one June night. The number of Czech claimants has since dropped dramatically. Richard Kurland, a Vancouver-based immigration lawyer and policy analyst, echoed the minister’s skepticism. He chalked the flood of Hungarian Roma claims to “sheer abuse.” He believed many Hungarian Roma asylum-seekers have “done a calculation on how much they can milk from the Canadian and provincial governments.” (Carlson 2011)

Refugee reform reached a new stage with Bill C-31, intended as a solution to what the Canadian government sees as a threefold ‘threat’ to Canada and its immigration and refugee system. Firstly, the refugee process can be very slow. It can take a number of years to determine whether or not a person is a legitimate refugee. Secondly, there are the so-called ‘smuggler’ boats. The *Ocean Lady* and the *Sun Sea* are two such crafts, carrying Sri Lankan Tamil refugees to Canada in 2009 and 2010, respectively. The government calls these asylum seekers ‘irregular arrivals’ and Bill C-31 has a number of provisions that penalize these groups. Asylum seekers who arrive ‘irregularly’ will be held in detention. Lastly, the third threat is Roma movement, an amassing of independent asylum seekers who buy plane tickets to Canada and declare on arrival their refugee status to authorities. This last group is the source of what the government considers to be the ‘third threat to the system.’ That is where the idea of ‘safe country of origin’ comes in. Bill C-31 provides that asylum seekers from countries the Ministry

designates as 'safe' will get short shrift indeed - 15 days to make their case in writing and 45 days in total. After this they will, if the authority (IRB) does not accept them, be immediately returned home. Based on abundant empirical data and massive and detailed reports by bodies such as Amnesty, the Council of Europe, the United States State Department and Human Rights Watch, it is impossible to imagine that any panel would be able to classify Hungary in 2012 as 'safe.' The cruel fact is that Hungary is not safe for the Roma.

According to European nation-state's version of the story, the Roma are not victims at all. They are people who refuse to work, who were the 'spoiled children of Communism,' and whose 'culture' is based on indolence and criminality. Canadian officials accept this antiquated, profoundly racist story and have legitimized it to the Canadian government who, in response, reintroduced the visa requirement for Czech visitors in 2009. However, the visa fix did not settle matters with the EU. It only muddied the waters for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) Canada was trying to negotiate with the EU. A number of EU countries said they would never make such an agreement with Canada as long as it imposed visas on any EU member states. Indeed, the government was in a pickle; especially considering that Roma were now coming to Canada not only from the Czech Republic but also from Slovakia and a considerable number from Hungary, as well. (Nerenberg 2012)

Free movement of persons, workers

European Union integration is based on economic freedom (free circulation of products, services, capital, etc.), including the free movement of workers. Although the latter has been a guarantee that has gradually developed over a period of 45 years, the establishment of union citizenship in the Maastrich Treaty (1992) extends the personal scope to workers, entrepreneurs, students, inactive persons, and family members. This almost linear development is challenged by the temporary limitations on workers coming from ten new member states without economic gains. (Lukács

2011) In these circumstances, the interpretation of the free movement of union citizens - namely that they are eligible for entry and residence in another member state unless they cause an “unreasonable burden to the social system of the place of residence” - is hardly popular with public opinion. Furthermore, the irregular economic activities commonly associated with lower strata Roma such as begging, prostitution, dumpster diving, scraps and refuse collection, material recycling, and hawking, have brought to question whether these poor, mobile, segregated union citizens should be the subjects of expulsion or tolerance. EU law prohibits ‘removal of residing union citizen’ based on pure economic grounds or mechanic authoritarian decisions or discrimination. On the other side, Roma who are third country nationals can be easily expelled for ‘public order’ reasons, in particular based on the readmission agreements. However, the authorities simply cannot differentiate amongst Roma as irregular migrants or else wise.

However, EU law protections are more limited in scope. The prohibition of discrimination against nationality in EU law applies to the context of free movement of persons and is only accorded to citizens of EU Member States. In addition, the non-discrimination directives contain various exclusions of application for third-country nationals (individuals who are citizens of a State that is not a member of the EU). The non-discrimination directives expressly exclude their applications as nationality discrimination, as regulated under the free movement directive.¹⁷ Accordingly, only citizens of EU Member States have right of entry and residence in other EU Member States. After a period of five years of lawful residence in another EU Member State, an EU citizen is entitled to permanent residence, giving them equivalent rights to those in the category of ‘worker’. This, however, does not mean that non-discrimination directives do not protect nationals of other Member States.

Both the Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive state that they do not provide any right to equal treatment for

17 Directive 2004/38/EC on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States, OJ L 158, 30.4.2004, p 77.

third-country nationals in relation to conditions of entry and residence. However, third-country nationals will enjoy a right to equal treatment in broadly the same areas covered by the non-discrimination directives, allowing them to qualify as ‘long-term residents’ under the Third-country Nationals Directive (which requires, among other conditions, five years’ lawful residence). In addition, the Family Unification Directive allows for third-country nationals that lawfully reside in a Member State to be joined by family members in certain conditions.¹⁸

In brief, EU law on free movement grants limited rights to third-country nationals. Nevertheless, the ECHR does stipulate that it is the duty of all member states within the Council of Europe to guarantee the rights provided in the ECHR to all individuals within their jurisdiction, including non-nationals. The European Court of Human Rights has maintained a balance between State’s right to control what benefits it may offer to those enjoying the legal bond of nationality against the need to prevent states from discriminating against those who have formed substantial, factual bonds with the State. The Court has applied great scrutiny in matters relating to social security, if individuals can show a strong ‘factual tie’ to a state. In this way, the ECHR administers stronger protection for third-country nationals than the EU law in terms of entry and residence. In connection to this, the European Court of Human Rights has primarily intervened in complaints relating to deportation of individuals where they face inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment or torture in the destination state (under Article 3), or have formed strong family ties in the host state, which will be broken if the individual is forced to leave (under Article 8).¹⁹

The free movement – entry and residence without prior permission from the authorities in the destination state – is not universal but, in theory, it is a prerogative for union (EEA) citizens and family members, internally and externally. In this way, the common visa policy determines EU

18 Directive 2003/109/EC concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents, OJ L 16, 23.01.2004, p. 44.; Directive 2003/86/EC on the right to family reunification, OJ L 251, 3.10.2003, p. 12.

19 For example, ECtHR, *Chahal v. UK* (No. 22414/93), 15 November 1996. *Abdulaziz, Cabales and Balkandali v. UK* (Nos. 9214/80, 9473/81 and 9474/81), 28 May 1985.

foreign affairs, also in regards to the solidarity closure of visa restrictions. In the relationship between Canada and EU, the Roma ‘situation’ was, if truth be told, significant neither in terms of threatening the solidarity principle against Canadian nationals (requiring visas to enter the EU) nor to hindering the free trade agreement under negotiation between the EU and Canada. In short, the visa war was a burlesque, not a drama. (Tóth 2010c)

European policy or a separate Roma Strategy?

Numerous surveys and reports made by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) prove that legislative instruments and regulations cannot make an impact on Roma integration into the mainstream society. The deeply-rooted segregation of Roma requires active measures, institutional intervention, expert analysis, and financial backing to reduce the gap in new democracies between Roma and the mainstream in terms of employment, housing, health care, schooling and democratic thinking. The social cohesion and regional development of employment policies in the EU are supported by funds (ESF, ERDF, EAFRD) to the tune of EUR 17.5 billion in the period of 2007-2013. These can be implemented to include social inclusion programs that also favor Roma inclusion. However, effective and sustainable programs cannot be evaluated properly if there is no statistical data, governmental coordination (both horizontally and vertically) with municipal governments, and a system of monitoring that assures the involvement of civil society. We have to add here that security and justice programs combating organized crime (i.e. the Stockholm Programme 2009-2013) are also supported by the EU budget (covering human trafficking, protection of victims as witness in racial violation, etc.).

In absence of a holistic pursuit of European policies and governmental coordination at the national level, the success of the Europe 2020 program is doubtful. Additionally, it establishes its anti-poverty policy without stipulating specific methods for monitoring. In parallel, the segregation of Roma continues, as testimonies and available surveys demonstrate. Roma

ghettoes and spatial segregation in settlements have been documented in these states. The construction of walls around Roma neighborhoods, the denial of (address) registration for Roma households at municipal offices, and the municipal obstruction of Roma families seeking to purchase homes in ‘clean’ villages demonstrate some of the specific legal conflicts. Between 2008-2010, the Slovakian press covered instances of ghettoization – the construction of walls around Roma neighborhoods and settlements in Ostovany, Michalovce, and Sedovce. The authorities cited the moves as intended to improve property protection, theft prevent, environmental pollution, noise, and further that the walls would be used for sport activities. However, the common feature of these construction projects is that these walls were built without exhaustive communication taking place first between the municipality, inhabitants, self-governments, and Roma communities at the local level on the issues that led them to build the walls in the first place²⁰.

From the legal perspective, affirmative (or supporting) actions are a universal concept. In the UN context, these are labeled as ‘special measures’, while EU law refers to them as ‘specific measures’ or ‘positive action’. By taking special measures, governments are able to ensure ‘substantive equality’, that is, equal enjoyment of opportunities and access to benefits available to the general society, rather than a mere ‘formal equality’. In such instances that governments, employers, and service providers fail to consider the appropriateness of taking special measures, they increase the risk that their rules and practices may amount to indirect discrimination. The European Court of Human Rights has stated that, “the right not to be discriminated against in the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed under the ECHR is also violated when States fail to treat differently persons whose situations are significantly different.”²¹ Similarly, the EU non-discrimination directives expressly foresee the possibility of affirmative action stating, “with a view to ensuring full equality in practice, the

20 Opinion issued by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, 22 January 2010 <http://www.snslp.sk>

21 *Pretty v. UK* (No. 2346/02), 29 April 2002, para. 88.

principle of equal treatment shall not prevent any Member State from maintaining or adopting specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to [a protected ground].”²² The permissibility of making positive measures in favor of disadvantaged groups is further reinforced by guidelines offered by several of the bodies responsible for interpreting and monitoring UN human rights treaties. These bodies have stressed that such measures should be temporary in nature, not extending in time or scope beyond what is necessary to address the inequality in question.²³

Although many experts have claimed that the segregation of Roma is not ethnic in character and that implementing effective social and employment policy is the best mid-term panacea, for Roma as well, the dilemma remains whether a specific Roma strategy is required or whether the integration of Roma into mainstream society shall be treated inside various existing sector’s frameworks. At one point, a separate ‘Roma toolkit’ was proposed at the EU level. Looking beyond the shortages in governmental capacity, affirmative action to date has simply not been based on either social acceptance or a supportive attitude on the part of municipal authorities. Thus, I am afraid, the concept of national Roma strategy shall remain a theory found only in the books.

On March 8, 2011, the Roma Framework Strategy came before the European Parliament. It was generally agreed that a focus on improving the Roma’s economic situation would raise the GDP and result in better social cohesion. Creating a map of ‘territories in crisis’ would help direct the destination of money towards projects financed partly from the European funds, taking into consideration the ethnic, social, and economic features of a region as well as the demand and supply at regional and national

22 Racial Equality Directive, Article 5; Employment Equality Directive, Article 7; gender goods and Services Directive, Article 6; and also with a slightly different formulation: gender Equality Directive (Recast), Article 3.

23 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment no. 18: non-Discrimination’ UN Doc. A/45/40(vol. I.) (SUp), 10 November 1989; UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation no. 30 on Discrimination against non-Citizens, UN Doc. HRI/gEn/1/Rev.7/Add.1, 4 May 2005.

level programs. The overseeing body would be the European Commission. This strategy was accepted with 576 in favor, 32 against, and 60 abstained (March 9, 2011). The national field of priorities and administrative capacity in terms of programming and monitoring would remain the responsibility of the member states. Perhaps the move towards separate Roma actions stemmed from the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), launched by 12 countries, targeting joint cooperation with Roma civil societies across Europe in four priority areas: education, employment, healthcare, and housing and on three interrelated issues: poverty, discrimination, and gender equality. Each of the 12 countries created their own action plan, based on the existing governmental policies and strategies.²⁴

In summary, the forthcoming European goals regarding anti-poverty and Roma inclusion policies are treated separately (as demonstrated here on Tables 6. and 7.).

24 For instance, the Slovak program can be read in the Report on the Observance of Human Rights including the observance of the principle of equal treatment in the Slovak Republic for the year 2009, Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Bratislava, 2010.

Table 6. Aims of Europe 2020 in EU27 and in member states with significant Roma populations

EU 27 headline targets for the Europe 2020 program		Employment rate (%)	School Drop-Out rate (%)	Tertiary Education (%)	Reduction of population at risk of poverty and social exclusion
	% Roma population / Total Roma population (estim.)	75% of the population between 20-64 years old	10%	40 %	20 million
Bulgaria	10.3% 750,000	76%	11%	36%	250,000
Slovakia	9.2% 500,000	72%	6%	40%	170,000
Romania	8.3% 1,850,000	70%	11.3%	26.7%	580,000
Hungary	7.1% 700,000	75%	10%	30%	450,000
Greece	2.5% 265,000	70%	9.7%	32%	450,000
Czech Republic	1.9% 200,000	75%	5.5%	32%	30,000
Spain	1.6% 725,000	74%	15%	44%	1,500,000
Total EU in average	1.73% 6,172,800				

Table 7. Comparison of goals in Europe 2020 to the past Roma Strategy

Europe 2020 targets	EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020
<p>Employment of 75% of working age population (20-64 year-olds) Reduction of school drop-out rates to below 10%</p>	<p>Reduction of the employment gap between Roma and the majority population</p> <p>Completion of (a minimum of) primary school for all Roma children</p>
<p>Completion of third-level education for at least 40% of adults (30 years old and up)</p>	<p>Reduction of the disparity in health statistics between Roma and the majority population</p>
<p>Reduction in poverty and social exclusion: Reducing the number of people in, or at risk of poverty and social exclusion, by least 20 million.</p>	<p>Elimination of the gap between Roma's access to housing and public utilities and that of the majority population</p> <p>EUR 26.5 billion in EU funding (Structural, Agricultural, Regional Development, etc.)</p>

Optional minority rights

Minorities may enjoy specific rights that preserve own identity, as a community or individuals with the same regional origin, language, traditions, religion, and/or ethnic roots. Although the European Charter of Fundamental Rights respects diversity and minorities, there is no EU level ethnic/minority policy. Regional rules such as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (1992) and the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995) protect minority rights but their ratification within the member states is not high. In this way, constitutional rules on specific rights and institutions, as well as domestic practice, are decisive in minority rights. For instance, Slovakia established the Council of the Government for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups and, in 1993, Hungary passed the Act on Minorities' Rights, setting up a self-governmental system for statute (13) minorities

in 2011. However, if we are aiming at effective diversity, the existence of minority actions and commitments ought to be accompanied by the majority society's acceptance of minorities and the active involvement of an influential minority elite who govern the infrastructure of community life. (Tóth 2012)

Conclusions

The academic research on migration to Canada (as well as to France and the UK in 1996-2001), conducted in both Hungary and Canada in the last few years, disproves the simplistic suggestion that (Hungarian) Roma migration is either merely a response to economic misery in Hungary and better opportunities elsewhere or a product of *de facto* (if not *de jure*) persecution. Simplistic imagery dominates much of popular thought on migration, which is clearly seen in the rhetoric of political parties, along with human rights protection and racial exclusion attitudes exhibited in the parliament, as was well documented in 2000-2001. (Kováts 2002)

The media espoused the 'wave from poverty to wealth' without critical analysis of either the internal or external ramifications of Roma migration. As it has been proven, even significant disparities in economic returns (measured in wages) are not sufficient to induce migration in most people. For Roma, the overwhelming factor in their mobility was that their home country was a less and less desirable place to live. Furthermore, in actuality, migration as a 'strategy for survival' is only truly available for persons in a certain social and economic position. The heterogeneous nature of Roma communities and the levels of abject poverty mean that the most deeply segregated groups have remained untouched by this pattern.

In Hungary, the 'ethnicisation' of poverty and the Roma issue at large have been most prominent political features in the past couple of decades and is more characteristic of Hungarian civil culture than any other CEE country. Since 1990, every government has followed this pattern of 'ethnicization', yet without capping off the slippery slope towards ever-greater amounts of migration. Roma migration is not an ethnic phenomenon,

but rather a socio-economic and political one and it can be treated as a part of the inevitable transformation of labor markets, in relation to the liberalization of world trade.

Furthermore, Roma migration may give rise to revision of sending countries' inclusion policies, inspiring a separate Roma strategy and reform within destination states' asylum legal systems, through the externalization of the European visa and other security measures. Roma migration may also create a focus on how to make the protection against racial/multiple discrimination more effective in future. However, if things do go this direction - if the response does include creation of a separate Roma strategy for substantive equality, the introduction of visa restrictions, and stricter asylum regulations in destination states - then all this would definitively relegate migrating, as well as returning, Roma to the role of Europe's 'scapegoats'.

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3. ROMA IN CANADA: MIGRATORY TRENDS, ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS

Antonela Arhin

University of Toronto, Canada

Introduction

Although prominently exposed in the media over the last decade, Romani migration to Canada is not a recent phenomenon. Early Romani migration to Canada took off in the last decade of the 19th century when Vlach Roma from Eastern Europe and the Balkans migrated en mass to the United States, Central and South America, and Canada (Lee 2000). In the second decade of the 20th century, Roma migrated to Canada from Britain as British-Romani Travellers and were identified as British immigrants by the Canadian immigration authorities. The third largest group composed of Hungarian Roma arriving in Canada as political refugees who were fleeing the 1956 Soviet invasion (Lee 2008).

It was not until 1997 that the mainstream media and the general public became aware of their arrival to Canada. After the birth of new democracies in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary, Roma were no longer able to claim refugee status. They began arriving in Canada as victims of ethnic persecution, a category unfamiliar to Canada at the time. In 1996, a group of some 150 Czech-Romani refugees arrived in Vancouver after first landing in Montreal and being told by Canadian

Immigration officials that they were not welcome in Canada. Though this incident flew under the media's radar, in contrast, Czech TV Nova aired a well-viewed documentary *Na Vlastni Oči* (With Your Own Eyes) in August 1997 portraying the lives of a few Czech Roma refugee claimants and presenting the situation in a rather optimistic light.²⁵ As a direct result, some 1,500 Czech Roma sought refuge in Canada. Two months later, by October of that year, Canada had already countered this with a visa regime specifically for Czech nationals (this was finally lifted in 2007 and reimposed in 2009). According to one source, from August to November of 1997, 14 major Canadian media outlets ran no less than 91 stories on this matter (Ferguson 2009). The media frenzy generated images of a 'Gypsy invasion' using a number of value-loaded terms; their arrival was described as an "influx," a "flood," "tide," and Roma refugees were accused of being a "burden," "straining," "draining," to the system and the taxpayers; "severely taxing," "swamping," the Canadian economy or "taking advantage of" emergency housing, welfare, and other social services." The above source also claims that 600 of the 1,500 Czech Roma have since returned home and 96% of reviewed refugee claims have been deemed legitimate and granted.

In late 1998, for the first time in its history, the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) decided to establish a lead case, involving two families, which would serve as the precedent for all other Hungarian Roma refugee cases. The question at hand was whether or not, while the applicants may indeed face discrimination if sent back to Hungary, the affliction they would face in their home country would amount to persecution. The rationale for producing the lead cases was published by the IRB in a March 1999 "Lead Case Backgrounder".²⁶ On March

25 This short TV report portrayed Romani emigres in Canada living comfortably with support from the state, sheltered from racial discrimination and violence. This was in stark contrast with current events in the Czech Republic. One of the reports stated that 5,000 Romani from the city of Ostrava were ready to migrate to Canada. Mayors in some Czech towns even offered to facilitate the move and finance flights. In 1997, 1,285 people from the Czech Republic arrived in Canada and claimed refugee status, in comparison to 189 Czechs who applied the previous year. Both governments criticized the TV report.

26 IRB «Lead Cases Backgrounder», March 1999. See *Geza v. Canada* (Min. of Citizenship and Immigration) 2006 FCA 124.

27, 2006 the Federal Court of Appeal of Canada overturned the IRB Lead Case decision of January 21, 1999 because, *inter alia*, “a reasonable person... would think that the hearing panel was biased and was not acting independently when it rejected the appellants’ claims for refugee status”.²⁷ In 2008, the Canadian Citizenship and Immigration Minister (now the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism), Jason Kenney, publicly stated they were ‘bogus’ refugees coming from democratic countries in Europe. In 2009, Canada re-imposed visas on Czech applicants, due to a significant rise in migration in 2008. In 2010, the Balanced Refugee Reform Bill C-11 was passed in order to address the large backlog of claims and the long waiting times for hearings. In the same year, Canada was presented with its first case of trafficking in persons for labor exploitation. It involved Roma families and it was the largest human trafficking case in Canada to date. In 2012, Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act Bill C-31 was passed. It included a number of important changes and provisions to the system, mainly regarding the Interim Federal Health Program.

Roma Refugee Statistics

Canada is a signatory to all major United Nations human rights treaties that seek to protect refugees and victims of torture, including the Refugee Convention, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the Convention against Torture. Canada has been accepting refugees since the end of World War II and has gone through three major refugee movements between 1945 and 1970, in response to humanitarian crises: (1) accepting displaced persons in the years immediately following WWII (2) Hungarian refugees between 1956 and 1957, and (3) Czech refugees in 1968.²⁸ In the past decade, Canada has become one of the top three

27 Federal Court of Appeal of Canada, Dockets A-419-04 and A-420-04, Heard at Toronto, Ontario, on November 22, 2005, Judgment delivered at Ottawa, Ontario, on March 27, 2006.

28 See <http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=853>

refugee resettlement countries in the world. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that, as of January 2012, there are 206,735 refugees and asylum-seekers present in Canada.²⁹ Currently, Canada has one of the highest per capita immigration rates in the world, driven by economic policy and family reunification (Dolin and Young 2004). Canada also resettles over one in ten of the world's refugees (Public Safety Canada 2010). Approximately 41% of Canadians are first or second generation immigrants.³⁰

According to a comprehensive overview of IRB decisions over the past 20 years, compiled by the Human Rights Research and Education Centre at the University of Ottawa, refugee acceptance rates have largely remained consistent at 40-45% for most years (Human Rights Research and Education Centre 2012). The same source makes the following conclusions:

- In regards to acceptance rates, the current rate of 38% in 2011 and 2010 is the lowest in the IRB's history, while over the previous years it remained at 40-45%.
- Refugee flows to Canada, through to the year 2001, remained at around 25,000 new claims per year. This year saw its largest flow of refugees – nearly 44,000 claimants. From this point on, refugee flows have been fluctuating, amounting to some 34,000 new claims in 2009 then dropping to just over 22,000 new claims in 2010. The number of new claims reached almost 25,000 in 2011. There is an assumption that the fluctuation was caused by visa restrictions being imposed on Mexico and the Czech Republic, which resulted in over 9,000 claimants from Mexico in 2009 and just over 700 in 2011.
- According to the statistics on the top ten refugee source countries, there is no parallel between the number of claims made and the acceptance rates. To illustrate, some countries that have had a high

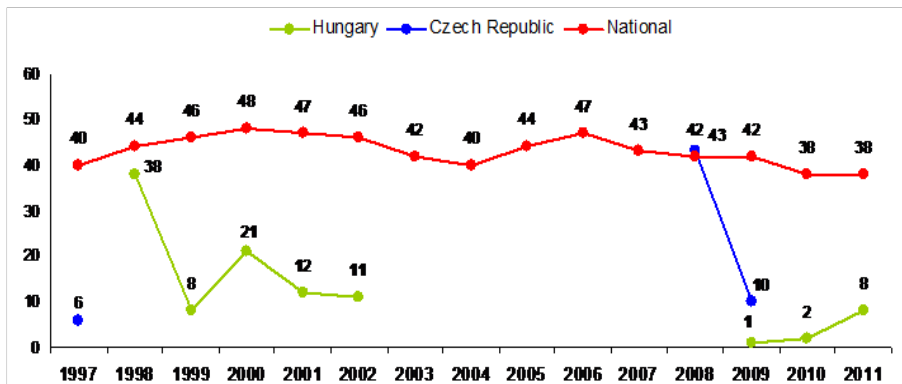
29 See UNHCR's 2012 Fact Sheet on Canada at <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e491336>

30 Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) (2009). Canada – Permanent residents by gender and category, 1984 to 2008. Facts and figures 2008 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2008/permanent/01.asp>.

number of claimants over the last 23 years, such as Hungary, have had low acceptance rates while others, such as Sri Lanka, have traditionally had high acceptance rates. For example, Sri Lanka has been a top source country in 10 years during the analyzed period from 1989 to 2011, and has consistently been among the top 10 during that time frame. Its aggregate average acceptance rate amounts to 79%. Hungary, in contrast, has been among the top 10 source countries eight times in the period from 1989 to 2011, a top refugee source country three times, with an aggregate average of 13% over the considered years.

Expanding further on these assertions and analyzing IRB status determinations from 1997 to 2011, it is possible to infer that Canada’s national acceptance rates have been well above those of applicants from Hungary and the Czech Republic. The last two years offer some interesting points for analysis. Although being the top refugee source country, Hungary has had the lowest acceptance rates (i.e. 2% in the year 2010 and 8% in 2011), while the remaining nine countries have had an aggregate average of 48% in 2010 and 44% in 2011 (Chart 1.). It is not possible to make the same claim about the Czech Republic, which appeared amongst the top 10 source countries in the last two years (it had acceptance rates of 43% in 2008 and 10% in 2009).

Chart 1. Acceptance rates in % for Hungary and the Czech Republic, 1997-2011

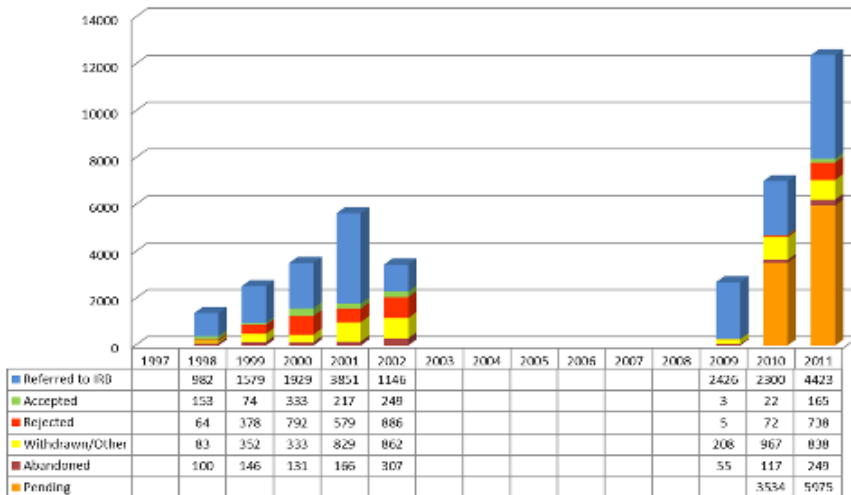


Source: Author’s calculations based on IRB status determinations (1997-2011)

Concurrently, while analyzing the number of rejected applications, we note that Hungary had 72 rejected applications in 2010 and 738 in 2011 (Chart 2.). In 2010, Hungary had both the lowest number of rejected applications as well as the lowest accepted rate amongst the top 10 source countries. The remaining nine top source countries had an aggregate average of 882 rejections with Mexico leading with 3,437 rejected claims for the analyzed year. In 2011, the aggregate average of the nine leading source countries amounted to 828, while Hungary had 738 rejected refugee claims. Mexico again had the highest number of rejections, totaling 4,184. In 2009, likewise, refugee applicants from Hungary had the lowest rejection rate.

In terms of pending cases, Hungary was in the top three countries with 3,534 pending cases in 2010, along with Mexico and Haiti. Last year, Hungary came in first as a country with a highest number of pending cases (5,975), followed by Mexico and China.

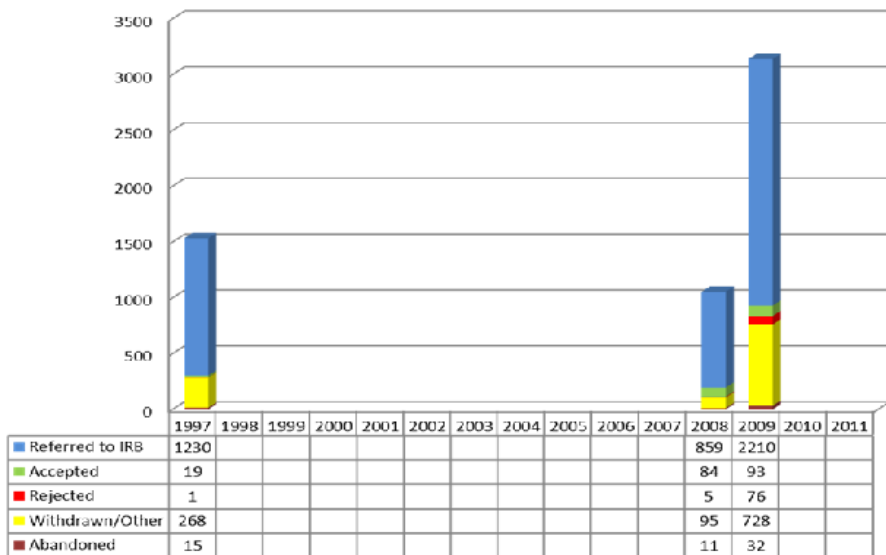
Chart 2. IRB status determinations for refugee claimants from Hungary, 1997-2011



Source: Author's calculation based on IRB status determinations (1997-2011)

In comparison to refugee claimants from Hungary, information and data on those arriving from the Czech Republic has resurfaced on Canada’s refugee statistics for 2008 and 2009, as a visa requirement was in force from 1997 to October 2007. The visa regime was re-imposed in July 2009 after which data on Czech claimants disappears from national refugee statistics. In 2008, refugee claims lodged by Czech citizens totaled five out of referred 859 claims (Chart 3.), thus making it the country with the lowest number of rejected refugee applications that year. In 2009, Czech refugee claimants had the lowest rejection rate along with those arriving from Hungary, 76 and 5 respectively

Chart 3. IRB status determinations for refugee claimants from the Czech Republic, 1997-2011

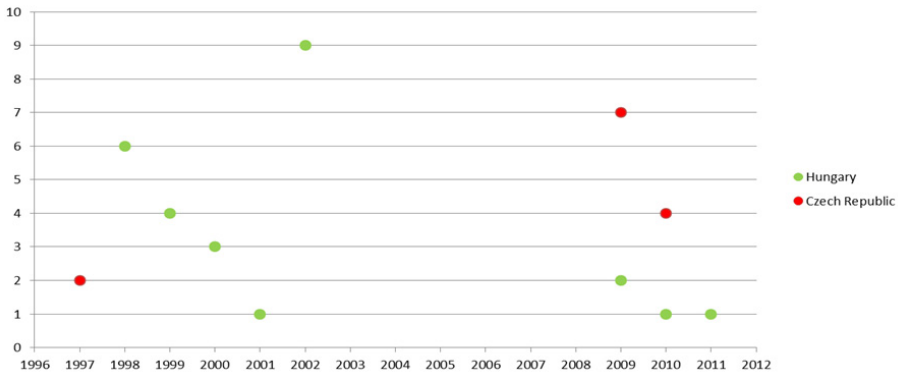


Source: Author’s calculations based on IRB status determinations (1997-2011)

While analyzing the set of data presented via IRB refugee status determinations in terms of the number of referred cases, it is possible to corroborate that Hungary has been in the top ten source countries eight

times from 1997 to 2011, and has ranked three times as the top sending country. The Czech Republic, on the other hand, has been among the top ten source countries three times during the same time frame (Chart 3.).

Chart 4. Top source countries' rankings for Hungary and the Czech Republic, 1997-2011



Source: Author's calculations based on IRB status determinations (1997-2011)

Bill C-31: Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act

Bill C-31, also known as the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, was introduced in Parliament on February 16, 2012 and received royal assent on June 29, 2012. Many refugees, legal experts, non-governmental organizations as well as government officials raised serious concerns as to some of its new elements. The most contentious amendments are the following:

1. Changes to the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP), which provides temporary health benefits to refugees until they qualify for provincial and territorial coverage.

Historically, the benefits included basic medical care as well as supplemental benefits such as pharmaceutical, vision and dental care, ambulance services, and devices to assist with mobility, at a level similar

to that provided by provinces to people on social assistance. Irrespective of whether they arrived in Canada as part of a government resettlement program, had official sponsors, if they sought asylum, or were awaiting deportation, everyone received basic medical care. This also applied to rejected refugee claimants awaiting deportation. In fiscal year 2010/11, the IFHP cost the government \$84.6 million (i.e. 0.04 % of the nation's health bill), serving 128,000 refugees. It cost each Canadian about \$3 per year. On June 30, 2012, the reformed IFHP ended the coverage of supplemental health care benefits to all refugee claimants except those selected and resettled from abroad by the government (government assisted refugees or GARs) and those privately-sponsored refugees who receive federal financial assistance. The refugee claimants, and other groups falling under the ambit of the IFHP (such as resettled refugees, refugees whose claims have been accepted, rejected refugee claimants whose cases are under judicial review, victims of human trafficking, or people detained at Canadian borders), shall be provided with medications and vaccines "only if needed to prevent or treat a disease that is a risk to public health or a condition of public safety concern."³¹ These changes, according to Minister Jason Kenney, will discourage people who may be considering filing an unfounded refugee claim in Canada.³²

31 See Interim Federal Health Program: Summary of Benefits. Available at: www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/summary-ifhp.asp

32 'Urgent' services are defined as "those provided in response to a medical emergency - an injury or illness that poses an immediate threat to a person's life, limb, or a function. The services and products shall not be more than what is required to respond to the medical emergency." 'Essential' services are defined as ones provided to a refugee claimant or protected person:

- "who is presenting for assessment and follow-up of a specific illness, symptom, complaint or injury;
- for prenatal, labor and delivery, and postpartum care (including routine prenatal care and maternal care for up to 28 days after the delivery);
- or for the prevention, diagnosis, or treatment of a disease posing a risk to public health or of a condition of public safety concern."

Services which are deemed as neither urgent nor essential include those:

- "provided solely for the purpose of screening or prevention of a disease or injury except for screening or prevention of diseases posing a risk to public health or of conditions of public safety concern;

2. Provision for ‘Designated Countries of Origin’, identified at the minister’s discretion, by which certain countries would be deemed democratic, peaceful, and safe if they have a democratically elected Parliament, independent judiciary and civil society organizations, and therefore highly unlikely to produce any refugees.

Having a ‘Designated Countries of Origin’ (DCO) list raises concern that the lack of an oversight mechanism would render the entire process to political rather than human rights considerations. According to Bill C-31, only countries with a combined rejection/withdrawal/abandonment rate of 75% or higher, or a withdrawal/abandonment rate of 60% or higher will qualify as a safe country. The government deems that these countries do not normally produce refugees, do respect human rights, and offer state protection. On the other hand, the DCO lists raised concern with a number of organizations including Amnesty International.³³ Overall, over 70 countries would automatically make the safe list based on 2011 statistics alone. It is planned that claimants from designated ‘safe’ countries would have their cases fast-tracked and would have no right to appeal a negative decision to the new Refugee Appeal Board. The government’s aim is to deport illegitimate claimants within 45 days instead of the current 1,000 days.

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- for elective purposes or primarily provided to improve quality of life with respect to a condition that causes minimal dysfunction and that is unlikely to deteriorate to a medical emergency within 12 months or the current period of eligibility, if shorter;
 - for cosmetic purposes or convenience of the beneficiary;
 - for fertility and sterilization purposes;
 - for the purpose of rehabilitation, including the cost of rehabilitation hospitals and facilities;
 - primarily related to research or experimentation;
 - not paid for by provincial or territorial health benefit programs;
 - required by or paid by third parties such as insurance companies, business establishments (e.g. automobile insurance), or government agencies, but excluding immigration medical examinations; and
 - for long term care and home care.”

33 Amnesty International’s Alex Neve expressed his concern about a number of countries that meet the statistical ‘safe’ threshold and that there was no objective way to come up with a DCO list.

3. Tight timelines for preparing refugee hearings and for processing refugee claims.

A new claimant now has 15 days from arrival to file a written claim (i.e. to find a competent lawyer or, in most cases, get legal aid approval), have their lawyer arrange for an interpreter (a necessity in many cases), have the lawyer understand the case, and have the lawyer draft and deliver a well-written account of the refugee claim. There is serious concern that refugees will not have sufficient time to prepare, provide documents, and apply in a timely fashion.

4. Mandatory detention without sufficient independent review for 'Irregular Arrivals' (i.e. groups of two or more), identified at the government's discretion.

The amendment stipulates review of detention within 14 days and then after six months – instead of after one year as originally proposed – and children will still be detained, despite the fact that detention is not 'mandatory' for those 16 and under.

5. Barriers to Appeal: Irregular Arrivals will not have access to the Refugee Appeal Division, irrespective of circumstances in their country of origin. Bill C-31 will also allow only 15 working days to file an appeal for an unsuccessful claim to the Refugee Appeal Division.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada expects to save about \$100 million over the next five years by implementing these changes (CIC 2012a).

Reactions and Perceptions

The new Bill C-31 mobilized numerous reactions at governmental and non-governmental levels causing a media upheaval, especially in relation to Roma refugee claimants. The most prominent figure on behalf of the Canadian government has been Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Minister Kenney, who is determined to deter

'bogus' refugees by introducing the above-mentioned changes to Bill C-31 (Chopping health coverage 2012).

In one of his public statements, mostly referring to Roma migrants from Hungary and the Czech Republic, Minister Kenney argues that the new legislation will stop the abuse of Canada's immigration system and will "help stop foreign criminals, human smugglers, and those with unfounded refugee claims from abusing Canada's generous immigration system and receiving taxpayer funded health and social benefits" (CIC 2012b). This was not the first time he has made allegations that refugee claims made by Roma were illegitimate. In 2009, when Canada was facing a large influx of Roma refugees, Minister Kenney stated, "It's hard to believe that the Czech Republic is an island of persecution in Europe" (O'Neill 2009). In July of the same year, when Canada implemented a visa requirement for residents of the Czech Republic and Mexico in order to stem the tide of refugee claims, he commented that claimants from those countries represent "economic migrants who want to jump the queue" (Clark 2009). In addition, in March 2010, questioning the veracity of Hungarian Roma refugee claims, Minister Kenney referred to them as 'bogus,' citing how the majority of applicants withdrew or abandoned their applications before receiving judgment from the IRB (Ruf 2012).

Throughout his public statements, Minister Kenney has maintained that the government has tried, but thus far failed, to stem the tide of Roma coming into Canada and abusing its refugee system (Boesveld 2012). The IRB receives approximately 400 claims from Hungary every month and the vast majority of claimants are believed to be Roma. About 40% of refugee claimants from Hungary are from the city of Miskolc, about two and a half hours east of Budapest. The Canadian government began circulation of information brochures within Hungarian villages on why seeking asylum was not an effective way immigrate to Canada.³⁴ These campaigns proved to be ineffective as Minister Kenney remained convinced that the flood

34 Canada's ambassador to Hungary, Tamara Guttman, visited Miskolc and a city to the north, Eger, to find out why 1,600 Hungarians, many from these cities, applied for refugee status in Canada in the first half of 2011.

of asylum-seekers was “highly organized” and not at all spontaneous. (However, even quite recently, Minister Kenney travelled to the village of Alsózsolca and the city of Miskolc to meet with members of the Roma community in order to listen to their concerns, and discuss irregular migration with them.³⁵) In July 2011, he said that between January 17 and December 31, 2011, 8,819 Mexicans racked up nearly \$7 million in health care costs under the IFHP, and some 6,749 Hungarians cost the state over \$4.4 million, and another 4,583 Columbians racked up over \$2.6 million in costs (Cohen 2012a). Moreover, 3,790 Americans received over \$1.4 million in free health care and Jamaican claimants round out the top five with 809 health care users receiving over \$808,000 worth of health services, according to Postmedia News.³⁶ Minister Kenney utilized this data to further assert that Mexican, Hungarian, Columbian, and American refugee claimants used Canadian health care services more than any other asylum claimants, thus, supporting the argument that there were abuses being made to the Canadian system.

The views of the Roma Community Centre in Toronto and its executive director, Gina Csanyi-Robah, are diametrically opposite to Minister Kenney’s opinions and perceptions. The Roma Community Centre is a volunteer-based organization that opened in 1997, a non-profit organization since 1998. They claim that Roma in Canada are the victims of a public defamation campaign led by Minister Kenney who continues to use unfair and stereotypical claims to attack Roma refugees. He has denounced Roma asylum claims as “bogus” and says Roma have arrived to Canada as a result of “human trafficking, resulting from organized crime”.³⁷ Csanyi-Robah asserts that ‘gypsy’ stereotypes persist in Canada and are propagated by the Canadian media who label Roma as thieves, criminals, and undeserving refugee claimants. The Roma Community

35 See the news release: Minister Jason Kenney Meets with Roma Leaders in Hungary [News release]. Available on-line at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/departement/media/releases/2012/2012-10-09.asp>

36 See the cited article on-line at: <http://www.activelypassive.com/category/dailynews/page/8/>

37 See the Roma Community Centre’s Report for CERD on the state of Roma in Canada: *Illegitimizing Roma Refugees in Canada*.

Centre's report for CERD on the state of Roma in Canada underscores that one of the problems is that many Roma families were denied refugee status because they were not able to 'prove' their Romani ethnicity. The report also directly addresses some of the issues pointed out by Minister Kenney in an attempt at detailing some of the explanations of why legitimate refugee claims are withdrawn. They state that one of the reasons is that Roma have very little prior knowledge of the Canadian refugee system and it proves to be too complex for them to navigate. Secondly, due to racial discrimination in Hungary, Roma have limited access to police and medical reports, the documents that could evidence their persecution and substantiate their refugee claims, once in Canada. Thirdly, there are a few lawyers that speak Hungarian or who have provided appropriate legal representation. Furthermore, translations are sometimes inaccurate. Finally, Roma refugee claimants can grow weary of the entire process and the long stagnant periods waiting for results: as a consequence, they may withdraw or abandon their refugee claims.

Not only the Roma community, but also the Jewish community reacted queasily to the Senate passing Bill C-31. The implication was that Canada was denying a place of refuge and vital health services to men, women, and children longing for the safety and security that Canadians cherish (Rosenweig 2012). Further, as the same media source spells out, "Bill C-31 implicitly determines that if a Jew persecuted in Hungary, as is happening today, or a Roma who has been attacked and is the victim of what Amnesty International calls (regarding Hungary) 'violent and hate crimes' will still be nearly impossible for them to stay in Canada."

Numerous reactions also arose from other parties, including medical practitioners and refugee advocates who specifically denounced the introduction of more impediments to health care for refugees.³⁸ Among others, the Canadian Association of Optometrists, the Canadian Association of Social Workers, the Canadian Dental Association, the

38 Amnesty International expressed concern over changes to the IFHP as being discriminatory and potentially resulting in violations of the right to health of refugees in Canada, in contravention of Canada's international human rights obligations.

Canadian Medical Association, and the Canadian Nurses Association all showed their support and called on the government to revoke the reforms (Montgomery 2012).

Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews put her support behind the national campaign against Ottawa's planned cuts to health services for refugees indicating that – should the cuts be approved – the federal costs would simply be passed on to the provincial health care system (Keung 2012). In her letter of protest, Matthews highlights a downtown Toronto hospital where it cost them an estimated \$1.3 million in annual costs to care for refugees. Should the new changes be implemented, she affirms, the hospital will simply not be able to claim most of that amount back.

Minister of Parliament (MP) Peggy Nash also took to the floor to emphasize that negative prejudice associated with asylum claims from European Roma does exist.³⁹ She used as an example Parkdale-High Park, a district that is home to coexisting communities from many different countries, including a large Roma community. She mentioned that community's concerns about how the bill would concentrate power in the hands of the minister and allow them the ability to treat refugees differently.

Although portrayed as a fiscally prudent move by the Conservatives, Davenport MP Andrew Cash argued that taxpayers would be paying more in the long run and that the government was praying on the most vulnerable in the Canadian society (Rainford 2012). Cash's source also quoted FCJ Refugee Centre's Director in Toronto, Loly Rico, as stating that Minister Kenney was breaking one of the most basic human rights: the right to access to health care. Dr. Meb Rashid of the Crossroads Clinic, Women's College Hospital believes that it is inhumane to deny refugees access to the health care they need as they begin their new lives in Canada. Meanwhile, Chief Physician for Family and Community Medicine at St. Michael's Hospital, Dr. Philip

39 See *Debates of May 17th, 2012, House of Commons Hansard #126 of the 41st Parliament, 1st Session*. Available at: <http://openparliament.ca/debates/2012/5/17/jason-kenney-6/>

Berger, calls the cuts “the meanest and most vicious attack” on refugees thus far (Chopping Health Coverage 2012). President of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, Dr. Sandy Buchman, head of an organization that represents over 26,000 family physicians nation-wide, pointed out that, contrary to some allegations, Roma refugees were not coming to Canada for the health care and that many doctors testified that [refugees] would come with ready diagnoses and prescriptions (Rosensweig 2012).

Along with these positive outcomes, in terms of growing support for Roma refugee claimants, the media seems to continue to embrace negative stereotyping. For instance, Ezra Levant is a conservative media pundit who recently was featured in a video segment equating Roma with theft and begging and saying that their “culture is synonymous with swindlers” (Berger and Rehaag 2012). (The Roma Community Centre responded to this segment by lodging a complaint with the police.)

According to the President of the Canadian Council of Refugees (CCR), Wanda Yamamoto, the new system is vulnerable to political influence and the government’s new law emphasizes speed and categorizations over fairness and individual protection. The CCR (2012) has stated that there are over 38,000 refugee claimants still awaiting a decision under the old system and they suggest that the government implement an ‘Earned Regularization Program’, which would allow them to remain in Canada on the basis of the successful integration; length of time spent in Canada; experiences of rape or torture; experience of domestic violence; statelessness; other human rights considerations; or sponsorship by a third-party.

Citizenship and Immigration Committee, May 3, 2012

May 3, 2012 was an historic day for the Roma community in Canada: Gina Csanyi-Robah, executive director of the Roma Community Centre, was the first Romani person to address the Canadian federal government. During the 10 days of testimony being heard in Ottawa regarding the

new refugee reform legislation, Bill C-31, she addressed the Citizenship and Immigration Committee. In her speech, she asked the committee not to create a DCO list, which would preclude Roma originating from EU countries to seek safety in Canada. She stated her belief that the great deal of withdrawn refugee claims reflected an incredibly unwelcoming climate for Roma people in Canada, not any illegitimacy of the claims being made.⁴⁰

Maureen Silcoff, a refugee lawyer in private practice since 1988 and a representative of the Roma Community Centre, also addressed the committee.⁴¹ A member of the IRB for five years, she currently represents many Roma refugees. In her statement, she focused on Roma refugees from Hungary, elucidating some of the barriers affecting their relocation to another EU country: For instance, EU citizens cannot make asylum claims to other EU countries (Roma from Hungary could not, for example, file a refugee claim in Italy). Also, there are limitations on the right to relocate within the EU (i.e. an EU citizen may stay in a country for up to three months and then must either find employment or show that they have sufficient funds to support themselves). She noted that it was extremely difficult for Roma to find jobs, due to prejudice against them, and that France has sent a clear message on their policy when they deported Roma en masse in the summer of 2010. She also objected to the DCO's position, stating that the government uses statistics of rejected, withdrawn, and abandoned asylum cases to determine whether a country is deemed 'safe' instead of its human rights record. She noted the high number of refused Hungarian Roma cases and that, of the cases that came before the refugee board in 2011, less than one in five were accepted as legitimate. Referring to the labeling of Roma as criminals,

40 See Gina Csanyi-Robah's *Statement to the Citizenship and Immigration Committee on May 3rd, 2012, Evidence of meeting #39 for Citizenship and Immigration in the 41st Parliament, 1st Session*. Available at: <http://openparliament.ca/committees/immigration/41-1/39/gina-csanyi-robah-11/only>

41 See Maureen Silcoff's *Statement at Citizenship and Immigration Committee on May 3rd, 2012, Evidence of meeting #39 for Citizenship and Immigration in the 41st Parliament, 1st Session*. Available at: <http://openparliament.ca/committees/immigration/41-1/39/maureen-silcoff-2/only>

she underscored that this was a “tiny drop in the bucket.” She also cites a decline in democratic values in Hungary as a growing concern in terms of the rise of fascism and racism in the region. At the close of her statement, she posed a number of questions, suggesting that the DCO list was made, in fact, to discourage Roma claims very possibly connected with political motivations relating to Canada’s free trade negotiations with Europe. She suggests going back through the criteria in Bill C-11, and having a panel of human rights experts be the ones to determine the criteria of whether a country was safe.

During the hearing, St. Catharines’ MP Rick Dykstra stated that, prior to the 2008 visa regime imposed on Hungary, the Canadian government received some 20-30 asylum seekers per year, while in 2009 this skyrocketed to 2,500 and in 2010 to 2,300 applicants. He went on to explain that the problems came when 95% to 98% of those individuals arrived to Canada for a period of up to 10 to 12 months and, just prior to their IRB hearings, they disappeared, simply did not show up for their hearings, or authorities found they had returned to Hungary. Such a situation, he said, leads one to think that a number of those individuals did not come to Canada to seek refugee status at all. Csanyi-Robah’s response describes the period during the late 1990s and early 2000s when large waves of Roma refugees arrived as a result of lifting the visa restriction. The subsequent decision on the lead case, which attempted to stop the flow, was eventually overturned and the visa regime was re-imposed from 2006 to 2009. Roma came flooding into the country looking for safety, she explained. While many did not appear to their IRB hearings, she says, one should also note that there was a 91% withdrawal rate of refugee applications in 2010 and, of those that made it through the process to the end, there was a mere 26% acceptance rate. Here, she asserts, the main fault lies in the complex refugee system, too overwhelming for Roma to navigate with their limited skills, experience, and resources.

As for the high rate of abandonment and withdrawal of Roma claims, Silcoff stated that in 2011 about 4,500 people initiated claims, of these about 800 were withdrawn, around 250 were abandoned, 160 were accepted, and 738 were refused. Half of the claims initiated remain pending. The

percentage of withdrawn claims compared to the number of claims pending is not very high. In either case, one cannot know for sure there would be a refusal rate of 98% or even an abandonment or withdrawal rate of 98%. However, one can, in fact, state that a mere one in five cases in which people actually appear before board members were approved. In terms of withdrawals, it was noted that Roma often lack the level of education and experience required to successfully navigate a complex legal system and many ended up with unscrupulous lawyers and consultants who did not properly advocate for them.

MP Dykstra reiterated that the issue was not whether there is fair and equitable treatment in Hungary, but whether there is a need to change the immigration policies to allow permanent residents to come here under a different scheme. In his words, “achieving permanent residency for a better life is not done through seeking refugee status here in the country; it’s done by seeking permanent residency.”

For Csanyi-Robah this is mainly a question of human rights and persecution, about the state protecting its citizens, and not about seeking a better place to live. There is no lineup for refugees, she says. She declared that the Roma are not a community of collective criminals and that no one should base their opinion on one single case in Hamilton, involving 20 Roma people, while there were easily 9,000 refugee applications in the last few years. (According to unofficial estimates, there are about 80,000 Roma in Canada.) She further expressed that this situation gave her cause to concern that the same negative rhetoric visible in European societies would soon spill over to Canada.

The 2010 Hamilton Human Trafficking Case for Labor Exploitation

“Canada has passed new immigration laws to crack down on the heinous crime of human smuggling. Human smuggling is a serious criminal offence that endangers human lives and benefits criminal organizations. We have made it easier to prosecute human smugglers and have imposed minimum sentences and

finis for those convicted. People who arrive in Canada via a designated irregular arrival (e.g., human smuggling event) will be detained so that authorities can determine their identities and whether they pose any danger to the Canadian public.”⁴²

The CIC’s web page is intended to provide information for refugees on how to claim refugee protection from inside Canada and how to resettle from abroad. The announcement provided above (no longer available online) was once posted to serve as an introduction, and an explanation, to the most recent changes in Bill C-31. It appeared on June 29, 2012 after the Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act received royal assent. Concomitantly, a press release appeared on the Media Centre’s website informing the public of the implications of Bill C-31 (CIC 2012b). It focused on the heinous crime of human smuggling and indicated that the new measures would facilitate the prosecution of human smugglers and impose stiffer penalties. Minister Kenney affirmed, “These new measures send a clear message to human smugglers that Canada’s generosity will not be abused, that we will enforce our immigration laws against human smugglers.” Within this framework, the Minister of Public Safety will be in charge of designating irregular arrivals of groups of people, who will be then detained.

Human smuggling and trafficking in persons are egregious human rights violations. As a global phenomenon, they are the subject of increasing concern to border officials and law enforcement agencies. The main international legal instrument used in the fight against transnational organized crime is the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations 1998) supplemented by two protocols: the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. According to the first protocol, human smuggling implies “the procurement, in order to obtain directly or indirectly,

42 An announcement by the Citizenship and Immigration Canada that appeared on <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/index.asp>

a financial or other material benefit of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident” (United Nations 200a). Trafficking in persons, often referred to as modern day slavery, is defined as the act of “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (United Nations 200b). Exploitation includes, at a minimum:

- exploitation in the form of prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation,
- forced labor or services,
- slavery or practices similar to slavery,
- servitude,
- or the removal of organs.

Canada became party to these three international instruments in 2002 and is, therefore, bound by the obligations that each one carries. In addition to provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act contains specific reference to the additional offences of human smuggling and trafficking in persons. Section 117 prohibits human smuggling, while section 118 prohibits trafficking in persons (IRPA 2001).

Although pertaining to different conditions, it is important to bear in mind that, at times, human smuggling incorporates trafficking in persons – as these two phenomena have known to be used interchangeably, especially in the Canadian context (Table 8.).

Table 8. Differences between trafficking in persons and human smuggling

	Trafficking in persons	Human smuggling
Type of crime	Crime against the person	Crime against the state
Objective	Protection of human rights and the responsibility of the state to provide adequate protection to its citizens	Protection of state sovereignty
Basis of crime	Organized recruitment/ transportation and continued exploitation for profit	Organized transportation of the person for profit
Border crossing	Transnational and national	Always inter/transnational
Consent	Irrelevant	Relevant
Length of relationship	Continued in order for the trafficker to maximize the exploitation	Finished once the migrant has crossed the border and paid the fee
Movement	Trafficking victims have restricted movement or are in complete isolation without documents	Migrants move freely and are able to leave their job
Source of profit	Exploitation	Transportation or facilitating the entry into the destination country
Terms of payment	Trafficking victims often pays the minimal amount before leaving or not: later on he/she is in debt which perpetuates itself and turns into debt bondage	Migrants often pay the fee before leaving or after arriving in the destination country
Recruitment	Trafficking victim is approached	Migrants often contact smugglers
If apprehended	Repatriated or given residency status	Repatriated

Source: Arhin (2011)

Considering again the CIC's stance, Minister Kenney's rhetoric overall on 'bogus' refugee claimants, and the subsequent Bill C-31 amendments, clearly there was a popular correlation made between the influx of asylum seekers and the serious criminal activities that had occurred in Canada in recent years. Prior to the passing of those amendments, Canada has witnessed the largest case of trafficking in persons to date and the first one ever to involve labor exploitation. The Domotor family, and their extended family, brought 19 Hungarian Roma from Papa, Hungary to Hamilton, Canada to work as unpaid labor for their construction business in Southern Ontario. The case alleged that, in October of 2010, the Domotor family recruited and trafficked victims for the purpose of forced labor and took advantage of Canada's refugee and welfare systems by committing fraud (Sorooptimist 2012). Victims were instructed to claim refugee status and apply for welfare, which the Domotor family then collected. They were locked in the basements of homes in Hamilton and Ancaster where they lived in deplorable conditions. Their passports were taken away and, with no knowledge of English, they were forced to work seven days per week without pay. Known as 'Project Opapa', this case has seen eight convictions for conspiracy to traffic in persons and more were found guilty for participating in a criminal organization (Morrow 2012). The 2010 Hamilton human trafficking case carried first-ever convictions for forced labor as well as for international human trafficking.

This case not only matches with government perceptions of Roma refugees and – to a great extent – supports the protective measures introduced in Bill C-31, but also offers a demonstration of Canada's broader immigration policy. It is not uncommon for countries to articulate their issues with transnational crime, in this case trafficking in persons, in the context of state security and national immigration policies. Driven by these concepts, governments are prompted to formulate their fight against transnational crime by curbing irregular migration (Sanderson 2004).

In this particular case, trafficking in persons was perceived to be a threat to state integrity and the nation and immigration has been viewed as a matter that challenges state sovereignty (Bigo 2002). Addressing trafficking

in persons, as well as human trafficking, has become central in security studies and has evolved to be a school of thought that is substantiated by the assumption that these issues are primarily a matter of immigration policy and state security. The focus, therefore, is on the state and public rhetoric frequently engages terms such as ‘national defense,’ ‘terrorism,’ and ‘safeguarding borders,’ in order to solicit public support.

In contrast to perceiving immigration and crime in the context of state security, it is possible to view them within the framework of humanitarian principles. In doing so, one shifts the spotlight on the victim and perceives transnational crime in the context of human rights violations (Clark 2003). Some of the terms that would be used in this case are ‘human condition,’ ‘vulnerability,’ ‘socio-economic conditions’ and even ‘women and children.’

While acknowledging these ostensibly contradictory approaches, security and humanitarian discourses can be mutually supportive, as states are required to provide not only secure borders but also the security of people living within them (Arhin and Quayson 2012).

Roma Refugee Claimants: Economic Migrants or ‘Real’ Refugees

It is instinctive to place the issue of Roma refugees in the context of Canadian immigration policies that have largely focused on the state and the protection of its borders and citizens, especially in light of the aforementioned Hamilton case. This inevitably results in a debate as to whether Roma are coming to Canada as economic migrants, looking for jobs and better life, or are fleeing to Canada based on fear of persecution in their home country.

As illustrated throughout this article, Roma refugee claimants have consistently been placed in the context of the immigration-crime nexus. Having such a high profile case involving Roma trafficking Roma from Hungary to Canada, members of which applied for and obtained welfare, provides fertile ground for building an image of criminal elements arriving with the intent to abuse Canada’s refugee and health system.

On the other hand, considering the harsh realities that Roma in particular face in Hungary, it remains uncertain whether recent criminal activities that surfaced in Canada can overshadow the socio-economic hardships and persecution that force Roma to leave their countries of origin.

Analyzing cases that emerged in the media during this time might offer some new points of inquiry and consideration. In December 2011, *Embassy*, a Canadian foreign policy newspaper, ran a story on István Kamarás, a Roma historian and political analyst (ostensibly Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén's top Roma affairs adviser), who sought refugee status in Canada (Shane 2011). Activists hurried to declare this case the prime example that Hungarian Roma were fleeing to Canada based on their fear of persecution and not for economic reasons – the argument commonly expounded by the Hungarian government. In his email correspondence with the newspaper, Kamarás said he left “because of the ever-growing, strengthening, aggressive prejudice against Roma.” Meanwhile, when asked his opinion, Hungarian Deputy Head of Mission, Tamás Király, stated that, although he was not fully aware of the details of this case, he believed that it was an instance of economic migration. He also noted that there was substantial misinformation about what a refugee claim implies, citing a case of a Hungarian couple that actually emailed the embassy to ask how to apply for one.

Another high profile case involved Viktória Mohácsi, a Roma rights activist and Hungary's former Member of the European Parliament (MEP), who allegedly left the country in December 2009 to apply for political asylum in Canada after filing for police protection in Hungary, due to serious threats she had received (Hungarian Roma activist 2012).

Both cases make an attempt to highlight the push and pull factors behind Roma's decisions to seek refuge in Canada, in line with one of the earliest theories of migration supported by Ravenstein (1889) and Lee (1966). Fear of persecution, poverty, lack of employment and education opportunities, discrimination, restrictions on legal migration, socio-economic and cultural norms, and family violence are among the most often cited push factors. On the other hand, pull factors might be at play,

such as the main factors forcing one to migrate including globalization, demand for cheap labor, illegal (but still) employment opportunities, and perceived better life abroad. It is not difficult to relate many of the push and pull factors to Roma's refugee claims in Canada, in particular those referring to fear of persecution and discrimination, which supports the argument that they are indeed 'real' refugees.

Counter to the notion that Roma are refugees fleeing their countries of origin and perceiving their circumstances as human rights violations, the Canadian government has focused on corroborating a link between 'dubious' refugee claims and recent crimes committed on Canadian soil. In addition to the 2010 Hamilton human trafficking case, Canadian authorities are currently investigating an alleged human smuggling ring that has brought hundreds of Romanian Roma refugee claimants to the Toronto area via Mexico (Bell 2012). Authorities believe that smuggled migrants are being charged between \$10,000 and \$30,000 for passage from Mexico via Texas to greater Toronto, which is to be re-paid to the smugglers using welfare benefits once in Canada and by engaging in petty criminal activities. Just one month prior to this incident, the Durham Regional Police Department arrested 34 Romanian Roma who targeted convenience stores, jewelers, and seniors by distracting them and then stealing goods. The officials called it the dismantling of an "organized crime ring" that resulted in booking over 260 separate offenses made while collecting allegedly over \$2 million in social assistance benefits since January 2012. Investigators also identified over \$1 million in suspicious wire transfer overseas ('Distraction theft' 2012).

In January 2012, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) completed a report analyzing charges against 311 Hungarian-born people who were jailed in Ontario between January 2010 and December 2011 (CBSA 2012). The report states that 226 of them were foreign nationals, of which 187 had claimed refugee status. It concludes that Hungarian Roma refugee claimants post a "significant" risk of committing crime upon their arrival in Canada, based on their finding that 25% of those 226 committed a criminal offence within three months of making their refugee claim

(Elliott 20120). The report states that “the information received is not all encompassing, nor is it a depiction of all members of the community, however it serves to demonstrate that there is significant criminal activity occurring within this group.” In order to support such claim, the report cites several documented examples:

- Filing recurring claims even after being rejected and using altered or falsified names;
- Credit and debit card fraud and check theft;
- More than 20 Hungarian nationals who continued to receive benefits after being deported;
- The 2010 Hamilton human trafficking case, involving 19 Hungarian Roma victims, that resulted in 12 convictions of Hungarian nationals;
- Cases where people after claiming refugee status leave Canada with thousands of dollars and in possession of electronics and laptop computers.

Conclusion

In the last two decades, Canada has handled a great deal of Roma refugee claimants from Hungary and Czech Republic. As a result, Citizenship and Immigration Canada has introduced multiple legislative and policy instruments to control these admissions, such as visa restrictions, a ‘lead case’, Balanced Refugee Reform Bill C-11, Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act Bill C-31, along with a host of ministerial rhetoric over Roma’s illegitimate claims of being refugees fleeing persecution. In order to facilitate the return of failed asylum seekers to their home countries, the Canadian government has teamed up with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to institute the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration Pilot Program (CIC 2012c). The program is now fully operative and has already assisted some 91 failed asylum seekers to

return to Hungary in little more than two months into the project. While those returning are provided with free airfare and up to \$2,000 in in-kind resettlement services, the Roma Community Centre views this process as a bribe and claims that people are given money to give up before they have exhausted all their remedies (Cohen 2012b).

Undoubtedly, more research into the underlying root causes of Roma migration to Canada is warranted, perhaps within the parameters of a wider theoretical framework which further would shed light on the internal dynamics of the migration process (de Haas, 2010).

At the moment, however, the dichotomous relationship between perceiving Roma refugee claimants in the context of regular refugee flows and also as economic migrants continues to exacerbate the debate between Roma activists, human rights advocates, and Canadian government officials, leaving modest prospect for it to be resolved in the near future.

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PART TWO

RESEARCH IN THE FIELD
– CASE STUDIES

4. ROMA ASYLUM MIGRATIONS FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC TO CANADA AND BACK: A CASE STUDY OF ROMA MIGRATORY NETWORKS FROM BOMBARY

Jan Grill

*Department of Social Anthropology, University of Manchester,
United Kingdom*

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to examine a recent form of migration from the Czech Republic to Canada. More specifically, it explores the asylum-seeking process and reconstructs the migration trajectories of a specific network of Roma from one southern Bohemian town to Canada, and their return. It draws on short-term ethnographic fieldwork, semi-structured interviews with individuals, and informal group discussions. Rather than formulating an overarching theory on Roma asylum seeking migration, this paper provides a qualitative study reconstructing a particular migration process through the perspective of the Roma migrants themselves, thus formulating an ethnographic response to the prevailing top-down approaches to studying Roma migration. It also situates the experiences of the Roma migrants within a particular socio-economic and historical context embedded simultaneously within a micro-cosmos of a small South Bohemian town and also within larger kinship and friendship networks of Roma extending to other parts of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Great Britain and Canada.

A comparison of Roma migration trends in the Czech Republic

Examining the extent of Roma migration is difficult for a host of complex reasons, related to the lack of any reliable statistical data (Guy 2004; Uherek 2007). This shortfall makes providing any estimates on Roma migration very difficult. With the exception of asylum seeking migrations (in which Roma migrants claim asylum status based on discrimination or persecution), migrants' ethnicities remain highly invisible within statistical data on mobility, since most of Roma migrants identify themselves during migration as Czechs or Slovaks. This is, for example, the case with Roma migrations to Great Britain after 2004. In the context of recent migration trends stemming from the Czech Republic, Roma mobility does not seem to differ greatly from the Czech Republic's overall migratory patterns.⁴³ Thus, the only significant difference remains the waves of asylum migration to Canada and other western European countries (mainly prior to the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union). Similarly to other Czech citizens, some Roma have participated in trans-border migration to Germany and Austria.⁴⁴ Roma have also been active in terms of labor migration to other western European countries, which has frequently been associated with their previous asylum migrations to these countries (e.g. Great Britain, Belgium). This has been especially the case in regards to migration to Great Britain following the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union in May 2004. Roma and the majority alike found themselves migrating to Great Britain and following very similar trends. However, in comparison to non-Roma Czech migration, several aspects of Roma migration differed. For some of the initial Roma migrants, their arrival to Britain depended most frequently on knowledge

43 Based on an estimate made by the author of this report.

44 Roma migration to Great Britain might have been more significant than trans-border migration to Germany or Austria, considering the generally lower level of education held by Roma migrants and the types of jobs they would take on in these labor markets. Of course, these migratory trends depend on particular localities: some borderland areas between the Czech Republic, Germany, and Austria have developed certain patterns of trans-border migration. At the same time, more recent forms of migration to western European countries seem to have taken on a more massive dimension. This is particularly the case in regards to migration to Great Britain, where many Roma entered the low-skilled jobs market in urban areas of Britain.

attained during their previous migration experience to Britain as asylum-seekers or a social connection with networks of Roma who had been in Britain before (either having stayed on after being granted asylum or having overstayed after their claim was rejected). These resources were also reinforced with Roma family networks and their intense communication within the transnational social field that stretched between the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Britain. Additionally, one of the important and distinctive features of Roma migrations is that Roma tend to migrate in families and only rarely as individuals. Roma labor migrants in Great Britain usually occupy low-level positions that do not require skills attained through formal education. Most migrants enter low-skill, temporary, and exploitative jobs. For example, being placed by temporary job (temp) agencies in food production factories (cf. Grill 2011).

What also distinguishes recent Roma migration from the general trends in the Czech Republic are the waves of asylum seeking movements (Guy et al. 2004) and the impact of these waves on the more general patterns of Roma migration. According to some approximations, around 10% of Czech Roma have participated in some type of migratory movement, with one notable instance being the migrations to Benelux countries.⁴⁵

As for Roma migration to Canada, we can distinguish two main waves of asylum seeking; the first reached its peak in Summer 1997 and the second in 2008/09. Although the connections and continuities between these two waves are important, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyze these (but see e.g. Tóth 2010) or examine in greater detail the larger context of their asylum seeking migration. Rather, this paper focuses on the most recent wave of asylum seeking migration, which started in late 2008. In 2008, Canada recorded 859 asylum claims (with 84 migrants granted status, 128 returned, and 35 withdrawn). In the following year, there were 2,210 applications, out of which 93 were granted asylum status, 76 returned, and a considerably higher amount (728) withdrew their request.⁴⁶

45 This estimate was made by Roman Krištof, based on research conducted for several reports made for the International Organization for Migration in Prague (IOM) and the Czech Ministry of Interior regarding Roma migrations to/from the Czech Republic. (http://www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/politika/_zprava/776445)

46 http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/documents/REFUGEES_TATSCOMPREHENSIVE1999-2011.pdf

Beyond ‘push-pull’ and other models of migration

Most research on Roma migration is based either on discourse analysis or on interviews with Roma immigrants in the destination countries. To a lesser extent, interviews may be sometimes conducted with would-be émigré in their countries of origin. They rarely trace the migration trajectory between and within both regions. Such interview-based accounts⁴⁷ are then analyzed through the lens of the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ model of migration. This model, developed initially by E.S. Lee (1968) to create a demographic typology for migration movements, tends to portray migrants as either balancing between or driven by the ‘push’ factors of deprivation and discrimination and the ‘pull’ factors of imagined improvement in their standards of living and perceptions of the destination countries as a less racist society (see e.g. Fremlová et al. 2009, regarding recent Roma migration from Central Eastern Europe to Western Europe).

The migration of Czech and Slovakian Roma to West Europe and Canada at the turn of the twenty-first century tends to be portrayed one of two ways: either as a result of economic choice, calculation, and/or ‘profit-seeking’ – often involving the organized exploitation of other migrants and of state systems (Krištof 2008) – or as a mass movement to escape the racism and discrimination faced in the countries of origin.⁴⁸ These narrow conceptualizations fail to examine the specific conditions of Roma emigration and the concrete pathways through which Roma come to migrate, navigate, and experience their movement. Thus, they risk the danger of sliding into popular, stereotypical depictions of Roma as cunning ‘economic migrants’ or ‘bogus refugees’ (by receiving states) or as the ever-oppressed victims of ethno-racial discrimination (by Roma activists). Additionally, practically no studies have addressed the topic of migrants’ return to the home country from an anthropological perspective (see for exceptions Janků 2007; Vidra’s introduction to this volume).

47 See, for example, Cahn & Guild 2008; Fremlová et al. 2009, regarding recent Roma migration within the EU.

48 This position has been supported by representatives and associates of the Roma Community Centre in Toronto (see e.g. Csányi-Robah 2012)

The waves of Roma asylum seeking migrations throughout the 1990s and early 2000 became the topic of major political debate as well as the impetus for a number of social researchers to investigate and actively engage with asylum seeking migrants. The resulting studies have approached the subject from a variety of contexts and perspectives.⁴⁹ While many of these challenged the stereotypical interpretations of ‘Gypsy migration’, providing adequate contextualization and overview of these migration trends, few accounts focused on concrete biographies, social trajectories, and the personal migration experiences of individual Roma migrants (see for exceptions, Janků 2007; Kovats 2002). In comparison to previous migration waves, the most recent Roma asylum migrations to Canada have not been investigated in an analytically rigorous fashion and further research is needed to examine its dynamics.

There is one frequently cited study on the most recent wave of asylum seeking migration to Canada⁵⁰ (Krištof 2008). According to this study, asylum migration has been organized around a ‘client system’ with a central role played by so-called ‘prospectors’. The prospectors are former emigrants from Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, who, since their immigration, frequently organize migration runs benefiting from it both ‘professionally and financially’. Krištof asserts that these prospectors are embedded within the social network of human right activists in the Czech Republic and Canada. One of the key points of the study is that asylum migration is organized by these prospectors (and other previous asylum seekers) whose circles, to some certain extent, overlap with more affluent and better-situated Roma as well as with various non-governmental organizations. This network of prospectors orchestrates the migration, communicating to their acquaintances in the Czech Republic, when the time is right, about when to travel and/or what story to tell the Canadian

49 See Clark and Campbell 1997; Kovats 2002; Klimova & Pickup 2003; Matras 2000; Sobotka 2003; Stewart 2002; Guy, Uherek, and Wernerová 2004; Uherek 2007; Vašečka et al. 2000

50 It is interesting to note that the author of the study has refused to make public who commissioned the study. Some of the critiques of the report seem to suggest that the report was commissioned by the Czech government.

institutions upon arrival. Krištof says migration can be seen more as a 'business' driven mainly by a variety of economic interests and to a much lesser extent by issues of racism and discrimination. However, in one media interview, he somewhat modified his opinion by suggesting that the term 'organized migration' might be too strong and he proposed using the term 'mediated' (*zprostředkování*) when referring to the role of prospectors and Roma rights' organizations.⁵¹ From 2008 to 2010, Krištof presented his findings in various newspapers and other media sources and became seen as an 'expert' in the field of Roma migration.⁵² It was primarily the findings from his research report, often filtered through the interviews he gave to the media, which came to influence the public discourse on Roma migration. So, it was also his selective interpretations that contributed to the simplified and rather generalized interpretation of Roma asylum migration.⁵³ Krištof purported that Roma's decisions to migrate were always orchestrated by a network of prospectors and, further, migrants themselves were unable to grasp the difference between labor migration and asylum claims.⁵⁴ While the report provides descriptive observations and other kinds of data⁵⁵ regarding the migration process (obtained mostly from interviews), its main

51 See Holec, P. 2009. Jak užít Kanadu. *Reflex* 30. This journalistic account includes an interview with Roman Krištof. It is also here that he states: "But Roma migration is neither trafficking nor illegal. These people go towards better [migrate towards a better life], they don't see it as abuse of the asylum system." One of them described this to us by the term *užívání*. The term *užívání* can be translated as 'making use of' or 'using', but also as 'enjoying.'

52 It is telling to note how his positioning and referencing of a report (which to my knowledge was never made publicly accessible) and a study (without specifying what the research consisted of) resulted in legitimizing his position as having some kind of 'expert knowledge' whereas the data produced by activists was seen as bias - supporting their particular interests in the discussion on the asylum migrations.

53 See, for example, http://www.lidovky.cz/emigrace-romu-je-byznys-byt-nekdo-veri-ze-pomaha-dobru-pf7-/ln_domov.asp?c=A090705_084621_ln_domov_mtr

54 http://www.rozhlas.cz/zpravy/politika/_zprava/776445

55 Krištof does not explicitly clarify his methodology or the techniques he used in order to obtain his data. The work appears to be based on interviews with several Roma and with representatives of institutions who represent Roma, or who interact with Roma asylum seekers. The report also includes excerpts from two interviews with Roma families who claimed asylum in Canada.

analytical points and interpretative frameworks appears to be flawed – in the light of empirical scrutiny and when compared to the findings in the concrete case study presented here. Krištof's report tends to over-emphasize the role of 'prospectors' and to highlight economic reasons over other aspects of migration trends while also omitting to address the individual Roma migrants' agency, reducing the weight of complex social forces, and using particular circumstances and fitting these into a rather generalized account of asylum migration. In the case study provided here, we do not aspire to provide an overall analysis of Roma asylum migration. Rather, its findings aim to challenge some of the assumptions that have been made in the past by engaging in a concrete ethnographic critique. In the following case study, the prospectors play a rather marginal role, migrants had no contact with the 'key players' prior to their migration, and their decision to migrate was driven by a mixture of motivations, some contradictions, and with the ultimate trigger being a violent incident.

The intention of this present paper is to contribute to the better understanding of Roma asylum seeking migration from the perspective of the returned migrants themselves. Examining migration through the migrants' own perspective and experience enables us to leave behind overly mechanistic 'push' and 'pull' models, and to avoid passing judgment over migration as 'good' or 'bad' (for Roma, for the home countries, or for the societies both within the state of origin and in the destination country). It is only by paying attention to the lived experience of migration processes that we can debunk the tendency to reify and homogenize Roma migration as is done in academic, popular, and state-generated accounts. This paper aims to further challenge 'either-or' assessments of migration by following the 'more or less/to what extent' social logic of migration, looking for the specific contexts and conditions that produce, as well as being products of, migration movements.

Fieldwork

The account presented here is based on a concrete case study, a research project deploying a combination of methodological tools of an anthropological fieldwork as well as desk research reviewing available media and literature sources. The main bulk of fieldwork was carried out in a small town, which I will refer to here as ‘Bombary’,⁵⁶ located in South Bohemia.⁵⁷ The town became well-known for the significant number of its Roma inhabitants who took part in the most recent wave of asylum-seeking migration to Canada.

Methods

Members of several interrelated families who had returned from Canada were interviewed over the course of several days and visits. The interviews were carried out in informal and semi-structured ways. The interviews lasted between one-and-a-half to three hours and were conducted simultaneously in Romany and Czech. Although most of the respondents communicated in Czech, the older respondents at times switched into Romany. Although I introduced a set of open-ended questions, the interviewees often changed the topic and flow of discussion and took off in different directions. Additionally, the format of the interviews moved from a single narrative of individual interviewees to multi-vocalized account – as relatives and neighbors (both Roma and non-Roma) joined in and left the conversations. Thus, at times, the interviews turned into a group discussion, as new participants entered the conversation.

Rather than formally setting up a focus group, I was inadvertently able to participate in informal meetings where I found that respondents participated more freely and discussed their migration to and from Canada with less reservation. This was made possible by the specific arrangement of

56 Bombary is a pseudonym. Additionally, I have changed the names of participants appearing in this report.

57 Additionally, I also visited another town in southern Bohemia with a larger population of Roma inhabitants who had participated in a recent wave of asylum migration to Canada. However, the main focus of this report is the Roma networks in Bombary.

the spatial setting in which the interviews took place. The interviews and group discussions were conducted on benches at a playground nearby the participants' homes. During my first visit, I conducted an interview with a Romani woman and obtained a rather 'standard' version, singular narrative about her and her family's experiences of migration and return. On my second and third visit, I was able to record other narratives and stories that were, at times, contradictory and, at other times, supportive of the narrative recorded in my first visit. The second and third visit finally gained me the necessary level of trust from my Roma interviewees, who then were more open to share their stories and knowledge on the different issues and factors influencing their migration strategies.

I feel it is important to mention that this informal setting allowed me unique access to contested narratives and descriptions of the migration experience. Due to the short-term nature of the project and research period, most of the data consisted of interviews and could not be juxtaposed against empirically-observed practices.

In order to include the perspective of local institutions that deal with Roma, I also conducted an interview with one employee at the town council. In her position working in social affairs, she has worked with local Roma. Her observations, as she emphasized, did not necessarily represent the opinion of the municipality as an institution. However, her thoughts on the Roma migrations to (and returns from) Canada were influenced by her daily interactions with Roma clients (in the institutional context), as well as her background, having lived in Bombary all her life.

Additionally, I carried out some relatively short interviews with a lawyer who represented the returning Roma families in a court case against the town of Bombary. Finally, I reviewed media coverage of the recent Roma migrations, in order to determine what the dominant representations of Roma asylum seeking migrations were.

Roma in Bombary

The majority of Roma from Bombary are descendants of Slovakian Roma families who migrated to the Czech borderlands during the aftermath of the Second World War, a place from whence the German-speaking population, long inhabiting this area, were displaced. The actual number of Roma inhabitants in this small South Bohemian town oscillated throughout the second half of the twentieth century. The current total population is 4,068 people.⁵⁸ There are no official statistics regarding inhabitants of Roma origin. In the last decade, some Roma moved away from Bombary in search of better opportunities, as a consequence of marriages and other family matters. Yet, they also left as a consequence of the present mayor's efforts to get rid of default tenants in municipal housing. Several families who historically resided in the centre of the town have now moved to the outskirts. The real numbers of Roma families living in town also differs from the statistics, as some of them do not register their permanent residency when they move to Bombary. According to the local social worker I interviewed, to date, there were about 40 Roma families living in town. For her, 'they are all one big family here.' Her comment highlights the general perception of the Roma as some kind of homogenous community, interconnected through a web of kinship ties. This depiction of Roma as a homogenous ethnic group is a widespread perception amongst the local non-Roma population. In comparison, the Roma themselves made fine distinctions within their community, showing a complex web of kinship relations, but also emphasizing significant frictions and fissures that overlapped with Bombary residential patterns: the Roma families who migrated to Canada were from families traditionally residing in the town's centre or in the neighborhoods nearby, while there were also several families living at the city limits who were not related to them and did not migrate to Canada. To a certain extent, these differences also reflected socio-economic statuses and hierarchies between the more affluent families and more marginal Roma in Bombary.

58 This is the official number provided by the municipality office in June 2012.

Most of the persons interviewed (Roma and non-Roma) mentioned that there have not been significant tensions between local Roma and non-Roma in Bombary. Some keenly emphasized their rootedness and sense of belonging in Bombary. This was demonstrated throughout the interviews that took place on the playground, as several non-Roma friends of my Roma respondents stopped by the benches for a small chat. Additionally, the respondents also established their claim for belonging by emphasizing their familiarity and intimate friendship with some local non-Roma neighbors: *“the people know us here. [some of] the local gadže⁵⁹ have known us since we were kids and we have grown up here.”* At one point during the interview, this sense of closeness and familiar intimacy with the local non-Roma living in the surrounding block of flats was then contrasted with comments indicating mistrust of, and/or complete absence of knowledge about, the non-related Roma who live on the margins of the town.

This was confirmed by the local social worker who stated, although *“Bombary earned the reputation of being a ‘Gypsy’ town”* (implying that the town has a rather negative reputation with outsiders due to their Roma population); she herself opposed such a view. She did not consider the situation there to be any worse than in other towns with Roma inhabitants. The situation changed after a violent incident in November 2008. A fight broke out between several Roma and members of staff (non-Roma) at the local discothèque in the Hotel Šemík. This incident triggered a change in interethnic relations in town and also influenced several Roma families to make the decision to migrate to Canada.

Most of the Roma in Bombary are officially unemployed. Both the local social worker as well as the Roma interviewed confirmed this to me. Women, in particular, are considered the long-term unemployed, some finding occasional temporary jobs. Some men commute to work on a weekly basis, usually employed on construction sites and with menial labor. I was told that several Roma men are working in Germany and Austria and return only for weekends. The interviewed Roma asserted that there is “no chance to get a job here,” and frequently added that this is

also particularly due to the discrimination against Roma. The local social worker says the problem of Roma unemployment is also further reinforced by their reluctance to commute to work, “especially by bus”. Her statement seems to be a contradiction to the relatively high number of Roma we found commuting to work from Bombary, or labor migration from Bombary, as recorded throughout our research.

Considering the worsening socio-economic situation, migration arose as one of the possible options available to improve one’s situation. However, not all forms of migration were necessarily international migration. Some families frequently migrate to other parts of the Czech Republic in search of better opportunities via family connections. These connections have crystallized during the second half of the twentieth century, following the migration of Roma from Slovakia into Czech territory. Most of the Roma migrants had once moved from Slovakia to borderland towns that were left depopulated following the forced displacement of German-speaking inhabitants in the post-World War II period. Many Roma living in the Czech countryside today have maintained extensive kinship ties with relatives in other Czech cities and parts of Slovakia.

A History: Migration to Canada from Bombary

A previous history of migration

Unlike the Czech Roma that participated in earlier waves of asylum migration, the Roma from Bombary had no previous experience of this kind of migration prior to their departure to Canada in 2008-2009. Their migration to Canada was not built on connections. However, several local families had migrated to Great Britain following the Czech Republic’s accession to the EU in 2004. In 2006, Mrs. Věra first migrated with her husband, one son, and two of her daughters, to Britain. Her eldest daughter, her two children and husband, stayed in the Czech Republic. Věra explained her move to Britain:

“Half of my family, from my husband’s side, lives in Britain... first we went only for a holiday. We were there for three weeks and then I had liked it there so much that we took our things and went there [to live].”

Her husband’s relatives, all originating from another part of the Czech Republic, helped them with their first steps in Britain. His four siblings and their families migrated to Britain in the late 1990s, during one of the first waves of asylum seeking migration by Czech and Slovak Roma. They all live in Britain and have obtained legal residential ‘status’ in Britain. Věra spoke highly of her migratory experience in Britain:

“I’ve got a job immediately, and my husband as well, [our] girl went to school – everything without any problems. I’m always saying that the foreign country – the Czechs can’t beat that.”

She said that although they had to work very hard, for 12 hours’ shifts in a food production factory (packing fruits and vegetables), they enjoyed Great Britain. Having a personal history of once migrating to Britain informed her migration experiences and strategies when moving to Canada. Additionally, Britain often appeared as a point of comparison between the two. When juxtaposing their migration experiences, Canada often appeared to come out on top, as a better place in almost all aspects. At the same time, the legal framework, the visa regime, and stricter immigration procedures against the Roma asylum seekers, as well as the long-distance – dividing families between Czech Republic and Canada – were reasons that made Canada worse in comparison to Great Britain.

Věra’s family did not plan to leave Britain any time soon. However, one of her teenage daughters, who had come back to their hometown in the Czech Republic earlier, became pregnant and the whole family came back, Věra says, “because of her” in autumn of 2008. It was shortly before their return to Bombarý that the violent incident took place at the local disco. It involved several of her close relatives and proved to be the turning point in terms of a sudden intensification of interethnic tensions and, for many, an incentive for making the decision to migrate.

The triggering incident: Fight at Hotel Šemík

The incident at the local Hotel Šemík took place in November 2008. Several Roma men were involved in a brawl with security guards at the hotel disco. The reason for the fight was not clear from all the various accounts, but it seems likely that it involved some racial abuse against the Roma. One of the Roma men, Věra's brother, was badly beaten up and ended up at a local hospital. As the fight took place, several bystanders ran for help, to the relatives and friends of the Roma who were being beaten up. The incident stirred up mixed emotions of fear, anxiety, and anger, as a new crowd of people spontaneously rushed towards to the discothèque in order to help and/or possibly take a revenge for the fight. Many of these men were reportedly armed with various tools (such as hammers or axes). Afraid of being attacked by the crowd, the hotel staff locked the door, but also kept the injured Roma men inside with them. The crowd tried to attack the hotel, in an effort to get their relatives. In the ensuing chaos and tension, the security guards took their guns and shot several times (accounts vary as to whether these were warning shots aimed in the air in order to prevent the crowd from entering or actually shot into the crowd). Shortly after, police intervention brought the fight to an end, and the police took several actors (both Roma and non-Roma) involved in the fight into custody.

The days and weeks that followed the Hotel Šemík fight were charged with a mixture of fear and tension in town. Although none of the security guards involved in the beatings were from Bombarý,⁶⁰ the violent incident had a negative impact on interethnic relations in town. I was told that, in the aftermath of this incident, there was a series of verbal threats and increased tensions along interethnic lines. The situation resulted in a series of discourses and interactions that evoked the 'interethnic tensions' and consequently brought them into being by instilling the increasing fear and suspicion into the minds of many local residents. While Roma and non-Roma interviewees agreed that, in general, "there was no big racism" in

60 Interestingly, several of the Roma respondents reported that the guards who attacked their relatives were "foreigners"... "not from here." The non-Roma security guards were not from Bombarý and had not lived in the town.

town, they also asserted that this conflict worsened the situation. The Roma I interviewed reported that they experienced verbal attacks and threats. For example, they recalled when several young non-Roma drove up in front of their flats in order to threaten and swear at them. Similar types of verbal threats, a sudden increase in tensions, and mutual mistrust were mentioned in my interviews with local non-Roma, too. Although no similar acts of physical violence occurred after the Šemík incident, the tension, verbal threats, and general feeling of insecurity negatively influenced the relationships and interaction between Roma and non-Roma. Additionally, the media contributed to the situation by selectively portraying the situation as a result of “interethnic conflict,” ascribing homogeneity of opinion to the two ‘groups,’ despite the variety of social discord.

According to Věra, after “*the Gadžos badly assailed my brother, we had enough.*” Later on, she added that, “*it’s not that there would be, God knows, how big kind of racists in Bombary, but [then] we had enough of that.*” Some members of the families came up with the idea of going to Canada. The idea was discussed amongst various family members in what she called as informal ‘family gathering.’ However, the decision was made. This is how Věra summarized her family’s decision: “*I did not hesitate for a minute. One day I just said I’m finished here.*” Although the incident described above played a crucial role in influencing their decision to seek asylum in Canada, there were other important factors that need to be considered in analyzing their move. The incident operated as a trigger, however, a mixture of factors also influenced them; a general sense that the socio-economic situation was worsening, a perceived lack of opportunities fused with a perceived rise in anti-Gypsy sentiment in the employment sector, and discrimination all informed their decision to migrate. All these are mentioned in the recorded interviews. For example, while discussing media coverage of Roma migration to Canada, highlighting how one-sided and negative these representations had been, it was mentioned that, “*it would look as if Roma are going to Canada just for money.*” Several respondents rejected this interpretation but also admitted that a part of their reason to migrate was financial. Another family reported that the situation seemed “*no longer bearable*” and that’s

why they “*decided to move towards [something] better.*” Here, they referred to a general sense that the quality of life was dropping and that there was a shrinking sense of possibilities in Bombary, accentuated by the constant (rising) suspicion and increasing exclusion on the side of non-Roma.

Unlike simplistic and overly deterministic top-down accounts that portray asylum seeking migration to Canada either as *economically* motivated or as a matter of *discrimination*, my interviews with Roma migrants indicated a more complex picture, at times combining a variety of motives, at times emphasizing one at the expense of other, at other times contradicting these claims and then finding a balance between both at another time. The interviews showed certain oscillations and contradictions in relation to other factors.

Departure to Canada

Following their collective decision, several Roma families left for Canada at the beginning of 2009. The family members tried to fly together, though some followed them later for variety of reasons. In the case of Věra’s family, they purchased their tickets from the savings they made during their time in Britain and by borrowing some money from her sister. Her sister had also lived in England prior to going to Canada (and later on returned to England from Canada). All of her six brothers and their families went with their families, too. Other relatives had to borrow money for their trip. They borrowed money from their relatives, friends, and some also from personal credit sources.⁶¹ But I was also told that some families had to sell their flats in order to be able to afford the tickets to Canada. Thus, Věra’s sister sold her flat and supported her relatives. Additionally, some other Roma families sold their flats in order to raise enough money for their family’s tickets to Canada. Věra’s family purchased ten tickets for their family members,

61 One of the popular sources of quick cash-loans was the financial company Provident. Companies like this, offering small loans to individuals with lower credit ratings at high interest rates, were one of the reasons why so many of the returning Roma found themselves greatly in debt.

costing a total of 186,000 CZK.⁶² The family members included Věra and her husband, their children and grandchildren, and also Věra's mother. This was relatively exceptional strategy in relation to other families, since many elderly Roma often stayed behind. One of Věra's daughters was about to give birth, so Věra stayed with her while the other family members departed to Canada. It took them almost three months before they received all the official documentation and permission required for traveling with such a small baby. Věra's granddaughter was a little more than two months old when they joined their family in Canada.

In comparison to traveling to Britain, which she *“was used to and frequently traveled alone,”* Věra was a bit worried prior to her trip to Canada. She was concerned about the long transatlantic flight, her small granddaughter, and also because she did not know what to expect when they arrived in Canada. However, her previous migration experience to Britain somehow gave her more confidence than the other Roma who traveled for the first time. She laughed as she told me *“our Roma – stupid [laughing] – they didn't want to eat on the plane as they thought that they would have to pay.”* She contrasted their inexperience and ignorance with her knowledge obtained during her migration in Britain. It was also this cultural capital that helped her not only to manage the flight but also to adjust to the new country and living conditions.

Upon landing in Toronto, the Roma migrants arrived with a sense of angst, not knowing what to expect from the *“heavily armed police waiting at the airport.”* After the Roma families said “emigration,” the border guards took them aside. It is interesting to note that most of the interviewees claimed to “know what to say” upon arrival. As one respondent explained, *“you can go to Canada either as a ‘refugee’⁶³ or for ‘holiday’. So, we went as a ‘refugee.’ You just tell them “emigration” and they already know, you don't need to say*

62 This amounts to approximately EUR 7,480. Agata paid back the loan from her sister while in Canada. She was “only able to pay it back because we were in Canada. Here [the Czech Republic] I would not be able to pay her back.”

63 Although the interviews were carried out in Czech, these expressions were pronounced in English.

anything else."⁶⁴ Although they claimed to have no family connections in Canada, they seemed to have gained this specific knowledge from another source, possibly from a more distant friendship connection with Roma families already in Canada. Apart from knowing what to say at the airport, the respondents suggested that they did not have much knowledge about Canada prior to their departure. It can be said that while they possessed certain amount of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986) from their previous migration experience (mainly to Great Britain), this was not necessarily linked to Canada but was converted while becoming incorporated into the social networks of other Roma families and institutions assisting the asylum seekers in Canada.

The Canadian experience

One of the greatest outcomes of migration to Canada was the encounter with a multicultural society, wherein ethno-cultural difference does not automatically translate into different and/or worse treatment (in contrast to their experiences in the Czech Republic). Practically all interviewees highlighted this experience as one of the most positive features of their lives in Canada. *"What is great there is that no one can call you names. Over there, we were like them. No one was making any differences."* Another migrant suggested, *"there, no one looks at whether you're black, yellow, or whatever. No one looks at you as a Gypsy!"* This observation was made both in reference to interactions in everyday life and also in reference to institutional treatment. Another person expressed a similar opinion; *"[over there] they can't call you a Gypsy because [they would] be sent to jail immediately."* This experience was often contrasted with their encounters with racism, discrimination, and being treated as second-class citizens in the Czech Republic. Additionally, many Roma migrants valued diversity in Canada greatly and did not perceive themselves to be at the bottom of ethnic hierarchies. Most of the Roma women also noted how women and children get treated with more respect and their rights are more protected in Canada.

64 This usually takes place already at the airport, upon arriving to Toronto (cf. Krištof 2008:2).

All the Roma migrants praised the treatment they received from institutions in Canada. This was often contrasted with the Czech Republic. For example, their experience with medical staff was said to be incomparably better. Věra was diagnosed with breast cancer in Canada. She said, when she sought medical help, *“over there, this is altogether different. The attitude of the doctors...When they found out that I had a tumor in the breast, I had to say that I was very worried...when I came, the doctor gave me a hug and said ‘don’t worry, we’ll help you, we’ll treat you’...and here [the Czech Republic] when we came back? [They said,] ‘Go back to Canada.’”* They emphasized the medical staff’s empathy, openness, and reassuring friendliness. While the migrants had much praise for the attitude of (and treatment by) institutions, the system nevertheless posed some misunderstandings, uncertainties, and insecurities for the newly arriving Roma. This was especially the case when communication proved difficult and, at times, it took much longer to be seen for an appointment. This led some migrants to worry and to complain about the system and some of them thought that the Czech health system was quicker in terms of getting the necessary treatment. Some migrants thought this might be simply the attribute of big cities, in which *“there are thousands of patients who need to be seen and, thus, they do not have that much time.”*

Additionally, what most respondents highlighted was the higher standard of living and improved socio-economic situation they experienced in Canada. This referred simultaneously to being “treated better”, feeling a greater sense of possibility, and also notable socio-economic opportunity and improvements. One of the respondents summarized this saying, *“in Canada we used to live like raja [kings].”* This was further illustrated by stories of the greater variety and quantity of food one could buy, but also, for instance, a one-day trip to Niagara Falls. Some migrants gave examples of other Roma who were granted refugee status in Canada eight years ago and now regularly go on holiday.

In Canada, the most recent wave of asylum seekers did not only receive the support given to asylum seeking applicants (interviewees used the same term – *sociálka* – as for Czech social benefits), but some also found jobs

in the informal sector: work at construction sites, cleaning, or other low-skill, manual labor. These were usually jobs mediated through their Roma connections and acquaintances they made in Canada. The combination of the state support, informal work, and/or merely from receiving the state support for refugee claimants, families found sufficient coverage for their socio-economic survival. Some of the respondents suggested that they were able even to save some money in Canada and, when considering their Canadian experience from a merely economic perspective, they often regretted their return:

“If someone would tell me to go to Canada [again], I would not think for a second. What a (great) life was there...I managed to bring some savings back from the Czech Republic. And I’m not counting the money, which I had sent home to those who left earlier (for the Czech Republic). When they called on Skype and said ‘I need some 100 dollars’...and this money [I sent to them] are irrecoverable. It wouldn’t exist if we would be coming home to Czech Republic and then we would ask for this money back. Never! We were all equal over there. One didn’t have money and another one gave. [There were] so many Gypsies [over there], strange gypsies and we were all one family. We’ve made ourselves a new Canada here.”

[J.G.]: *What do you mean by a ‘new Canada’?*

“Because we somehow became more united when abroad. The families even more...not just from Bombary. So, for example, I have millions of friends in Teplice now. Some of them are like my sisters now.”

The above excerpt from one of the interviews reveals not only a socio-economic in betterment, but also other important aspects of the migration process that were described by several respondents. It shows how migrants participated in the transnational social field and communicated via Skype with their relatives. They also supported members of the community at

home with remittances. Moreover, many of the migrants reported that they forged new ties of friendship in Canada and that they experienced more egalitarian ethics and better treatment amongst fellow Roma asylum seekers in Canada. One interviewee suggested that “*Roma stuck together more.*” They highlighted new friendships with other Roma, but also with other migrants. This greater solidarity and mutual help was illustrated in the above cited exert, not only referring to lending money when needed, but also through other forms of help and support. For example, one respondent said that because her son learned English very quickly he was often helping people with their institutional interactions. She suggested that this is due to his “big heart” and “*unwillingness to take money from families who might need it for their children.*” Being in Canada, thus, contributed to re-configuring some previous social relationships and building a certain sense of community through what was perceived as a more egalitarian ethics of mutuality. According to the interviewees, this code of ethics not only enhanced solidarity amongst Roma migrants, but also served as leverage to prevent unwanted behavior. This becomes apparent in the following quote, which reflects upon the alleged change in behavior of one family with a previously bad reputation: “*Gypsies were keeping an eye on each other*⁶⁵ [in Canada]. *Even those who were stealing in the Czech Republic didn’t dare to steal there. Over there, they would be reprimanded... Besides over there they did not need to steal.*”

At the same time, the example of translating for free and helping others was contrasted by the mention of a very competitive and self-serving network of non-related Roma and non-Roma that offered their help for a fee. This led to the creation of differentiations and the deepening of fissures between some family networks. Services ranged from helping with interpretation at institutions to advising on the asylum process. Although the interviews did not reveal in depth the extent of this business or its organization, the interviews suggested that a lot of people were involved in the business of asylum seeker ‘assistance’.

65 The verb *merkovať* has an ambiguous meaning and can be interpreted as ‘watching over’ each other - as a form of help and support -, but also ‘keeping an eye’ on the others so they don’t do something bad.

For many of the migrants, Canada also represented a space of relative abundance and greater variety of food and clothes. As Věra recalled, “*for me it was nothing new, since I’ve been in England before, but for those who were abroad for the first time...when they saw it, all these brands and things, they were amazed.*” Similarly, the diversity and quantity of food available to them was well received. These aspects of the lifestyle were highly praised and were considered by some to be the advantage of moving from a small peripheral town in the Czech Republic to a diverse, metropolitan city. Speaking after their return, the sense of possibilities offered by Canadian cities was nostalgically remembered: “*I love living in cities. If I could, I would live in the city immediately.*” The interviewees enjoyed the variety of goods and diversity of the people they encountered. At the same time, not everyone found the move to the city as positive. For example, some of the migrants said they did not like the city lifestyle, where “*there was nowhere to play with the children.*” One male respondent in his fifties commented that he did not like the fact that he did not have anywhere to go in Canada and spent most of the time in flat with his nuclear family. Some migrants also noted that one’s experience also varied, depending on the area in which one lived. On one hand, the migrants generally considered Canada to be a safer place to live than the Czech Republic, which overlapped with the sense of greater multicultural tolerance. On the other hand, some migrants suggested that they did not feel safe in certain areas of Toronto. This fear was, at the time, connected to their move to a big and foreign city. Although the interviewees said that the area they lived in was not particularly nice and they considered it to be fairly dangerous to go out in the evenings, they also contrasted their experiences with other families who lived in areas seen as much worse, even dangerous, and as having a higher proportion of street violence. Apart from the deportations implemented after the asylum claims’ refusal, these negative aspects also played a part in many people’s decisions to withdraw their asylum application and to return.

Motivations for and different routes of return

There are two ways of returning from Canada. First, if application for asylum is refused, then the unsuccessful claimant will be deported to the country of origin. The respondents mentioned that deportation could be significantly postponed by filling an official appeal to the decision. As most of them remarked, concerning their claims during this most recent wave of asylum migration, *“it has become almost impossible [to be granted asylum]... the government [Czech Republic] went there and said that the Gypsies are not discriminated against and all that rubbish!”*⁶⁶ The second way of returning home, and this was the case for the majority of Roma interviewed for this research project,⁶⁷ is to return to the Czech Republic after giving *stopka*⁶⁸ and withdrawing one’s asylum application. It is this latter case that we will focus on here.

For the interviewees, one’s individual well-being was often embedded within the collective well-being of their family. This was encapsulated in someone’s comment that, *“we’re like that. If one has a pain, we all have the pain. That’s how we are. It’s different for gadže.”* Thus, families who left behind some of their close relatives often felt a mixture of conflicting

66 Although reflections upon the political representatives’ views on Roma asylum migrations did not appear in the migrants’ accounts, from several comments it was clear that the Roma were aware of some of the public discussions and controversies circulated in media. One of the latest public waves of attention drawn to the issue of Czech Roma asylum migration followed events in May 2012. It was during his speech, appealing to Canada to lift the visa obligation for the Czech citizens, that the Czech Prime Minister, Petr Nečas, stated: “There is no reason for any citizen of the Czech Republic – regardless of his/her ethnic origin, religious beliefs or political opinion – to seek political asylum anywhere in the world... The feeling that one feels better somewhere else is not a (sufficient) reason for political asylum.” His comments were stated with regards to Canadian implementation of visas for the Czech citizens and stirred discussions prior to the official negotiations between Canada and EU about trade cooperation. (See: <http://zpravy.ihned.cz/c1-55866040-jestli-kanada-nezrusi-vizovou-povinnost-pro-cechy-muze-cekat-problemy-varuje-necas>)

67 It must be emphasized that at the time of the interviews, there were many Roma families still in Canada who were waiting for the decision regarding their asylum applications. In this project, only returned migrants were interviewed and these were usually among the first ones who decided to return for a wide of reasons. This context needs to be taken into consideration when analyzing the recorded interviews.

68 *Stopka* refers to their withdrawal of asylum applications.

emotions about their move to Canada. Although regular contact was maintained through Skype and phone calls, there was still an intense feeling of loss and homesickness for the close relatives left in the Czech Republic. These were often children, grandchildren, or grandparents. This grew especially strong when someone in the Czech Republic fell gravely ill. Roma migrants described states of unbearable pain and heaviness stemming from being apart from their beloved relatives who were suffering from illness. This was one of the most frequently reported reasons to give *stopka* – to put in a request to end their asylum claim and return home. The research recorded a number of similar requests to return – based on illness or a family problem back in the Czech Republic. For the Roma migrants, the decision they made in these circumstances was simply the most obvious choice. However, for many of the political commentators and institutions processing their asylum claims, this appeared to be an insufficient reason for returning and only contributed to growing negative impressions of Roma asylum seekers. Additionally, the interviewees noted that, on more than one occasion, Roma gave *stopka* due to a suddenly arising personal problems in the Czech Republic, but later changed their mind and no longer wanted to return (for example, one's relatives' health having improved, or a similar problem being resolved). However, these changes found little understanding in the Canadian legal system, in which there was no space for such retrospective changes of mind. Thus, whoever submitted their request for *stopka* was sent to the Czech Republic, with no chance of ever receiving asylum status again.

For Věra's family, the decision to return was again driven by an array of factors. Unlike other families whose grandparents stayed in the Czech Republic, her elderly mother came to Canada with them. However, her deteriorating health and homesickness played an important role in their decision to return back. Additionally, it was also Věra who fell gravely ill in Canada after being diagnosed with a breast cancer. Although she was pleased with the attitude and care provided by the Canadian health system, she grew nervous and increasingly worried over what she perceived as very slow progress in treating her cancer. She confessed that she lost her patience

and got worried that the slowness of Canadian health system, the waiting for and at appointments, might critically delay her treatment and endanger her chances to fight the illness in time.

“I caught nerves and lost my patience. They were still saying “all right” or “no problem” but this made me very nervous. I had a tumor of this size [gesticulating its large size] and was afraid.”

Her worries over the ineffectiveness of Canadian system eventually contributed to the decision to undergo the examinations and operation in the Czech Republic. While they did not like the way in which they were treated by the medical staff in the Czech Republic, many said that at least they understand them and feel that they get appointments quicker and that the Czech system allows for more in-depth examinations. In other words, the Czech health system was more familiar to them and the Roma migrants felt they know how to navigate it easier. In addition to her health problems, Věra’s family encountered a problem with one of their Canadian acquaintances, being in a long-standing conflict with a family of Albanian migrants who lived nearby. The conflict began with a short-lived love affair between Věra’s son and a young Albanian girl. However, the affair abruptly came to an end after her family found out. Věra’s entire family had to live under constant threat from the girl’s brothers. As Věra put it:

“Ever since he started to have something with her, we’ve got into problems. Her brothers were threatening us with a gun... they were saying that they are going to shot Peter [Věra’s son]... Or, they would follow up on the street in a car and threatened us verbally. Another time, they would ring us at our flat and kept threatening... My youngest daughter, she used to be like this [gesticulating her well-built figure with her hands]. But then she had lost so much weight because of the constant fear we lived in, because she feared that they would kill or beat up her brother... we’re like that... if something happens to our closest, we feel horrible and share the same pain.”

The conflict and ensuing tensions between the families suddenly transformed their lives and made their living in Canada more insecure. This experience of insecurity and fear significantly contributed to their decision to request stopka. However, their decision cannot be explained in one explanatory framework. It was the multiplicity of mutually reinforcing factors, which lead them to make the decision to return. Once they made that decision, it was only a matter of time before they got tickets and returned home.

Finally, it should be mentioned, that a frequently mentioned reason for returning 'home' was homesickness; or rather a lack of certain shared cultural intimacy (cf. Herzfeld 1997) and familiarity. Although, in most cases, this reason alone would not be enough to convince a migrant's return, it played an important role in their construction of home. Although some migrants referred to Canada as their 'home', the majority of our interviewees tended to imagine the Czech Republic as 'home'. Roma migrants greatly acknowledge the positive aspects of life in Canada and saw their migration as an opportunity to move in a future-oriented movement. However, they also expressed that their 'roots' were still in the Czech Republic.

Returning 'home'

Most of the migrants' reflections on their return were a combination of contradictory feelings and emotions. On one hand, migrants described feelings of regret, saying "*I already realized that I made a mistake when we landed in Prague,*" or "*when I came back, I realized how horrible it is here.*" Yet, on the other hand, the very same persons simultaneously suggested that their return was also determined by one's roots, which "*will always keep pulling you home. Here [Czech Republic], you have your acquaintances and friends.*" Other returning migrants emphasized how they did not feel home in Canada and were looking forward to be back. These comments frequently drew on an imagined cultural intimacy and familiarity with things and social relationships in the Czech Republic.

However, their actual return to the Czech Republic was not as positive an experience as they had imagined. Their arrival was paved with difficulties and it pushed many of them into more marginal and excluded positions vis-à-vis the dominant society. On one level, this was certainly the case in regards to the local non-Roma Czechs, who made them feel unwelcome. I have heard several complaints articulated in an upset tone that *“one of the first things we’ve heard was ‘why did you come back, if you wanted to go [to Canada] so badly?’”* This account was supported by several of the local non-Roma, who characterized their fellow Roma’s migration as “adventure migration,” “going to try their luck,” or as some kind of “holiday.” As some of the local non-Roma commented, *“when they found out that even in Canada they won’t get everything easily without making any efforts,⁶⁹ they started to come back.”* For example, the local non-Roma social worker summarized her reflections:

“They went to try their luck ... but when it didn’t work out, they came back...They didn’t try hard enough, even in Canada. Some of them did not even learn good English and they were there for over a year!”

Her comment is telling, not only because it reveals her assumption that their migration was mainly motivated by ‘trying their luck,’ but also that their ‘efforts’ can be measured by their proficiency in English (or a lack there of, as she suggested). Many of the returning migrants encountered similar reactions, reflecting widespread assumptions that their migration motivations were primarily driven by economic interests and that the Roma are unwilling to adapt. These representations were almost a mirror image of media portrayals, depicting the Roma negatively, as a special kind of migrant, a particularly non-adaptive ‘group’ of ‘scroungers’. In both these forms of representation, the Roma have been continuously, negatively “all lumped together,” as one of the respondents critically pointed out.

69 The exact idiomatic expression used here was “when they realized that they won’t get the baked pigeons straight into their mouths.” This idiomatic expression refers to receiving something without making any effort.

The returning migrants complained about the attitude they encountered at the institutions, as well as a sense of powerlessness and exclusion they felt after being told that:

“After we came back, we were told that we are not entitled for a single crown for three months.”

“It’s true that we came back and went to sociálka⁷⁰ to register and apply for benefits. We were told, ‘you don’t have the right to claim.’ And so I told them: ‘And why? I’m still a citizen of the Czech Republic. I didn’t disavow the Czech Republic. I disavowed the Canadian Republic.’ They were staring at me like morons.”

Despite their difficulties at the beginning of their return, the migrants eventually managed to get social support. Although most non-Roma reactions were negative, such as with the local mayor who was said to be “the biggest racist ever – she hates Gypsies.” They also encountered non-Roma who were more sympathetic and understanding of their situation. For example, I was told of one officer who was willing to help with their re-applications and negotiations with various institutions. As one of the Roma women said:

“There is one good gadži⁷¹ (at the municipality offices) who helps us with the papers...I bought her a chocolate and she has helped me with everything and now when I’m helping people [i.e. her relatives] who are returning only now, she always helps.”

These encounters came part and parcel with the institutional exchanges and financial debts that awaited them upon their return. The local mayor’s reaction to their arrival illustrates this well and is indicative of the main difficulties many families faced upon their return to Bombary

70 Social Benefits’ Office.

71 Romani word for a non-Roma woman.

concerning their housing. In one interview with the Mayor of Bombary,⁷² she summarized her reluctant attitude in the following statement: *“if our citizens would like to return from some kind of holiday in Toronto, unfortunately, they will not have their council flats here.”* She was referring to the municipality-owned social housing situated in the centre of the town, several of which had been rented by the Roma migrants’ families, prior to their departure to Canada. However, many of these families left for Canada without officially notifying the municipality about their departure and, in some cases, leaving outstanding rental debts or other utility bills (e.g. electricity, gas, etc.). Most of these flats were in relatively poor condition to begin with, but were further vandalized during the migrants’ absence. When they returned, most of the flats were in rather critical condition and the mayor decided not to allow the Roma families to move back to them.⁷³ This left several Roma families in a precarious living situation.

The mayor embraced a politics of ‘hard-fist’ by refusing to rent out these flats, or provide any alternative assistance, upon their return. She admitted that this might possibly lead to exposing the returning migrants to the risk of temporary homelessness, but refuted her role in this by suggesting that *“everyone is responsible for his/her own luck”* and *“they are adults and they will have to take care of themselves.”* The mayor’s attitude created a set of tensions between several returning Roma families and the representatives of local municipality. In desperate need of living space after their return, many ended up living in relatives’ overcrowded flats. Some returned Roma families filed an official legal complaint and case against the municipality. However, most were unsuccessful. The authorities backed the mayor, saying that *“since they stopped paying their rent and left without notification [thus,*

72 Reportéři ČT: Romští navrátilci z Kanady nemají kam jít. See on-line: <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/83513-reporteri-ct-romsti-navratilci-z-kanady-nemaji-kam-jit/>

73 It is also interesting to note how the deterioration of these flats was implicitly ascribed by the local mayor to the collective Roma/Gypsies community – by asserting that the Roma had contributed to the radical deterioration of these flats prior to their asylum migrations and by assuming that “the others” [i.e. other Roma] were the ones who destroyed the flats after the original Roma tenants left for Canada. <http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/83513-reporteri-ct-romsti-navratilci-z-kanady-nemaji-kam-jit/>

breaking the tenancy agreement], the municipality office has no obligation to provide flats to them after their return.”

Finding new flats proved to be a very difficult task, since they often had to search outside of Bombary. Their search was often complicated by the fact that, as they themselves said, “*today, no one wants to rent a flat to a Gypsy [in the Czech Republic].*” The Roma experiences lead to a lack of trust and hope in finding a flat to rent, with most landlords unwilling to rent to ‘Gypsies’. Several families bought themselves a house from their Canadian savings, dividing the costs of the remaining monthly installments between the inhabitants. However, other families that did not have sufficient economic capital were left impoverished. Some of them faced difficulty in securing the amounts needed for renting a flat at all. This situation put several families in limbo and forced them to search for housing elsewhere. Some of them had to move away, which often resulted in the weakening of their social capital and further contributed to their socio-economic marginalization.

In the case of Věra’s family, they did not return to Bombary. Her family first moved to Teplice, where one of her brothers lived and where it was easier for them to find a flat. However, since Věra’s mother’s health was deteriorating (she had gone back to Bombary), Věra had to commute every week between North and South Czech Republic. Finding this long-distance commuting and the separation from her mother and other members of her close family physically, mentally, and economically unbearable, Věra decided to move back to Bombary.

In addition to the institutional and the housing challenges, the returning Roma migrants often faced a great deal of debt. These outstanding debts had accumulated over the time of their absence and they often incurred additional fines and interests on loans (the ones they had taken prior to their departure). Some of the families were in a position to pay these debts from their savings. However, the majority of returning migrants continued to live under continual duress from businesses and collection agencies.

One of the key factors influencing the level of re-integration of the returning families was the amount of capital at their disposal and their

housing situation.⁷⁴ Migrants who returned to their privately owned homes, or those who had enough savings to buy a flat, were in a better position. However, those lacking economic means found their return more difficult. Additionally, a network of relatives and friends proved crucial in the readjustment period following their return. For example, families who ended up without their flats stayed at their relatives' flats and, thus, relied on their social capital. Additionally, those who knew how to interact, speak, and negotiate with institutions found it easier to return.⁷⁵ The combination (and a skilful use) of these variously accumulated forms of capital proved to be crucial to the extent in which they succeed to reintegrate.

The way Roma migrants coped with their return was also influenced by their migration experiences in Canada. More specifically, returning Roma migrants gained experiences with transnational migration and a multicultural society, which shaped their self-understanding and increased their sense of self-empowerment. The research here recorded how they used their Canadian experience as a reference point when formulating a critique of everyday relations and processing the deeply ingrained racial inequalities encountered in the Czech Republic. For example, the migrants viewed Canada as incomparably better, in terms of the institutional treatment of Roma clients. However, they also formulated this in terms of Canada's imagined societal advancement, in contrast with the Czech system's 'backwardness'. I recorded several remarks such as "that would never happen in Canada," or "people would never treat us like that, [they] would be sent to prison" (for calling someone a 'Gypsy'). When discussing how specific non-Roma still treat Roma as underlings and second-class citizens, one of the respondents noted that "*before [going to Canada] I would be always silent, but now I won't overlook/tolerate it anymore.*" His statement implied an intention to defend himself more actively. Additionally, this acquired sense of empowerment, in reference to the Canadian experience, was also used pragmatically, in order to increase one's standing and recognition vis-à-vis other Roma families and non-Roma neighbors.

74 I refer to P. Bourdieu's conceptualizations of capital (Bourdieu 1986).

75 Following Bourdieu, we could call this a volume of accumulated cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986).

Possible futures?

At the time of this research project, I encountered the family members of several networks who had returned from Canada over the course of the past two years. Some families had just arrived back, and others were about to return (so I was told). Yet, there were also some families who were planning to remain in Canada and were waiting for their asylum claim to be approved. The families stayed in touch using long-distance media and kept almost in daily contact via Skype. Although distant physically, they maintained intense social relationships via these transnational connections and fields.

The returning families I interviewed in the Czech Republic all expressed their dissatisfaction with their treatment after they returned. However, they were divided in opinion regarding the future and to what extent they would consider migrating again. Some families regretted having returned from Canada and I would often hear individuals say, *“I really regret coming back. If I could, I would go back straightaway”* or *“I realized that I made a mistake by coming back as soon as I returned.”* Some of these respondents expressed their desire to leave the Czech Republic soon. Frequently, they said that there was something that keeps them in Bombarý for the moment but once this particular bond is resolved, they will leave again. For example, one woman suggested that *“I’m just waiting for my daughter to finish her schooling here and I’m off.”* She was referring to her youngest daughter who had one year left of elementary school. I found that one of the main reasons for staying was the illness of a relative. This was the reason many came back and what also kept them in Bombarý.

At the same time, I encountered several interviewees who had no intention of leaving again. These were often members of the younger generation (in their late teens or early twenties) who, for various reasons, did not like particular elements of their experience in Canada. Although they identified many advantages to their move to Canada, they also raised issue with a number of disadvantages they encountered. They felt that they had to spend most of the time indoors, in their flats, in Canada. In the Czech Republic, one of the most common daily routines is hanging out, outside of one’s flat, with one’s friends and family, or going to visit relatives

who, in a place like Bombary, live in close proximity. This was not always the case in Canada and it was frequently mentioned that neighborhoods in Canada are not particularly safe in the evenings. Additionally, some of the returning migrants simply did not feel ‘at home’ in Canada. One of the interviewees, a young woman in her early twenties, had this to say:

“I don’t want to go anywhere again. Otherwise, I would feel that I’m (becoming) like one of those wandering Gypsies and I would not have home. I don’t want to leave again.”

By contrasting herself with the image of wandering Gypsies, she also implicitly made a claim about her sense of belonging. Others suggested that they do not want to migrate abroad again, but might possibly move within the Czech Republic. They did not envisage another international migration move in their futures, although they did not exclude the possibility of moving elsewhere in the Czech Republic, if a better opportunity presented itself elsewhere.

Additionally, there were some who, at times, had been hoping to migrate but were also reluctant and critical of making such a big move and of living abroad. For example, another respondent, a young mother in her mid-twenties with two children, expressed this contradictory mixture of feelings:

“I liked it there but I wouldn’t like to go there again...My children are going to school here...though for the children it was better there [in Canada]. They learned English perfectly and their equipment in classes, those computers were much better...Czechs can’t compete with that...but I wouldn’t go again. It would be different if I would be single, but with the children, no. They’ve got used to the school here again.”

While it is difficult from the present perspective to make any predictions about the whether these returnees will migrate again, one can argue that there is a shared understanding between many that the Canadian migration experience is a closed chapter. While some of the respondents suggested

that they “*would love to return to Canada,*” most of them also conceded “*this is no longer possible*” ... “*once you give stopka you won’t be allowed to come back.*” Considering the existing visa regime for Czech citizens, Roma migrants see their return to Canada as practically impossible (at least at this particular point in time). At the same time, some of them have been exploring the possibility of further migration and Great Britain featured in several interviews as one of the options, as a place where established kinship and family connections exist.

Conclusions

The last two decades have seen an increase in Roma migrations from Central Eastern Europe to western European countries and Canada. These included various forms of labor migration within the European Union as well as asylum seeking migration to Canada (and previously to other countries). Although this report focused on the most recent wave of Roma asylum migration to Canada by examining one particular Roma asylum migration network to Canada, its findings indicate some similarities to other forms of recent Central Eastern Europe Roma mobility, in that these migrants all strive to achieve ‘a better life’ abroad (cf. Grill 2012). This is particularly the case with many Czech and Slovak Roma who participated in different forms of migration to Britain (as well as other western European countries) and to Canada. They all went in search of a better and viable life. To view Roma asylum migrations as the constant struggle ‘in search of better life’ has been noted by several researchers (Kovats 2002; Krištof 2008; and others). However, these authors differ in their understanding of what ‘striving’ and ‘movement towards betterment’ actually mean (both analytically and for the migrants themselves). In the present text, I have tried to outline some aspects of Roma migrants’ struggles for a better life as simultaneously both an existential struggle for a greater sense of possibilities and a dramatic move forward that might (but might not) overlap with socio-economic betterment.⁷⁶

76 Theoretically, this approach draws on G. Hage’s work on homemaking amongst migrants in Australia (Hage 1997).

Considering its focus on one locality and its limitations as short-term fieldwork, the presented accounts are inevitably partial and fragmentary and do not pretend to generate a general explanatory framework for 'Roma migration' from the Czech Republic. At the same time, by choosing to focus on one particular network of Roma migrants, this paper was intended to challenge some of the established, dominant representations regarding Roma migrations (not only) to Canada.

This report also shows how a particular violent incident can trigger a chain of family migrations to Canada, as well as describing how the decision itself was embedded within a larger configuration of growing dissatisfaction and worsening conditions, as well as socio-economic impoverishment and marginality within the Czech Republic. Although the violent incident was a relatively isolated event in Bombary (and in the Czech Republic) that year (2008), since then Central Eastern Europe has witnessed an ever-worsening socio-economic situation and an increase in anti-Gypsism, with more explicit forms of intolerance and violence spreading across the region (Stewart 2012; Vidra and Fox 2012). In the case of the Czech Republic, several regions experienced a surge in tensions, a rise in the number of extreme-right groups (and their support), as well as ever-worsening living conditions for Roma (see e.g. Kafková et al. 2012) leading to the increasing likelihood that conditions will result in conflict and physical violence. The deteriorating conditions certainly played an important factor in influencing Roma to migrate in the past. However, contrary to the one-sided view espoused by many human right activists, these serious factors should not obfuscate our ability to consider other important elements within our analytical framework. The case study on Roma networks from Bombary clearly exhibits that the most recent migration cannot be understood in terms of 'either-or' (either refugee migration or economically driven migration). By paying attention to ethnographic details and observing in depth the often contradictory claims and actions of my subjects, it was my intention to present the migration process as defying any simple categorization and, thus, pushing beyond some of the mechanical applications implemented in the 'push and pull' model.

Contrary to dominant representations of Roma asylum seeking migrations (see e.g. Krištof 2008), the present ethnographic case study does not support the hypothesis that asylum seeking migration is always preceded by prior contact, based on family ties or other connections to organizational structures within the potential host country. As my ethnographic examples show, Roma asylum migration does not necessarily result from prior social connections between families of former and present migrants, and is not necessarily orchestrated by Roma and/or non-Roma mediators in Canada.⁷⁷

Unlike other groups of migrants from Central Eastern Europe, Roma mostly migrate in families. If a united migration of the family is not possible, the divided families strive to reunite as soon as possible. Being apart from other members of a close family has proved to be one of the most difficult challenges for Roma migrants to Canada and has often led to the withdrawal of their asylum claims. This paper also attempts to document some of the social conditions, dispositions and emotional implications of migration as well as how individual and collective well-being merges and informs each individual member's social actions.

This study also was able to reconstruct the migration trajectories of one migration network, in which several families from Bombary were participating. It focused on their motivations, socio-economic conditions prior to their migration, their decisions to migrate, and explored their migration experiences in Canada. Additionally, it documented some of the hardships and difficulties met by returning migrants, with many returnees ending up in a more vulnerable and marginalized position than they had been in prior to their migration to Canada. The study shows that the return of Roma families was accompanied by a backlash from the surrounding communities and documents their difficulties in finding adequate housing and jobs. Just as the possibility of their success during outward migration depended on a combination of social, financial, cultural, and symbolic capitals, the extent of their success in returning to the Czech Republic depended on very similar factors and capitals.

77 However, this does not exclude the possibility that transnational networks and connections exist in other cases of Roma migrants from other localities. It also does not imply that the role of transnational social field and flows of information does not play a significant role in migration process.

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5. SOME HYPOTHESES AND QUESTIONS ON THE NEW WAVE OF HUNGARIAN ROMA MIGRATION TO AND FROM CANADA

Zsuzsanna Vidra

Central European University, Center for Policy Studies, Hungary

Tünde Virág

*Hungarian Academy of Sciences,
Research Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungary*

Introduction

In our paper we formulate some hypotheses and raise a few questions with regards to what we label ‘Roma migration’, concentrating on one specific destination, Canada. The paper is based on explorative fieldwork in which families with migrant histories were interviewed in Borsod county, a region from where out-migration has been heaviest in terms of numbers.

Our approach is both anthropological and sociological in the sense that both tend “to emphasize social relations as central to understanding the processes of migration and immigration incorporation.” (Brettel and Hollifield 2008: 5). Nonetheless, due to the different historical roots of the two disciplines, migration anthropology usually focuses on the sending or the sending and the receiving ends while sociology on the receiving society and on the process of immigrant incorporation (Brettel and Hollifield 2008). In

that respect we took a more anthropological approach by studying exclusively the sending society. At the same time, we are also more anthropological in our epistemology because we are not focusing on global or large-scale processes but rather on micro-phenomena. Also, “anthropology’s focus on culture, which includes the study of interaction between beliefs and behavior, of corporate groups, and of social relationships, has resulted in an emphasis in migration studies on adaptation and cultural change, on forms of social organization that are characteristic of both the migration process and the immigrant community, and on questions of identity and ethnicity.” (Brettel 2008: 114) During our fieldwork we examined several aspects typical of anthropological studies: e.g. we looked into social relations and social organizations while studying networks and migration strategies, we explored cultural beliefs and behaviors while investigating motivations for leaving and returning.

The first hypothesis formulated relates to the conceptual framework: how should the phenomenon of ‘Roma migration to Canada from Central Eastern Europe’ be interpreted? Based on some relevant literature our assumption is that it should firstly be understood as a mix of classic labor migration and asylum seeking (Klimova and Pickup 2003; Brettel 2008). Our second hypothesis is more empirical for it focuses on the Hungarian experience of the recent out-migration process started around 2008 with the lifting of Canadian visa requirements for Hungary. It presumes that in the early 2000s people and families of somewhat higher social status migrated (Kováts 2002) whereas migration from 2008-2009 was different - an additional group, lower-status individuals and families, started to migrate as well.

Under our second hypothesis we set out some research questions, each looking at different aspects of the migration process. Our questions were: What kind of migrant groups can be identified? How can we identify these groups? What pushed low-status, deprived Roma families to migrate? What made it possible for them to migrate? What kind of trends could be seen in changes in migration patterns between the two periods? What are the effects of low-status migration on transnational networks? Why the strategy of ‘whole family at once’? What awaits low-status Roma migrants upon return?

In this paper we look more closely at our hypotheses and each of these questions and hope to give some analytical insight into the migration process of Roma to Canada. We emphasize this study is a pilot investigation, making our conclusion more of a synthesis of the relevant questions. This will open up further questions rather than reach any final answer at this point.

Labor-migration trends in Hungary

Emigration from Hungary between the 1989-90 regime change and the country joining the EU was moderate compared to other countries in the region. In contrast to predictions that joining the EU would radically change the situation, labor migration remained rather similar to the previous period. E.g. in Germany, the first target country of Hungarian labor migrants, the number of Hungarians arriving fluctuated as follows: 51,905 in 1999, 55,953 in 2003, 54,714 in 2004 and 56,075 in 2007 (Hárs 2009: 233). Also, compared to other countries from the region, in the post-accession period the proportion of Hungarian labor migrants in the UK lagged behind dominant migrant nations, such as Poland making up 71.3% of all EU-8 migrants in 2007, Slovakia with its 10.5%, Lithuania with 6.8% against Hungary with only 4.2% (Hárs 2009: 235). Surveys into the migration potential of Hungarians also reveal that fewer people consider leaving this country than they do other countries in Central Eastern Europe. In 2005 migration intention of Poles and Lithuanians was the highest among these countries (9.9% and 9.6%), Slovaks had 5.4% and Slovenians 4.1% against Hungarians at 3%. The lowest rate of migration potential was found among Czech citizens, 1.4% (Hárs 2009: 232).

There are several factors that are traditionally looked at while seeking explanations for migration trends in a country. Economic development and GDP are among the most frequently used explanatory factors. In Hungary, in the 1990s, and especially the second half of the decade, the state of the economy was a good predictor for low migration. Hungary's economic output was comparatively good, accounting for low emigration rates. However, while other countries were catching up economically, migration

rates still remained the same: higher in some other countries, such as Poland or Lithuania and lower in Hungary. Authors point to other factors for reasons “why Hungarians don’t (want to) migrate”. The moderate unemployment rate had been an explanation until the 2008 crisis, as well as the generosity of the welfare system. “Benefits in Hungary are comparatively generous in terms of child care and social and unemployment benefit, as well as pension.” (Hárs 2009: 245) This, as we will illustrate, changed in the second half of the 2000s and became an important migration push factor for various segments of the population including low-status Roma people. And indeed, in the 2012 statistics the migration potential of the Hungarian population showed an important shift from previous data. “Migration potential peaks in 2012”, it has never been this high: now every fifth Hungarian plans to migrate either in the short, medium or long term (Sik 2012).

Roma migration trends

Among typical labor migrants it is very unlikely that we find a significant number of Roma given their weak position in the labor market and low level of education. There are some special types of migrants, such as musicians, where Roma may be overrepresented. Low demand for unskilled labor in the target countries explains why asylum seeking was to become a typical migration strategy for Roma from Central Eastern Europe. Applying for refugee status is in most cases the only way for Roma to migrate. Given that the desperate social-economic situation of the vast majority of Roma is accompanied by widespread discrimination, migration push factors are indeed significant for this population (Kováts 2002). However, asylum seeking in European Union countries from Hungary before EU accession was substantially below that from other CEE countries. From aggregated data we know that until 1999 counting Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary together, refugee applications in European states by Hungarians represented only 0.67% of all claims from these six countries (Kováts 2002: 17).

At the same time, an important number of Roma people from Hungary chose Canada as their target country of migration. The number

of refugee claims most often exceeded the number of claims from all other CEE countries in Canada. Added to this, the number of Hungarian refugee claims occasionally, in 2001, 2010 and 2011, led the list of claims for asylum in Canada by originating country, exceeding even such migration sources as China, Columbia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, etc.⁷⁸

From Hungary, asylum-applying migration started around 1998: “In the late 90’s the Czech and Hungarian Roma have discovered Canada. (...) in December 2001, Canada imposed a visa requirement on Hungary. In that same year, Hungarian Roma was the largest group of Refugee Claimants in Canada.” (St. Clair 2007) The following data show the gradual and steady rise of the number of Hungarian refugee claims: 10 in 1994, 38 in 1995, 64 in 1996, 300 in 1997,⁷⁹ 982 in 1998, 1,579 in 1999, 1,929 in 2000, 3,851 in 2001.⁸⁰ Following the lifting of visa requirements, the number of asylum claimants from Hungary started to rise again. In 2007 around 300 people submitted refugee applications,⁸¹ in 2009 2,426, in 2010 2,300 and in 2011 4,423 asylum seekers were registered.⁸²

Fieldwork

The explorative fieldwork⁸³ was conducted in Borsod country in the middle of 2012, just around the time when the Canadian government passed its new refugee bill, Bill C-31, aiming to “crack down on so-called ‘bogus’ asylum claimants”.⁸⁴

78 <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>

79 Kováts 2002: 15

80 <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>

81 <http://www.origo.hu/nagyvilag/20111118-hogyan-fogadja-kanada-a-magyar-romakat-risport-torontobol-elseo-resz.html>

82 <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>

83 The interviews were conducted by the two authors of the article and by a journalist colleague, Ilona Gaal.

84 <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/06/10/controversial-refugee-bill-set-to-clear-house-of-commons-monday/>

Given the aim of our pilot study to formulate research questions and hypotheses for the Roma migration process in general and to Canada in particular based on fieldwork observations and interviews with Roma return migrants, we looked for local communities supplying large numbers of people leaving for Canada in the previous couple of years, and to which some migrants had returned. As indicated above, the county with the highest share of Roma inhabitants, Borsod, appears to be the most affected by Roma emigration. We have to be careful with this statement since we lack statistical data on out-migration. All we have is the mirror statistics of the number of refugee claimants issued by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada recording the number of people entering the country with the aim of applying for refugee status. Localities supplying emigrants had to be identified from sources other than statistical data. Since our pilot study is primarily a qualitative investigation it seemed legitimate to start with newspaper articles as a source of information and to follow up by the snowball method to find communities where return migrants or families of migrants live.

Having concluded from collecting articles from newspapers that Borsod county is indeed a place from where lots of Roma families have left (and to where lots of them have also returned), we wanted to find a small community there in order to conduct in-depth interviews with inhabitants and institutions to map out networks, strategies, tendencies, local reactions, etc. The size of the settlement was important insofar as a smaller community might let us explore more easily how migration is organized on an individual (family) level and on a community level.

Our choice was a village of some 2,000 inhabitants out of which around sixty percent declared themselves Roma in the 2001 census. According to our informants about 30 to 40 families had gone to Canada and only a few had returned at the time of the interviews. In the village we managed to interview family members of migrants still in Canada and one family who had just recently returned. Besides that we talked to Roma representatives as well as to the village school principal. Concerning the socio-economic status of the village, it belongs to the 'most disadvantaged settlements' category, with an unemployment rate of 90%. Poor as it is, the

village population is still stratified; there are families who manage to get by, and there are families who are in a much more desperate situation with no income whatsoever.

During our interviews we came to the realization that the nearby small town pr, networks at home and in Canada, experiences in the target country (ways of managing life, work experiences, accommodation, friends and relatives there, school for children, relations with authorities and institutions, etc.), reasons for return, and life after return. The interviewees were contacted by using the snowball method. Since the migration process affected a rather large proportion of both communities, it was a relatively easy task to find family members with a migration history. The only difficulty we came across was the distrust of us some of them initially expressed. As was later revealed, in some cases people had bad experiences with either the Canadian or the Hungarian authorities that made them reluctant to speak. Most of the interviews were family interviews with various members of the family present. Thus, we managed to have accounts of different experiences, of adults and children as well as of younger and older people. Altogether some ten families were visited in the two settlements.

First hypothesis: Mix of labor migration and asylum seeking

As it was put forward in our first hypothesis, we assume that the current Canadian migration should be understood as a mix of classic labor migration and asylum seeking. Our assumption concurs with the conclusions of a scholarly debate on this issue appearing in Nationalities Papers:

“At the beginning of the debate, activists and scholars almost unanimously challenged the portrayal by government officials and media of Roma as economic migrants. However, opinions have begun to polarize in the last couple of years. While some activists and scholars still maintain that Romani asylum seekers leave their countries of origin only because of racism and discrimination, others believe that Romani requests for asylum are also economically motivated. They argue that migration

can be seen as a strategy employed by Romani individuals who turn to Western societies for tolerance in the hope of obtaining a more equal opportunity for personal economic, educational and social development.” (Klimova and Pickup 2003)

Added to this, it needs to be emphasized that in migration anthropology enforced migrants (refugees) and other migrants are conceptualized as being the same or at least similar since their experiences show many resemblances once they are in the new country; refugees, “can be theorized in much the same way as other displaced peoples”. (Brettel 2008: 115)

In effect, it would be misleading to handle the issue exclusively as being either one or the other phenomenon since the process contains the elements of both labor migration and asylum seeking. The fact that receiving refugee status in Canada for Roma people is a viable way of entering Canada and staying in the country, does not mean that among the original motivations and the later strategies one cannot find typical labor migration patterns. Asylum or refugee status can be seen as facilitators of labor migration. On the other hand, it would be also a misunderstanding if we excluded the asylum motive from the process. As we will discuss it later, discrimination and different kinds of persecution are indeed among the push factors that help for a decision to leave one’s home country.

In the accounts we found different explanations of the original migration motivations that illustrate well the mix of reasons:

“Our plan was to return. (...) We wanted a better life, to be able to buy a few things that we need in our household.” (Mr. Pál)⁸⁵

“My brother tries to make as much money as he can so that they have something to live on when they come back, to pay back their bank loan.” (Mr. György)⁸⁶

85 Mr. Pál from the village. He had just returned two months earlier from Canada with his family.

86 Mr. György from the village. His brother was among the first ones to go. Later his brother was followed by several of his siblings and their families.

“We have tremendous racism in Hungary. You have to make a hundred times more effort than a Hungarian. I am disadvantaged because I am Roma.” (Mr. Görgy)

“Here in the village everyone would like to go. But Canada was the only possibility. Normally, we don’t even have money to go to the nearby town to the swimming pool.” (Mrs. Márta)⁸⁷

Second hypothesis: different migration waves, different social status of migrants

It was pointed out earlier that Roma migration to Canada could be split into two major periods. The first period lasted until 2001 when Canada, for very much the same reasons that the country later introduced a new refugee law in 2012, imposed visa restrictions for Hungarian citizens. The second period started in 2008 when visa requirements were lifted so it became relatively easy to enter the country and apply for refugee status.

Based on our interview data we formulated the hypothesis that in the early 2000s individuals and families of somewhat higher social status migrated, while from 2008-2009 we see more lower status individuals and families leaving as well.

Stemming from the modernization theory, migration is seen as a flow from rural to urban or, as in our case, from areas with scarce capital and abundant labor to regions or countries with high levels of capital and low levels of labor (Brettel 2008). Low-wage labor migration between these areas has its historical roots and patterns, e.g. “wage labor is viewed by these individuals as offering more opportunities than subsistence farming (Mitchell 1969) and can, in fact, provide the cash needed to succeed in the rural context – to accumulate bride-price, provide a dowry, or buy a home.” (Brettel 2008: 118) Indeed, low-status migrants could be easily identified with wage-labor migrants if their motivations, return strategies

87 Mrs. Márta, a young woman from the village with small children. Her brother and his family is in Canada.

and compartments are compared. This conceptualization is valid for the low-status migrants we observed, but it could also be valid for the higher status migrants we described. This draws our attention to the fact that our examples of lower and higher statuses should be handled carefully since the status difference is rather minor in the two types. As we will see from the interviews, higher status can refer to slightly different opportunities and access to resources and networks. E.g. somebody having had the opportunity to be employed in the state sponsored public work scheme for a wage under the subsistence level still allowed him to accumulate enough money to migrate whereas somebody without this opportunity was simply unable to do the same.

While coming up with this hypothesis we examined different questions such as the types of migrating groups, push factors, migration patterns and changes in migration patterns, transnational networks and experiences of return. In the following sections we will examine each of these questions relying on our interviews and fieldwork observation data collected in the two settlements.

What kind of migrant groups can be identified?

Roma migration to Canada, as we have seen, has a history dating back to the 1990s. As is always the case, migration statistics or any exact data on migrants are difficult to collect. Except for Canadian refugee statistics, we have no clear picture as to who are the migrants, how many are they, or where they are from. This is also true of the earlier migrants, the ones leaving before the 2001 visa restrictions. We can, however, rely on some research results of a project conducted by Kováts et al. at the beginning of the 2000s in which various aspects of the Roma migration phenomenon were studied (Kováts 2002). The project identified certain groups as potential migrants. These were mobile communities, families and individuals (musicians, showmen, traders); educated university graduates, young Budapest intellectuals; businessmen; and some refugees from local conflicts. Those who left for Canada in the 1990s or early 2000s could be assumed to belong to these

typical migrant groups. Nonetheless, it was found that a good proportion of the well-off businessmen rarely decided to emigrate due to a lack of business contacts, language skills and other useful knowledge. Underprivileged Roma were hindered by lacking financial means to even make the journey, so emigration remained “a mere desire to many”. (Kováts 2002: 24) The new wave of Roma migration to Canada, as we assume, affected, besides all other types, the deprived, underprivileged segment of the Roma population to a much larger extent than before. In fact, this is the main focus of our pilot research: we intend to explain the causes and consequences of this ‘new type of Roma migration’ characterized by a much larger outflow of underprivileged people than before.

How can we identify migrant groups?

As already indicated, migration statistics are hard to produce, and identifying migrant groups is probably an even more difficult task. Researchers usually use various proxies to assess migration ratios. In case of the Canadian migration process, the task is somewhat easier given the recorded number of asylum claimants. For our purposes we would have benefited however from more detailed data than the number of refugees. From our fieldwork experience we concluded that even without hard data some kind of qualitative approach might help to identify migrant groups.

To delineate migrant groups one way to proceed is to assess the social status of migrants. Since our pilot study focuses on ‘new migration’, that is the mass migration of underprivileged Roma, we wanted to pick out certain social characteristics that would be more typical of lower status migrants than other groups. We presumed that one good proxy would be to look at what risks migrants were willing to take to engage in the migration process. The idea is that lower status people tend to take greater risks for they have fewer resources. Poverty in general entails greater risks in any social actions than higher social status does.

The major risks we identified are material on one hand, and risks of moral temptation on the other hand. Material risks refer to the financial

resources that one needs to have to make the journey to Canada. Usually whole families with several children emigrated. This meant that the money needed for air tickets far exceeded the financial resources of those families. We have seen several different ways people secured money for the costly journey all involving different degrees of risk-taking. There were families who had made plans well before the journey and saved up money for as long as two years.

“I was putting money aside for two years. I had some occasional jobs in Budapest, we worked at construction sites.” (Mr. Pál)

It was nonetheless more common to borrow money from close relatives, distant acquaintances or even people already in Canada.

“My brother in Canada paid for the ticket for my other brother, three years ago.” (Mr. György)

Saving money all alone seems to involve less risk than borrowing money from someone for the simple reason that if somebody is capable of collecting this huge amount he is probably somewhat better-off than if somebody has to rely on external help. However, paradoxically, saving corresponds to a higher level of risk whereas borrowing may match reduced risk. This is mainly because the way a migrant gets access to the amount of money needed for the journey is indicative of the degree of her/his embeddedness in different types of networks. As already pointed out by Kováts et al. (2002) many of the migrants relied on the funds of those living in Canada to be able to start their journey. It was found that in the new migration wave the same process is still at work; many of the potential migrants receive either the whole amount or part of it from their relatives or friends in Canada that they are supposed to pay back after they get there. Or, the family back home makes the effort and collects the money for some family members or even for a nuclear family (e.g. a young parent with small children) so that they can migrate. Receiving money from abroad is at the same time the first act of assistance that one can count on in the migration process. So saving alone is truly a sign of more effective self-reliance but in

migration, at least the type we observed where mainly poor people were concerned, networks are more valuable than individual resources.

The risk can also be high from relying on networks but only if one happens to fall prey to a delinquent network. Mainly in accounts of returned migrants we heard stories of people becoming victims of moneylenders (usurers). They received financial help for their journey but were never able to escape their debts while in Canada. Without being able to assess how widespread this type of dependency is, we can surely say that there are different forms of networks and the moneylender type is only one of them. Most likely if one comes from a village or community where people are entrapped by usurers then this tight network will not let them get free of these entanglements even when migrating.

“There were people who tricked others, they invited them to go to Canada and then they used their credit cards and they cheated with them.” (Mr. Pál)

Nonetheless, for anyone in an underprivileged social class, migration entails a huge risk. Either saving money alone or borrowing it, all families left without anything (sometimes even selling all their furniture or even their houses) while knowing that they might have to return. None of them had any idea of how they would manage their lives if they were forced to return or they came back voluntarily.⁸⁸

There can also be a risk of moral temptation. Often people did not deregister when leaving the country,⁸⁹ and they continued using the social assistance system, e.g. taking family allowance payments. This put them in danger of being penalized upon return. For various reasons, people did not deregister, mostly because they had no information on their obligations. At the same time, this small amount of money still came in handy occasionally in Canada. One woman told her rather humiliating story. When she came back from Canada with her husband, she was immediately transported

88 See later section on return experiences.

89 According to the rules, a citizen entitled to social assistance is obliged to deregister if he or she leaves the country for more than three months.

from the airport and taken into custody. She was released next day and fined the amount she had taken without entitlement, plus of course an extra penalty payment.

From better to worse:

What pushed low-status, underprivileged Roma families to migrate?

Our next question addresses the ‘push factors’: what were the most important reasons that could explain the new migration wave of Roma to Canada and what could account for what we called the mass migration of the underprivileged? For that we will outline some important social and political changes with a focus on the most deprived social classes.

The situation at the turn of the millennium differed from the previous decade. In the early 2000s there was increased economic growth after the economic crisis of the 1990s and the political regime change. The economic boom was marked, among other factors, by growing foreign investment. Multinational companies (MNC) hired extra unskilled workers. Although these MNCs typically did not locate in the most underprivileged areas such as Borsod county (the major geographical area of out-migration to Canada), Roma from disadvantaged areas were able to work in other parts of the country. Many of them who had some funds to move migrated from the region to find work at these MNCs (Virág 2010). In addition to relative economic growth and extra employment for a certain layer of low-status, unskilled people, public and political discourse was far less anti-poor and anti-Roma than it later became.

Compared to the early 2000s several other changes have occurred that may be among the push factors. To name a few, we should look at the transformation of the welfare system with its increasingly anti-poor tendencies, ethnic conflicts, reactions by the political elite, and the rise of the far-right and growing racism.

Generally speaking the whole political elite (both left and right) has become more anti-Roma and anti-poor both in discourses and policies in the course of a couple of years. Regarding some of the welfare measures,

the mid-2000s saw an attempt on the part of the government to launch policies to alleviate poverty (e.g. family aid programs, launching of the child poverty government policy, a child poverty model program).⁹⁰ It is doubtful if we can speak of failure, but politically it came to be seen as a misconceived political strategy to tackle poverty in that pro-active way. Slowly the dominant political discourse assumed that poverty alleviation programs increase welfare dependency and generated conflicts between the working poor and social-aid beneficiaries. The socialist government (2002-2010) decided to stop the program and replaced it with the 'Pathway to Work Program', a public work scheme that obliged social-aid recipients to take up public work at the local government to ensure their entitlement to social aid. The 'Pathway Work Program' was further developed in a more punitive direction under the consecutive conservative government that came into power in 2010 (Ferge 2008, Kérmer 2008, Váradi 2009, Csoba 2010); the new government initiated and launched more and more anti-poor policies, e.g. reduction in job-seeking aid,⁹¹ preconditions for social aid,⁹² maximized amount of social aid per family.⁹³

At the same time it is also true to say that the nature of ethnic conflicts has changed in the last 5 to 10 years. Until the mid-2000s inter-ethnic conflicts had been typically between institutions and local communities. From 2006 Roma as individuals started to feel more unsafe and insecure, even in danger when the far-right and its paramilitary organization, the Hungarian Guard, came into being and started organizing marches in local communities where significant number of Roma lived. The aim was to intimidate and threaten Roma inhabitants and generate local conflicts

90 www.gyerekesely.hu

91 From 2011 job-seeking aid has been granted for 90 days instead of the former 270 days. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110830_kozmunka_kisokos_segely_kontenervaros

92 As a precondition of social aid and wage supplementing benefit, local governments can insist claimants keep their house and garden tidy. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110830_kozmunka_kisokos_segely_kontenervaros

93 Local governments can determine a maximum amount of social aid per family, and it cannot exceed 90 percent of the wage received in public employment. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110830_kozmunka_kisokos_segely_kontenervaros

between Roma and non-Roma. The Hungarian Guard, under a different name, is still organizing its paramilitary demonstrations. The purpose of the marches is to help the far-right to gain political support by enhancing fear and fuelling local conflicts. The political elite and institutions are slow to react. They even play a cynical role by not taking action against these clear cases of hate crime. In addition, in the history of post-communist Hungary, starting in 2008, a series of racially-motivated violent attacks were committed against Roma leading to 6 deaths. Many claim that the rise of the far-right was a consequence of the reluctance of almost of the entire political elite to implement measures to stop the spread of hate crime. Moreover, by letting racist discourse become part of the mainstream or even nurturing it themselves, the elite contributed to the overwhelmingly anti-Roma political atmosphere (Vidra and Fox 2012).

What made it possible for them to migrate? The role and nature of networks

We have already discussed some aspects of assistance networks especially in the initial phase of the migration process. They are essential both in helping to start migration (raising money for the journey, providing information on applying for refugee status) and to manage life in Canada (emigration authorities, welfare issues, accommodation, school, translators, etc.). As was recorded in the earlier wave of Canadian migration, networks already started to emerge and played similarly important roles in helping migrants to leave and to settle in the target country back then (Kováts 2002) as in the later wave.

Presumably, the second wave of migration characterized by a bigger outflow of more underprivileged Roma needed more extended networks. It was noted in 2000 that “the poorer the person’s or family’s conditions are, the more important the lack of funds will be as a hindrance” (Kováts 2002: 23). The statement is still true today with an important change, namely that many of the new migrants come from extreme poverty and the lack of funds should in theory be an unmanageable hindrance to all

of them, while they somehow make their way to Canada. This makes us believe that networks have become tighter and more reliable. As a matter of fact, based on observations, it is possible to say that the networks are actually the original community networks and very often they are based on family contacts. One other phenomenon at play is the earlier migration experiences of relatives or just village and neighborhood acquaintances. In the researched town an important number of people had already been to Canada in the early 2000s providing not only a migration pattern but also important networks. Many of them became second-time migrants in the recent wave as well.

One additional factor could have been decisive in generating an increased ratio of emigrating underprivileged people. That is the digital revolution and globalization often mentioned by migration researchers: “The technological revolution, which has facilitated travel and communication across national borders, also supports the maintenance and expansion of transnational social networks created by the migrants themselves.” (Heisler 2008: 92)

We observed that families of migrants in Canada keep close and intense contact with their overseas relatives via the internet using e.g. Facebook. Transnational networks have become easier to operate with the new technology.

“Friends told us what you have to say when you enter the country. We discussed it over Facebook.” (Mr. Pál)

Very importantly the families we came into contact with belong to the studied category, the underprivileged Roma. They live in very poor conditions, often in dilapidated, run-down houses, without proper heating. Nonetheless, the internet is available in some of the households, and if one family has it then the whole neighborhood has the opportunity to have access to it. Moreover, children can have access to internet at school as well. Oftentimes, internet access had been installed as part of the “wireless village” program to take internet use and computers to poor villages and neighborhoods.

What kind of trends could be observed in the changes of migration patterns?

It was pointed out that migration patterns are equally important in understanding migration trends. From our fieldwork data we made a few deductions about our main research focus, low-status migration. Studying migration patterns may give us some additional insight as to how low-status migrants leave their home country despite financial and other hindrances. We use the term migration patterns while we refer to certain social practices. Massey et al. (1994) talk about the “culture of migration” meaning that moving and returning might be deeply rooted in the social practices of a given community. From our fieldwork observations it is hard to assess if we could describe these patterns as being embedded cultural patterns. Nonetheless, the dynamics of how migration waves occur might indicate some aspects of it.

Our assumption is that migration patterns have both a social and a geographical aspect. According to our observations there is usually a specific direction of social patterns in migration trends: the move is from higher status to lower status that is applicable in both a geographical and a social sense. First, usually people living in higher status localities, e.g. bigger cities or towns, have the possibility to migrate and people in lower status localities, such as small villages follow only later. Similarly, first people from higher status families can mobilize enough resources to migrate whereas lower status families have this chance only after enough information has been spread and enough networks have been established. In certain sense we can call this ‘migration pattern flow’. Using this idea of ‘migration pattern flow’ helps us understand why certain migrant groups behave the way they do, or in our case why and how low-status people migrate.

During our fieldwork we came across the phenomenon of some families migrating from the researched town in the early 2000s. These families came back and some of them left again (and many of them have returned since). This could be labeled as yo-yo migration (Margolis 1995), a phenomenon that many researchers described in various geographical regions and social settings while observing the characteristics of return migration (Brettel 2008: 117).

We can state that in that town – and in that specific neighborhood that we studied – a certain migration pattern existed. In fact, those families that had an earlier migration experience were indeed better-off compared to the rest of the community. Their well-kept houses were located in the more decent part of the neighborhood and as we found out, some were also in a rather good social position (entrepreneur, minority politician). The fact that they had been in Canada at the beginning of the decade was common knowledge and a reference point in the neighborhood. Anybody asked would know who these families were. Some of the people leaving in the second wave apparently had lower status and had to rely on the networks and information provided by the earlier (usually somewhat better-off) migrants.

We also observed migration pattern flows from a higher to a lower status locality. In the nearby village migration started only in 2009, and nobody in the early 2000s had been to Canada. In fact, in the accounts of our interviewees the researched town served as an important point of reference. While explaining how the first migrants decided to leave, it was mentioned that they saw reports on TV about refugees in Canada from that town and from Miskolc. Nonetheless, we assume that there were no direct contacts with the people from the town for they had a very bad reputation in the eyes of the villagers, perceived as delinquents:

“Lots of people have gone from that town, they left their houses behind. But they screwed it up in Canada, they have broken into houses there.” (Mr. György)

What are the consequences of low-status migration with regards to transnational networks?

Low-status migration, as we have seen, probably has to rely on networks more than other types. Not only is the beginning of the migration process heavily dependent on the help of overseas relatives or friends but also all the following steps require special local knowledge (besides the language) without which one cannot get by in Canada. From our interview data we made some observations regarding how transnational networks work and what consequences this may have on low-status migration.

One of our assumptions is that earlier migrants – those arriving in the first wave and earlier in the second wave – had better opportunities in certain fields than those who came later. One of the areas where they definitely had an advantage was the labor market.

“We tried everything that other Hungarians who came earlier had done. But the newcomers didn’t have so many opportunities.” (Mr. Pál)

People with refugee status can apply for work permits⁹⁴ and work legally in the country. However, since most of the people arriving in Canada do not speak the language, this option is almost entirely useless for the majority of them. It is rather networks that may help people find some kind of job. These could be either legal or illegal depending on the network.

“It is very difficult to find a job without speaking the language. (...) Circles of friends and relatives who had already been there for a longer period of time could work, they took their friends to work, and they took responsibility of them.” (Mr. Pál)

One typical work our interviewees recounted is “garbage picking”, an activity that is not a legal job but not illegal either. You need a network for that, car, information, etc. This activity was recorded equally in the first migration wave as typical “work” done by Roma refugees in Canada (Hajnal 2002).

“They find brass in the garbage. People put it outside in front of their houses and then they go and find it and sell it for a good price. They take friends and relatives with them. They know where to find the garbage places.” (Mrs. Ildi)⁹⁵

“Besides their jobs they go to pick garbage. This is not theft. From one family six of them go and they make enough money for a month in one weekend.” (Mr. György)

94 http://www.settlement.org/sys/faqs_detail.asp?faq_id=4000556

95 She is a woman from the village. Her family members are in Canada.

There are also people with legal jobs where they do not have to speak English. We heard of factory jobs as well as work in construction. One of the men from our researched village started an enterprise and established a network of his relatives and fellow village people.

Why do we think that those arriving first, without networks, have better chances to engage in some money-making activity and thus ensure a better outcome to their migration adventure? One of the explanations is that social networks get saturated; people will maybe help their closest relatives but will not assist their fellow village friends or acquaintances once they feel they have to be at the service of too many.

“My other brother couldn’t go, the tickets would have been too expensive. Those already there, should they pay for all others? We are ten brothers and sisters. You have to decide if you help all your brothers, also the hell-raisers, or you spare money for yourself, so when you come back in five-ten years your kids will have money to live on. My brother helped the others but I saw he had enough. He would have been much better off if nobody had followed him. They held him back. He gave them over a million⁹⁶ that he will never get back.” (Mr. György)

As a consequence, a competitive situation evolves where the least experienced and the least embedded are the ones who lose out. They tend to perceive everything in a very negative light. One of our interviewees who had no close contacts had to tackle hardships all alone that made him give a negative account of everything they went through.

“Nobody helped us. They [acquaintances] put us up, but they did not help with anything. We had to find a translator, we just met one by accident. He’s been there for forty years. We had to pay him, 50-100 dollars for a couple of sentences. He helped us with arranging the official papers. The people we stayed with were not relatives, they were just from the same village. They were in a more advantageous

96 App. 3,300 to 3,600 Euros.

situation but they did not share any information with us. (...) We didn't even know how to pronounce street names. It was tough, especially the first two months.” (Mr. Pál)

A further explanation relates to the social status of the migrants and its consequences on how they succeed in their migration endeavor. The lower social status somebody has the more he or she lacks cultural and economic capital. These disadvantages determine their life chances not only in their home country but also in the new target country.

The lack of cultural capital prevents them from learning the language, or makes it extremely difficult for them. Without language skills, managing life, including finding a job, is almost doomed to complete failure except if one remains in a helpful network.

“You can't work. We didn't learn the language. We couldn't go to school because of the distance. We had to get up at 5 and got back home at 5 in the afternoon. (...) After two months we didn't go to school any more, we already wanted to come back.” (Mr. Pál)

Most of the families arrive with no money in Canada; they might not have sold their house but almost certainly all their furniture. The lack of economic capital and financial resources leads to the same “fatal dependency” on networks. They are fully reliant on the networks yet since these are already saturated. Therefore only very close – immediate family – networks are apparently helpful. Those without such contacts are surely among the ones who interpret their migration as a negative experience.

Why the strategy of ‘whole family at once’?

We should mention one more phenomenon that differentiates low-status from higher status migrants. Earlier migrants usually had the strategy that could be described as the classic labor migrant strategy whereby the head of the family and some male members went first to collect viable information on the possibilities and conditions that one had to face

once in the new country (Kováts 2002). In fact, we observed that when migration starts in a new community, such as in the small village where we did part of our fieldwork, then the early birds, the pioneers, go and actually follow the above pattern. The males go first and are then followed by their families.

“My brother collected the money, he had a friend there, a family. He went alone to sort out the financial situation so that the family doesn’t have to live on welfare. (...) His wife followed him one year later.” (Mr. György)

They are gradually followed by more people and they, as we could see, had lower social status. Lower status migrants, as was observed, tend to go with their whole family. Paying for the journey of families with three or more children requires a huge effort since the plane tickets themselves cost a fortune. The question arises then why these very poor families believe that going together is the right choice to achieve their migration expectations. The first obvious answer is that the classic labor migrant strategy is simply unrealizable for there are definitely no funds to undertake more than one journey. The ‘all at the same time strategy’ is built on the assumption that refugees are entitled to welfare but only a big family with three or more children receives enough to live on. It was often said in the community that “no way to manage with only one child!” From this respect it is indeed a rational strategy.

“It’s not worth being there with one child only. My other brother has one kid, they can hardly survive. Especially since there’s been a cut in medical aid.” (Mr. György)

Why voluntary return?

From the official statistics we know that the abandonment rate of refugee applications is quite significant.⁹⁷ In fact this was probably one of the main factors that led the Canadian authorities and politicians to switch to a more exclusive and restrictive refugee policy. Roma refugees from Hungary and from other CEE countries had been accused of refugee fraud; they were seen as taking advantage of the welfare system of the country and then withdrawing their refugee claims and returning home. As we stated earlier, our conceptual frame in which we proposed to interpret Roma migration to Canada was a combination of classic labor migration and asylum seeking since both aspects are essential elements of the process. Looking at the motivations for leaving reveals a myriad of reasons, where craving for a better life and escaping from economic deprivation and political or social discrimination are all at play.

It would also be important to understand the motivations or the interpretations for voluntary return, how people justify or account for their moving back. Most of the returnees mention that they had different expectations; they did not think that life would be so difficult there and above all they could not get access to any extra income besides the welfare money that was just enough to live on.

“The whole thing was a big disappointment. Free medical care for refugees was abolished, we had to pay for everything. And we didn’t receive much more money than in Hungary. We had to make more effort to save money. (...) We regret having gone to Canada. Not even half of the money spent on the tickets came back.” (Mr. Pál)

In their case return meant failure. They failed to create a better life for their families either there or back at home through saving some money in Canada.

97 In 2009 there were 2,426 new Hungarian refugee claims and the same year 55 were abandoned and 208 withdrawn, in 2010 2,300 new claims, 117 abandoned and 967 withdrawn, and in 2011 4,423 new claims, 249 abandoned and 838 withdrawn. <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>

Interestingly another dominant discourse was to refer to their own sickness, or sickness of some relative at home. Somehow, bodily sickness was a symbolic expression of homesickness. They claimed that they had to return because they fell sick and they did not trust Canadian doctors could cure them or they had to return because a relative was very sick and they felt that nobody else could take care of them at home.

“Children were constantly ill. In the first two months there wasn’t any problem but then they got flu, they had allergies. They gave some medicine to my wife that her body didn’t recognize and she fell sick. We had to go to the hospital where we waited for three hours and then they sent us home. She could never recover after that. The children were OK but we came back because of the health problems.” (Mr. Pál)

This latter motivation is similar to what most anthropological studies describe. Often return is not motivated by economic factors but rather by strong family ties. From this respect return is not a financial failure. To be “called back home” could be the result of very different things and it is usually a “powerful blend of motives” (Brettel 2008: 116).

What awaits low-status Roma migrants upon return?

We have seen various aspects of low-status migration and looked at the major motives for voluntary return. It is equally important to see what happens after resettlement, whether returning families face new problems or perhaps manage to restart their lives under better conditions.

Among the earlier migrants in the first wave there were also voluntary returnees. Their stories were very different from that of the new migrants. As said before, first-wave migrants came from somewhat better social backgrounds and had better opportunities in Canada. These families all recounted a “success story”: e.g. they managed to acquire some savings that they could spend on buying a house or renovating their old house at home.

Later migrants, on the other hand, typically found themselves in much worse situations, at least temporarily. Those who did not deregister and whose

family allowance was not suspended had to face criminal persecution charges upon their return. Moreover, returnees are not entitled to social assistance until they register again and it takes time before the administrative procedure is completed. Until then, according to our information, for a couple of months, many of them are left without any income at all. Most of them have to refurnish their houses and buy everything else for their everyday life. The most common experience is that they have a negative financial balance at the end and some of them become even more indebted than before.

“You sold everything and it won’t pay back. We paid 1,400 dollars for rent and from the welfare we had 50 to 100 dollars left. (...) We could spare some money because we didn’t pay last month’s rent, but we needed this for returning to our village.”
(Mr. Pál)

It is quite important, however, to see some of the positive outcome of the migration experience. These are obviously less direct and hardly tangible but could become positive assets at a certain point in the migrants’ lives. Next to the negative accounts of their different experiences in Canada, there are a few very positive memories that marked them all. It is not an exaggeration to say that these were experiences of positive cultural shock. The most striking one told by everyone was the humane atmosphere that they met in Canada:

“There everybody makes you feel that you are a human being. Wherever we went, any official place, you are welcomed politely in that nice and rich country. You can sit down, they respect you and they offer you coffee. There, human beings are human beings indeed. Since it is an immigrant country. They don’t know Gypsies.” (Mr. Pál)

It was so much the opposite of their everyday experiences in Hungary that they were practically shocked by being treated as fellow citizens and human beings. For some it was a revelation and they realized to what extent they had been discriminated against and humiliated in their previous life in Hungary.

Another salient experience that all of our interviewees talked about was the way children were treated in Canada. It was, according to their accounts, not only that Canadians were extra attentive and protective of children, but they also tried and to a certain degree managed to transfer this attitude to the migrants.

“We had been to the school, we were called upon to go to see the teacher in the office. They told us how to treat children, what to do with them. I was aggressive before but there everything is very calm. They teach people how to deal with kids. Gypsies are an angry type. In Canada they pay more attention to kids but some people are still aggressive with their kids, they take them inside the house so that nobody sees. But there are cameras everywhere, you can’t behave aggressively.” (Mr. Pál)

Similarly gender equity and emancipation of women was mentioned as a new and unforgettable experience although not always in a positive tone:

“Women are stronger there, they make men feel that there is female dominance. For example, their behavior changed, they wanted to rule things and men did not have the chance to manage life by themselves. It was the same in every family.” (Mr. Pál)

Although adults usually could not take advantage of the language courses offered to them neither did they manage to learn the language or at least pick up something by themselves, but children who had to attend school did learn English to various levels.

Conclusions

In the last one and a half decades thousands of Roma people left Hungary for Canada as asylum seekers. The rate of Hungarian refugees was actually the highest from the region. Unlike other Central Eastern European countries, Hungarian Roma preferred Canada to other, mainly European, destinations.

Our pilot study was an attempt to formulate hypotheses and questions on this migration process based on an exploratory fieldwork carried out in the region of Hungary most affected by out-migration. Interviews were conducted with individuals and families who had been to Canada or whose families had been or were still there. It needs to be emphasized that our project did not intend to give a full-fledged picture of the Canadian migration process. This was not feasible given the scope of the project and the methodology used.

Our first hypothesis was that Roma asylum seeking in Canada should be conceptualized as being a mix of classic labor migration as well as refugee migration. We assumed that the process cannot be analyzed without taking the characteristics of both types of migration into account. Our hypothesis was in line with what many scholars claim now, namely that Roma migration of this sort should not be reduced to refugee migration as it was the case for long. The reasons for that were mainly political. Civil activists supported by some scholars previously argued that the main driving force behind migration is discrimination and not accepting this amounted to blaming the Roma for taking advantage of the refugee systems of other countries. From an analytical point of view, however, not accounting for other reasons for migration outside discrimination risks losing insight into the process.

The second hypothesis we formulated was based on our fieldwork experience. We observed that in the late 2000s a second wave of migration started that was to some extent different in nature from the previous trends. In the early 2000s, mainly better-off people and families were able to make the journey to Canada while in the late 2000s a new group was observed to be among the migrants, the more underprivileged families. Our questions and points of analysis were mainly directed at this new phenomenon of low-class migration.

We identified the major social and political changes that created a more desperate situation for poorer Roma in Hungary from the mid-2000s. The subsequent governments introduced various social-welfare measures that had negative impact on the poorest strata of the population and launched public work programs that had the indirect purpose of punishing

the most vulnerable. These were not only theoretical push factors, but our interviewees mentioned them among their migration motivations. As to the political climate, the rise of the far-right and the spread of racism were tangible reasons that some Roma decided to leave.

Canada was the main destination of Hungarian Roma because, at least in the second wave, networks had already been established. For people coming from extreme poverty, accumulating the money to pay for the journey would have been impossible unless migrant networks helped them. So it seemed that networks became even more crucial than before because for the most underprivileged the lack of resources had to be overcome somehow and not only for the journey but for life in Canada as well. Indeed, it turned out that migrants relied on these networks to a large extent, but the way they functioned was not always helpful to everybody. Lots of people migrating from the same village or neighborhood is a widespread phenomenon and this entailed that these people could not assist one another. As we heard, networks also became saturated after a while, leaving some without any help. These people became the most desperate returnees since their balance at the end was negative having spent all their “fortune” for the journey without managing to save any money in Canada.

In fact, the major incentive for migration could be summarized as searching for a better life. What each migrant meant by better life was different. There were various strategies and migration plans listed by the migrants. Settling down in Canada was among the plans but having examples of returnees and having only vague ideas about what they should expect there, the most common aim of migration was not to permanently leave. The goal was rather to save up some money and return and with the money saved improve the life of one’s family at least for a while. The prospects for improving one’s living standard were nonetheless very modest given the fact that the resources and possibilities these people generally have are very limited. Among the most important goals we found was renovation of a house, or the hope to pay off one’s mortgage or simply the desire to purchase a home. More than that was hoped only among those with a somewhat higher social status who planned to provide a better education for their children when they returned.

It was also important to see that latter migrants tended to go with their whole families, a strategy that does not necessarily seem very logical, and which contradicts usual migrant strategies. In effect, earlier migrants did go alone or in male companies and were joined only later by their families. The difficulties of the entire family going together was thought to be worth facing because of the belief that in Canada only big families managed to survive. The point is not if this was true or not but the fact that people in extreme poverty took the risks of migrating believing that they had nothing to lose. However, because of the meager chances of finding a job in Canada (that would have allowed families to save a little bit of money), and because of the gradually more severe welfare, medical and refugee policies of Canada, the migration plans of these people were doomed to failure, giving them no better life either in Canada or back at home. Only a few things were found among the positive outcomes, such as some of the experiences they went through: the realization or crystallization of their humiliating situation, the fact that they had not been treated as human beings in Hungary, the admiration for how children were handled in Canada and the rights women had there.

All in all, as we assumed the most adequate way to theorize about Roma migration to Canada is to take into account both the labor and the refugee migration aspects. Roma decided to leave because of the desperate social situation they were in as well as the discrimination they had to face on a daily basis. Because Canada had a refugee system that provided chances for surviving without any personal resources, families from lower status backgrounds could also leave. This would be less imaginable in a classic labor migrant situation. From a certain point of view, the underclass, unprivileged Roma people's attempt to create a better life for their families through migration – basically an unsuccessful story for most of them – ties in with their constant struggles for some improvement in their life conditions. The struggle of migration has however proven to be overall a negative experience.

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6. "THERE IS NO LIFE HERE"

MIGRATION OF ROMA FROM SLOVAKIA TO CANADA

Elena Gallová Kriglerová

Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, Slovakia

Alena Chudžíková

Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, Slovakia

Introduction

After forty years of closed borders under the socialist regime in the former Czechoslovakia, migration became one of the legitimate living strategies for many people in Slovakia. Newly established democracy opened possibilities to bring more freedom into people's lives. Roma, like other citizens of Slovakia, became part of this. Furthermore, Roma (due to discrimination and unequal social status within Slovak society) faced many obstacles in achieving the "better life" promised by the fall of the communist regime. One of the active strategies that Roma use to alleviate their harsh socio-economic situation and position at home is migration abroad (Kompaníková and Šebesta, 2002). Apart from economic factors that prevail in the discussions on motives for migration, in Slovakia migration is also determined by asymmetrical power relations between Roma and non-Roma in the country. Given the majority's unwillingness to accept Roma

as full-fledged members of the community, migration serves as a means to symbolically change Roma's inferior status (Grill, 2011). Particularly migration to western European countries typical for their familiarity with cultural diversity gives many Roma hope of getting rid of the 'Gypsy' stigma that they have to bear in Slovakia.

'Winners of Socialism' and 'Losers of Transformation'

Slovakia ranks among countries with the estimated highest share of Roma population. According to the 2011 Census 2% of the population claimed to be Roma, which is a slight increase compared to the Census in 2001. However, experts estimate the numbers of Roma to be much higher, around 320,000 – 400,000 people. Marginalized Roma in Slovakia are the most deprived population group in the country in which unemployment currently peaks at 14%.⁹⁸ Segregated Roma communities are mainly concentrated in eastern Slovakia where unemployment reaches almost 20%.⁹⁹ A rapid fall of the Roma into deep poverty began shortly after the political transition in 1989. Owing to their position as objects of socialist social engineering Roma found themselves particularly unprepared for the socio-economic changes brought about by the transition in 1989 and early 1990s. The communist regime strove to completely rebuild society's natural stratification and systematically assisted lower social classes at the expense of the higher ones. Most Roma belonged to a lower social class and became an object of numerous socialist social experiments aiming to improve their social status. The various measures were based on the Marxist presumption that alleviation of Romani social circumstances would eventually change their behavior and eliminate negative phenomena supposedly associated with their ethnic affiliation (Radičová, 2001). The socialist regime constructed Roma as a social group, as opposed to a national minority, that needed to be socialized, civilized and assimilated into what they called a "socialist folk"

98 <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=48056>

99 <http://portal.statistics.sk/showdoc.do?docid=1801>, Prešov self-governing region – 17.8% and Košice self-governing region – 19.6% in 2011.

(Lajčáková, 2007). To this end the socialist regime employed numerous policies nowadays labeled as social engineering such as dispersal of the Roma within Slovakia as well as from Slovakia to the Czech Republic; disintegration of natural Romani communities; removal of the rural Romani population from their natural settlements to cities and industrial areas; destruction of natural bonds between the Romani community and the majority population; insensitive and forced allocation of flats to Roma from socially disadvantaged environments; forced compliance with general compulsory employment using the threat of imprisonment; statutory enforced school attendance for children; and the obligatory participation of Roma in disease-prevention campaigns. Indeed, many Roma did improve their socio-economic standing and reached a status comparable with the majority population. However, it was achieved by force and without their active participation. Needless to say, the majority never truly accepted Roma no matter what their social and economic situation became. The transformation period with its fundamental changes in the economy, social policy, civic and political rights thus negatively affected the most vulnerable social groups, particularly Roma, who were the first to lose their jobs after the disintegration of state-owned businesses. Given their low levels of qualification, previously encouraged by the socialist regime, most Roma had very limited chances to access opportunities and compete for socially valued resources. Chances to maintain their social status as members of the so-called Roma middle class (or upper working class as Vašečka and Vašečka coined it in 2003) thus approached zero. Not surprisingly many Roma view the socialist regime as the “good times”. Numerous survey findings confirm their view that “all troubles came with democracy” (Radičová, 2001). Not only had they lost their jobs and a relatively satisfactory social status but they became the transition’s “scapegoats” which potentially led to increasing tensions between the Roma and non-Roma population. When Radičová (2001) speaks of Roma as the “losers of transformation” it applies particularly to the Roma who were the “winners of socialism”, i.e. the Roma who did improve their social and economic standing. Transition processes with their specific impact on Roma led to their gradual marginalization and

exclusion. Liberalization of housing with rents soaring to unprecedented heights (rises of up to 200%) pushed the Roma to cheaper flats and lodging houses and eventually forced them to return to Romani settlements on the outskirts of towns and villages (Radičová, 2001). The state introduced policies of social assistance and a social safety net which, however, construed poverty as an individual failure and provided only those goods necessary for one's survival. Social policies did not address the broader context of poverty and thus reproduced a culture of dependency (Radičová, 2002).

Inter-ethnic Relations and their Impact on the Socio-economic Status of Roma

Owing to all this, the social distance between the Roma and non-Roma population continued growing, with the majority population believing that most Roma are unable to adapt to existing social norms (Vašečka M., 2003). The majority's negative attitudes coupled with long-term lack of employment opportunities and low levels of qualifications among Roma led to unprecedentedly high unemployment for Roma which in some communities reaches almost 100% (Puliš, 2002). Roma themselves perceive wide-spread discrimination in the labor market and refusal of private businesses to employ Romani job seekers as the main cause of their unemployment. In a 2001 *Roma Human Development Project* as many as 84.5% of the respondents stated their ethnic, Roma, origin as one of the three main obstacles in finding an employment (Puliš, 2002). A dire situation for the Roma in the labor market is closely connected with their position in the educational system. Roma children are systematically overrepresented in the special education system earmarked for children with mental disabilities. In the school year 2008-2009 approximately 60% of all children in special education in Slovakia were Roma (Friedman *et al.*, 2009). Not only are Roma children systematically steered into special education, but even in regular schools they are segregated into separate Roma classes. The cardinal prerequisite for success in Slovakia's labor market is passing the school-leaving exam allowing one to graduate from secondary education. The only form of

special education to produce graduates qualified for skilled work is special technical school. The vocational certificate allows its graduates to work only under supervision by more highly skilled workers. Specializations taught to such graduates are, however, poorly suited to the jobs available (Friedman *et al.*, 2009). Without improvements in Roma children's access to quality education, their position in the labor market can hardly be enhanced.

Long-term unemployed, among them large numbers of marginalized Roma, have become targets of several reforms, including the extensive reforms of social policy in 2003-2004. Interestingly, the reforms seemed to be designed to punish the long-term unemployed for their poverty rather than help them overcome it. The 2003-2004 reforms in particular seemed to be based on the proposers' conviction that unemployment and poverty is due to lack of willingness to work hard on one's success. The then minister of labor, social affairs and family, Ľudovít Kaník, proposed a new Child Benefit Act abolishing contributions to child benefit. The minister argued that the contribution did not motivate individuals with dependent children to provide for the families via regular employment. The new system was criticized for its potentially detrimental effect on the socio-economic situation of the unemployed, elderly or physically disabled individuals caring for dependent children. At the same time, the minister introduced further restrictions to the disbursement of material needs benefits and justified them by the government's attempt to motivate the long-term unemployed to seek employment. The reform's opponents argued that the amendment had no positive effect on unemployed individuals' motivation or opportunities to enter the labor market (Zachar, 2004). The reforms led impoverished and frustrated Roma in eastern Slovakia to riot which, however, turned public opinion against them and reinforced the majority's conviction that the only way to 'civilize' the Roma is "a long whip and a small yard". Even as an opposition MP, former labor minister Kaník continues his efforts to tighten social-welfare benefits for the long-term unemployed and so-called 'maladjusted' citizens (a pejorative expression earmarked for marginalized Roma that has recently been introduced in order to avoid being criticized for explicitly referring to ethnicity). Radicalization of political and public

discourse towards the Roma played a major part in the parliamentary election campaign in 2011-2012 in which even parties claiming to endorse democratic and humanistic values of solidarity and equality competed for the reputation of tackling the so-called ‘Roma problem’ most effectively. Openly racist campaigns by some candidates for the centre-right party SDKU-DS in eastern Slovakia confirmed the highly disturbing trend of rapidly decreasing solidarity with the most deprived population groups, i.e. marginalized Roma (Lajčáková *et al.*, 2011). The context of their poverty and exclusion is most often neglected.

Ways out of Poverty

One of the active strategies that Roma families use to solve their dire social and economic situation is migration in search of better employment opportunities. It is either internal migration within the country’s borders or emigration to western, more economically advanced, countries of the EU. The IOM survey (2000) pointed out that the main reason for Roma migration to EU member states was a desire to maintain or restore the living standards they had achieved during the socialism era (see above). “Every single Romani person with whom IOM researchers have spoken claimed it was easier for Roma to live in Slovakia before 1990. One of them said, ‘It is necessary to return the Roma to where he was 10 years ago’” (Vašečka and Vašečka, 2003: 36). Roma, who during socialism managed to break out of the vicious circle of poverty and established relatively good social networks and socio-economic status, gradually lost their gains as a result of transformation processes already in the early 1990s. This rapid fall by the “winners of the socialism” might be attributed to the fact that they were never truly accepted as equal and full-fledged members of society despite their socio-economic advancement, achieved through across-the-board coercive socialist measures externally imposed on the Roma without respecting their contextual needs and participatory rights.

Migration Trends in Slovakia

The change of regime in 1989 and consequently opening of the borders brought significant changes to migration opportunities in Slovakia. Migration patterns among Slovaks started to change radically already in the early 1990s. Available data are based on the numbers of citizens who de-registered their permanent residence before leaving Slovakia. Even though this is a legal obligation of each citizen changing his/her place of permanent residence there are no sanctions for failing to do so. It is estimated that only 5 to 10% of emigrants actually deregister their permanent residence. Numbers of Slovak citizens moving abroad might be therefore much higher than figures suggest. Very rough estimates indicate that in 2003 around 100,000 Slovak citizens (1.86% of the overall population of Slovakia) worked abroad officially. Currently, this number is likely to be higher owing to Slovakia's membership of the EU and the open labor market of most other EU countries. In the following paragraphs we will depart from the available statistics provided by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, bearing in mind that those figures are not quite accurate.

General migration trends and Roma migration in the 1990s

Since the early 1990s emigration from the Slovak Republic has been primarily motivated by seeking better economic opportunities outside the country's borders. After Czechoslovakia split in 1993, Slovakia's economy was left in a dire situation, and severely lagged behind the Czech economy. Owing to a more developed industrial structure Czech Republic was more ready to embrace changes associated with the transformation processes. Immediate rises in unemployment in 1990 (practically from zero to 10%) left many people in Slovakia jobless without hope of improvement. As mentioned earlier, Roma were the people hit by rapidly growing unemployment the hardest. Emigration was thus seen as a strategy for improving one's unfavorable socio-economic situation. If ethnic majority members were primarily leaving the country due to economic underdevelopment and in search of better job opportunities, factors driving Roma abroad must

include economic as well as social and political reasons (Vašečka I., 2001). Economic reasons for *Roma migration* tend to be stressed by experts and the ethnic majority members. However, the Roma themselves emphasize “*discrimination, racism, skinheads, the wrong treatment from the side of the state or local authorities as well as current poverty, the lack of money, unemployment, housing and health problems...*” (Divinský, 2004: 30). Even though their economic situation was among the major motives for their departure we cannot talk about labor migration *per se*. Due to various restriction measures, lack of access, visa policy and other factors, many Roma chose asylum application as an avenue to enter western EU countries – allowing them to migrate with their families as opposed to as individual sojourners. It is assumed that applying for asylum might have been viewed as a form of safe migration and a system providing relative security at the starting point in a new country along with protection against discrimination.

In 1990, according to official statistics, up to 10,940 people (0.2% of the overall population of Slovakia) left Slovakia, out of which 92% left for the Czech Republic. Czech Republic remained the main destination country of Slovak emigrants throughout the early 1990s. Based on the survey carried out by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic at the time (*Pohyb obyvateľstva...1990-2010*) we can conclude that the big wave of emigration to the Czech lands was associated with the break-up of Czechoslovakia since large proportion of emigrants stated family reasons as the main motives for leaving Slovakia. It is assumed that the share of emigrants stating family reasons constituted members of mixed, Czechoslovak families, who eventually moved to the Czech lands to join their relatives. Moreover, given the Czech Republic’s low unemployment rates (2.6% in 1992 compared with Slovakia’s more than 10%) it is plausible that family reasons were coupled with economic reasons hidden under ‘other’ reasons in the survey and many of those leaving for the Czech Republic were actually labor migrants. Each year several tens of thousands of Slovak workers find employment in the Czech Republic (e.g. 72,000 officially registered Slovak citizens were employed in the Czech Republic in 1996). One should bear in mind there are several more thousand Slovak citizens working in the Czech Republic illegally (Divinský, 2004). Apart from the Czech Republic, Slovak citizens

also headed for Hungary, Germany, Austria, Canada, Australia and United States of America in the early 1990s.

The official number of emigrants dropped radically in 1994 to only 154 Slovak citizens moving abroad and remained rather low until 2001 when it reached 1,011. In 1997, according to official numbers the share of citizens leaving for the Czech Republic decreased to 37% of emigrants leaving Slovakia. Slovak citizens recognized the potential of the labor market in countries such as Austria, Germany, Hungary and Italy. Particularly Austria has attracted Slovak citizens owing to its close proximity letting them commute frequently between the place of employment and their homes. The number of Slovak workers officially registered in Austria was approximately 5,000 in 2002 (Internal statistics of Arbeitsmarktservice, 2003 in Divinský, 2004). Germany has also been much favored by Slovak labor migrants due to its good employment opportunities and proximity. The number of seasonal workers from Slovakia in Germany rose from 5,288 in 1997 to 10,984 in 2002. Long-term workers from Slovakia amounted to 535 in 1997 and 848 in 2002. As seen from the figures above, official Slovak statistics compared to experts' estimates provide a significantly skewed picture of out-migration.

Even though the official statistics indicate that prevailing motivation to move abroad (excluding the Czech Republic) constituted family reasons (i.e. marriages and family reunifications), the largest proportion of emigrants continued to state 'other' reasons as major motives for their departure (Divinský, 2004). It is plausible that this category may entail labor reasons as other labor-related survey categories allowed rather limited answers, i.e. 'change of employment' and 'moving closer to my job'. Such formulations would assume that one already has employment as opposed to those who move abroad in search of employment. It is therefore likely that great share of emigrants in the mid- and late 1990s were labor migrants. Slovaks' interest in working in the EU 15 countries increased in the mid-1990s, and the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Switzerland were added to the list of Slovak citizens' most favored destination countries. Advanced western economies promised better job opportunities even for unskilled workers from Slovakia which has struggled with high unemployment since

the break-up of Czechoslovakia. In 1992 unemployment in Slovakia passed 10% (while in the Czech Republic it was only 2.6%) and continued to rise until it peaked at almost 15% in 1995, and still at 14.1% in 2011.¹⁰⁰ Unemployment in marginalized Roma communities often reaches 70%, in the most deprived communities it is almost 100% without any sign of improvement. In this situation the Roma employed migration to western EU countries as an active collective defense strategy (Kompaníková and Šebesta, 2002). In the ethnic majority's view migration by the Roma is a separation from a society that provided them with help. It is either perceived as a proof of Roma disloyalty to the Slovak Republic and is pejoratively labeled ethno-tourism, or it is a result of Roma exclusion that began in 1989. According to Roma themselves, their migration is a result of extensive discrimination (Vašečka and Vašečka, 2003). As mentioned earlier, Roma chose to seek asylum in the western EU countries as a form of safe migration providing opportunities for whole families.

Migration by Roma from Slovakia to different EU countries began in 1997, when approximately 800 Roma from Slovakia and Czech Republic applied for asylum in Great Britain. Western media commentators and politicians openly threatened to introduce visa obligations for Slovakia. This finally happened in 1998 when more than 1,000 Roma asylum seekers arrived in Great Britain (Kotvanová and Szép, 2002: 58).

Another group of 500 Roma claimed asylum in Belgium in 1998. Only three of them were successful. Given the large numbers of asylum seekers from Slovakia, which was considered a safe country of origin, most asylum claims were rejected as manifestly unfounded, being assessed in an accelerated procedure (Petrus, 2002). The Slovak and Belgian governments made an agreement for the organized return of those whose asylum claims were rejected (Kotvanová and Szép: 59). Belgium even amended its asylum system as it feared exploitation of the EU asylum system and its social-welfare system (Petrus, 2002).

100 Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. Available at http://www.statistics.sk/pls/elisw/casovy_Rad.procDlg

More than 1,000 Slovak Roma sought asylum in Finland in June 1999 (Vašečka and Vašečka, 2003: 28). Finland, along with Denmark and Norway, introduced temporary visas during 1999. None of the asylum claims from Slovakia was successful in these countries. Sweden was the only state that never even opened a discussion about imposing visa requirements. The total number of asylum seekers in Scandinavian countries was around 2,000 in 1999 (Kotvanová and Szép, 2002: 59).

Non-existent precise data on Roma migration allow us to draw only limited conclusions on the actual extent of Roma migration. Divinský (2004: 35) provides some figures outlining a certain picture of Roma migration to selected EU countries (Table 9).

Table 9. Numbers of asylum seekers from the Slovak Republic in selected European countries in 1998-2002 (Divinský, 2004, p.35)

State Year	CZ	B	DK	FIN	NL	D	UK	S	NO	IRL	Total
1998	6	985	90	20	293	0	2,207	17	0	69	3,687
1999	12	1,175	987	1,250	360	313	6	132	233	0	4,468
2000	723	1,392	10	434	977	0	3	109	964	39	4,651
2001	387	855	312	88	211	138	60	348	187	69	2,655
2002	842	637	35	421	200	673	115	781	324	0	4,028
Total	1,970	5,044	1,434	2,213	2,041	1,124	2,391	1,387	1,708	177	19,489

Source: Internal documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003, ICMPD 2001 and Boris Divinský's calculations (in Divinský, 2004, p.35)

After several EU countries imposed temporary visa requirements, Roma migration became central to public and political discourse. Several senior Slovak political representatives including the then Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda admitted that the recurrent “mass exodus” of Slovak Roma represented a serious threat to Slovakia’s accession to the EU. Roma migration also drew the attention of EU representatives interested in Slovakia’s human and minority-rights protection. The so-called Romani

“exodus” to Finland aroused negative public responses and repeatedly worsened relations between the Romani minority and the Slovak majority. Because the country’s potential EU membership might have been jeopardized by the issue, the then Deputy Prime Minister Pál Csáky and Deputy Foreign Minister Ján Figel established an interdepartmental committee to tackle problems related to emigration in July 1999 (Vašečka and Vašečka, 2003: 28). The government’s report on foreign policy in 1999 reporting achievements by the Slovak Republic in the field of country’s integration into European structures identified only one problem in relations with Belgium and Finland – a “continuing influx of Roma asylum seekers from Slovakia”. According to the report, the Belgian side appreciated the flexibility of Slovak authorities in solving this problem via repatriation (Správa o plnení...: 34). With respect to relations with Finland, Slovak representatives saw their most crucial task as explaining to Finns the “oppression of the Roma” (*sic!*) (*Ibid.*: 37). As the report states, “the Finnish political elite quickly understood that asylum claims of the Slovak citizens are unfounded and unjustified.”

Romani migration continued also after 2000. Nevertheless, its scope and political reactions were not as “hot” as before. Slovakia was on its way to joining the EU and concerns about failure to integrate proved unfounded. Migration patterns also changed. The so-called ‘massive exodus’ of Slovak Roma to any particular destination stopped, although departures by individual families and small groups of Roma to various EU member states became a regular phenomenon.

Migration after Slovakia joined the EU

Slovakia’s accession to the EU in 2004 brought dramatic quantitative and qualitative changes in the field of emigration. Among the major reasons for leaving the country were family reasons (50% in 2004; 27% in 2009) and search for employment (7.5% in 2004; 9.5% in 2009) although these figures are thought to be underestimated and labor migration is assumed to have dominated the overall migration trends from Slovakia after 2004 (Pohyb obyvateľstva....). According to the Statistical Office’s survey ‘other

reasons' constituted 41% in 2004 and 61% in 2009 containing, *inter alia*, the search for employment. A significant proportion of this group was likely represented by labor migrants. Due to most emigrants' failure to deregister their permanent residence, data on emigration are highly inaccurate. It is estimated that only 5 to 10% of those leaving the country actually do inform relevant state authorities and de-register (Divinský, n.d.). Immigration records of destination countries are generally more reliable and according to Divinský (2007) the number of emigrants from Slovakia reaches at least 15,000 citizens a year (approximately 0.28% of the overall population according to the 2001 Census). Slovak citizens continued to move to Germany and Austria. Furthermore, the United Kingdom became of particular interest due to its open labor market requiring no visa or work permit. Shortly after the country's accession to the EU, Slovakia became one of the main countries sending labor migrants to the UK along with Poland, Czech Republic, and Lithuania. In 2004 alone, the UK's Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) received 13,020 applications from Slovak citizens. This number rose to 22,425 in 2007 (Blancheflower, Lawton, 2008). Given that many labor migrants from A8 countries (countries joining the EU in 2004) do not register with WRS, even these figures are understated. Czech Republic, Ireland, and United Kingdom, particularly its industrial regions of Sheffield, Birmingham and Newcastle, are the most frequent destination countries of current Roma labor migration. It is often the case that men leave their wives and children at home while they work abroad and send home remittances that are later used for improving their living situation, such as building or refurbishing a house.

Asylum migration of Slovak Roma occurred again in the late 2000s with Canada becoming the main destination country of Romani asylum seekers. As the job opportunities in the UK and Ireland became scarce with the 2008 economic recession Canada, with the possibility to claim asylum, represented a rational choice as a safe haven and a country that had not been affected so much by East and Central European migration waves. Table 10 indicates numbers of asylum applications from Slovakia in Canada. Even though ethnic origin is not recorded it is believed that all of the asylum seekers were Roma.

Table 10. Number of asylum seekers from Slovakia in Canada and results of their asylum applications

Year	Asylum claims	Recognized refugees	Rejected asylum claims
2009	331	2	6
2010	258	4	58
2011	329	3	12

Source: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Even though numbers of migrants from Slovakia dropped mildly during the economic recession, Slovak citizens still perceive western economies as providing better opportunities for socio-economic advancement. It should be noted that the advancement often occurs at the expense of one's skills and qualifications as many labor migrants are overqualified for the jobs available for them abroad. On the other hand, lack of unskilled workers abroad is an opportunity for Romani job-seekers with few qualifications who find it difficult to find employment in Slovakia in harsh economic circumstances and the increasing exclusion and marginalization of Romani communities.

Horná Dolná¹⁰¹ – Description of the Community

With the population of more than 8,000 Horná Dolná is the largest village in Slovakia. It is located in the north-eastern part of Slovakia, in the close neighborhood of the district centre of Spišská Nová Ves. Horná Dolná was established in the 13th century and became a privileged “royal settlement”; it thus has a very long and rich history. In the 15th century Horná Dolná was the second largest “town” in the Spiš region. At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the structure of the population changed due to massive emigration to the United States of America.¹⁰² Historically, the Spiš region has been ethnically mixed with large populations of Slovaks, Jews, Germans, Hungarians and Roma.

101 Horná Dolná is a fictitious name used for reasons of anonymity.

102 Information provided by municipality via its website.

Nowadays, people in Horná Dolná live in 880 houses and another 41 blocks of flats (containing 1,700 flats), together in 1,755 households. Horná Dolná is a rural settlement with many urban characteristics due to close relationships with the district centre of Spišská Nová Ves. Table 11 indicates basic information of the locality's population.

Table 11. Age structure of Horná Dolná population

Age structure	Number of people
0-19	1,246
20-60	5,310
60 and more	2,070
Average age	33

Source: Basic information about municipality available at municipality website

Currently, the population size is quite stable due to the balance between in-migration and out-migration from the village. In 2008, 299 people immigrated to the village from different regions of Slovakia and 289 emigrated¹⁰³ (no information about foreign migration is available). The birth rate is slowly but steadily increasing. Unemployment is also relatively high. In the whole district of Spišská Nová Ves, unemployment in 2011 peaked at 18.83%. According to the most recent available data for Horná Dolná, in 2008 the number of unemployed people reached 1,283. Only a few employers operate directly in Horná Dolná (in 2008 there were 147 entrepreneurs offering 1,200 job openings). Almost 2,000 inhabitants have jobs outside the village. Owing to the lack of employment opportunities in the whole region Roma are not the only ones to face problems in the labor market.

The ethnic structure of Horná Dolná is not as heterogeneous as it used to be in the past. Nevertheless, quite a large share of Horná Dolná population is of Romani origin. According to the official municipal

103 Social and Economic Development Plan of Horná Dolná for 2007 – 2015, available at the municipality's website.

statistics, out of 8,397 inhabitants 2,260 were Roma (27%) and another 97 claimed another nationality than Slovak or Romani.

Roma in Horná Dolná live in quite good material conditions (compared to other Romani settlements in the region), but still, they are spatially as well as symbolically separated from the majority (the Romani part of the village is located approximately 200 meters from the main road on the other side of railway tracks). Needless to say, interactions between the Roma and non-Roma are also limited.

According to the Atlas of Roma Communities (Jurásková *et al.*, 2004), the only official source of ethnic data gathered in Slovakia besides official census data, Roma in Horná Dolná live in 353 households. The average number of people per dwelling was 5.9 in 2004. This settlement (as opposed to other settlements in the region) is not a typical segregated Romani settlement since the vast majority of houses are made of bricks, are connected to the water supply (85%), and almost 50% of them are connected to the sewer system (Jurásková *et al.*, 2004). According to Horná Dolná's *Social and Economic Development Plan*, the Romani settlement had its access road rebuilt in 2007-2008 and the municipality built social housing for sixteen Romani families.

On the other hand, the present research found that the road reconstruction was more nominal than real and the current road is poor quality:

“It started to break down immediately after it was ‘constructed’. They [municipal office] built the road in their [non-Roma] part of the village and all construction waste was brought to the settlement as a basis for the new road. But they never fixed it in any way.” (Mr. Milan)

The quality of the access road in the Romani settlement is indeed much worse than in the rest of the village. The same applies for the “social housing”. Roma feel dissatisfied with the quality of social flats construction and their allocation.

“In the beginning we were told that social housing is only for those in social and material need. But at the end of the day, only families that could afford it now live in these ‘social flats’. Moreover, quality of buildings is very poor and the new tenants had to invest a lot of extra money to fix them to the level they can live in.” (Ms. Alica)

Although the Roma community in Horná Dolná is quite large (one third of the overall population) and living conditions for its inhabitants are not equal to non-Roma population, the municipal office does not view it as a special target group for developmental policy in the village. Horná Dolná’s Plan of social and economic development contains numerous plans and developmental projects but none of them targets Roma specifically as a disadvantaged group. It would be a very important symbolic expression of the municipality’s ‘will’ to help tackle the many difficulties local Roma face if they did.

Segregation of the Roma from the majority population along with their poor social and economic conditions also harms their mutual relations. Historically, relations between Roma and non-Roma in Horná Dolná were relatively good and conflict-free although they were still largely hierarchical. The quotation below indicates power inequalities in that the Roma were the service people. Roma had worked for their non-Roma neighbors as peasants or provided various services typical for the Romani population (e.g. blacksmiths). Moreover, mixed relationships were not unusual in the past. Many children had non-Roma parents owing to ‘informal’ relations between Roma and non-Roma.

During WWII, non-Roma even protected many of their Romani neighbors and thanks to their interventions many Roma avoided being transported to concentration camps:

“As soon as they [non-Roma] learned something was happening they came to our colony on horses and stopped guardsmen saying: ‘We will not let them go, they are our Roma, our neighbors, they work for us, they serve us, we need them.’” (Mr. Milan)

During communism, many Horná Dolná Roma achieved a relatively satisfactory social status compared to Roma in other Romani settlements in the region. Their socio-economic status was comparable to non-Roma living in Horná Dolná although they were still spatially separated. Since all of them were employed they could afford to build brick multi-generational houses very similar to the ones in the non-Roma part of the village while, however, never exceeding the borders of the Roma 'colony'. In most cases Roma still live in these houses. After the fall of communism, relations with the majority deteriorated due to several reasons. One of them was the social situation of local Roma with an unprecedented increase of unemployment. The labor market became more competitive and Roma were the first to lose their jobs. Attitudes toward the Roma got worse generally in Slovakia as they became the 'scapegoats' of the transition period. Extreme deterioration in the social situation of many Roma families in Horná Dolná increased the distance between local Roma and non-Roma who refused to associate with 'the lower class'. Another reason for corrosion in inter-ethnic relations in Horná Dolná is that traditional ties among the Roma and non-Roma changed after the arrival of 'newcomers' from different localities with poor social backgrounds (Roma as well non-Roma) that began after the fall of communism. According to one of our respondents, the social structure and 'atmosphere' of the village rapidly changed and for the time being it can be characterized by growing tensions between the majority and the Roma.

Methodology

Slovakia is in a slightly different situation than Hungary or the Czech Republic. Migration to Canada is a quite new phenomenon since larger groups of Roma started to leave Slovakia only in February 2012 although few families from the region left in 2010/2011. Roma migration to Canada has not yet been properly explored and no relevant research has been done so far. While searching for a relevant site for field research we could rely only on very limited sources of information, the mass media being one of those. Based on a preliminary monitoring of media coverage of Roma

migration we decided to focus our attention on Horná Dolná since it was the only locality from which Roma migrated in larger groups. According to media coverage approximately 200 Roma from Horná Dolná left for Canada in 2012 with only few returnees so far (Jesenský, 2012). Finding respondents was, however, extremely difficult for several reasons. First, given the exceptionally negative media portrayal of Roma migration from Horná Dolná in February 2012, local Roma are reluctant to speak to anyone from outside the community. Second, early return from Canada without materializing one's objectives is seen as a failure no-one is willing to speak about. Thanks to a local Romani activist (Mr. Milan) we found two locals who were related to the families who migrated to Canada and were willing to speak to us although we met outside the so-called 'Roma colony' as the respondents did not want to be seen with us.

Ms. Júlia¹⁰⁴ is a mother of a young Roma (25 years old) who left in March 2012 with his small family (wife and a little child). Her son completed his university undergraduate education and was not able to find a job in Slovakia. Trying almost everything, he felt he was failing to provide for his family which is why he chose emigration to secure them a future.

Our second interviewee, Ms. Alica is a 36-year-old lady who had several relatives go to Canada. She keeps in touch with them on a daily basis and thus was able to describe the situation in Horná Dolná with respect to migration, motivations for migration and their situation in Canada.

The already-mentioned local Romani activist himself was the third and a very relevant respondent. He was closely engaged in planning and organizing migration to Canada. His activities in Horná Dolná and strong relations with all Roma (and non-Roma) in Horná Dolná allowed him to provide us with very significant insights into transatlantic Roma migration. Despite the negative attitudes of people towards Roma migration, low numbers of returnees and the overall 'unpleasant' atmosphere in Horná Dolná in terms of inter-ethnic relations we were able to collect information on migration to Canada. Further research is needed in order to thoroughly investigate forces influencing Roma migration. Nevertheless, in the current

104 Names of the respondents have been changed at their request.

atmosphere it is almost impossible to access the local Romani community. Roma do not trust non-Roma, regardless of whether they are journalists or researchers. As described below, Roma fear negative inferences from their migration. Having internalized the stigma ascribed to them by the majority population they feel 'guilty' for leaving the country.

Roma Migration from Horná Dolná

Roma from Horná Dolná, especially those with relatively good social status acquired during the socialist era and their descendants, belong to a social group that lost almost everything as a result of the transition after 1989. Most of them lost their jobs and their social status decreased immensely. Although their housing situation is in many cases better than that of numerous other Roma communities in eastern Slovakia, their chances to find work and live a dignified life are slender. And for many of them, migration is one of the very few ways to improve their situation. Unfortunately, we do not have precise data on migration from Horná Dolná to other regions in Slovakia. During our research we found anecdotal evidence of migration to larger cities or to the Czech Republic, which in any case is a typical destination of Slovak Roma. Social and economic circumstances in the Czech Republic are perceived as much better than in Slovakia. Those who stayed in Horná Dolná maintain strong ties with their relatives who migrated to the Czech Republic in the past. Their perception of the situation in the Czech Republic is arguably inaccurate as unemployment in the Czech Roma is also very high and the attitudes of the majority towards them are getting worse. Inter-ethnic tensions (including violent attacks on Roma) in the Czech Republic occur almost on a daily basis.

Many Roma from Slovakia (and also from the Spiš region) used to migrate to EU countries before Slovakia joined in 2004 (see above). The United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark and Sweden – all of these countries were destinations for Romani migration. Most of the Roma migrated to the United Kingdom, particularly from the Spiš region (and other south-eastern regions of Slovakia). After 2004, migration to the UK provided

many Roma with an opportunity to advance their socio-economic standing as virtually no entry requirements were imposed on labor migrants from Slovakia. Labor migration thus became one of the few ways to break out of the vicious circle of poverty, particularly in eastern Slovakia. Successful Roma migrants use their savings from the UK to purchase the highest status symbols for the Roma – a house and a car – in Slovakia while continuing their jobs in the UK. However, only few plan to stay abroad permanently (cf. Grill, 2011 and 2012). In some regions, the migration experience allowed many Roma from segregated settlements to move out of the traditional ‘Gypsy colonies’ and buy houses in the non-Roma parts of villages. Tarkovce, for instance, has become more spatially ethnically mixed as a result of Roma returnees buying houses in the non-Roma parts of the village (Grill, 2011). Another example of a ‘sending’ village, Bystrany (a village located 20 km to the east of Horná Dolná) is perceived by the Roma as a ‘success story’ of Romani migration to the United Kingdom. Many of Bystrany’s Roma returned from the United Kingdom and used their savings to build or reconstruct their own houses, start their own businesses and improve their living conditions. Such investments actually cause a reversal of previous hierarchies as Roma building or reconstructing their houses often hire non-Roma building companies to do the job. Construction work gives various job opportunities even to unsuccessful migrants. Migration experience thus seems to have an impact on the community as a whole. Job opportunities provided by the British labor market are often considered as life-saving among the Roma despite physical hardship they have to endure, such as 12-hour shifts, night shifts or extremely hard work in low-paid jobs. However, migration is often presented as a dream come true despite the fact that for many Roma it means deepening their poverty as they have to borrow money for the journey. If unsuccessful in job seeking they end up owing large amounts of money and find themselves in a very difficult situation (Grill, 2011). The fact that not everyone ‘makes it’ abroad was confirmed also by our respondents who described the situation in the labor market of western EU countries as deteriorating.

“People who are in England are still satisfied but not as much as those who went here from Bystrany or Pavlovce nad Uhom. The ‘capital’ of the Spiš region is now in Birmingham or Sheffield...but it is not like it used to be. A single person, with primary education, no skills or vocational training could find a job knowing a single phrase: I am looking for a job. But those times are over.” (Mr. Milan)

The situation changed due to massive labor migration by workers from Ukraine and Poland who pushed wages down to an absolute minimum and filled demand for unskilled labor. In the past, Roma used to travel either with their whole families or as individual sojourners sending remittances home. If they no longer can earn enough money to provide for their families, labor migration is not an option any more.

Why Canada?

As mentioned earlier, Roma from the region have very few chances to improve their standards of living. The only ‘legal’ source of income meeting one’s most urgent needs is state-supplied social welfare. The other survival strategy is emigration. This was employed in 2010 by several Romani individuals and families who decided to leave for Canada. They were the so-called ‘pioneers’ who later lent a hand to other newcomers from the region. In February 2012, more than 200 Horná Dolná Roma left for Canada and so far only very few of them have come back.

Our informants saw Canada as a ‘promised land’:

“They [Canadians] make no differences between people... The only thing that counts is your own effort... Everybody has a chance to be successful (even without an education) if he or she makes enough effort... Canadians do not suspect or doubt anyone... Canada is a very safe country – they [our Roma] can go out with no fear.”

(anecdotal evidence of feelings about Canada that emerged during the interviews)

Selection of Canada as a destination country is based on a very rational consideration. Canada's asylum system provides certain security to the newcomers, at least in the initial stages of their stay in the country. Even though their chances of actually being granted asylum are slender, being an asylum seeker provides a better starting point, particularly for those travelling with families, than regular labor migration with its uncertainty. Even if the asylum claim is rejected eventually, the asylum system secures satisfaction of basic needs and provides adequate living conditions to asylum seekers during the asylum review procedure. While waiting for the decision Roma can look for employment and secure their lives on their own.

Reasons for Migration

"There is no life here..." (Ms. Júlia)

This is a desperate but self-explanatory remark by one of our respondents. To be more specific: another respondent who served as our 'informant' during the research is a young, 25-year-old resident of Horná Dolná. After acquiring his undergraduate degree at a university he started attending various training sessions, seminars and workshops aiming to 'empower' young Roma. As a very active young man he helps other Roma with their everyday lives, communicates with the police, municipal offices, or the media. He is also one of the few to get a job in the region. Working manually in a nearby factory he has to wake up at 3.30 a.m. to get to work in Poprad (23 km from Horná Dolná). He earns less than 300 Euro per month.

The socio-economic situation of Horná Dolná Roma is one of the major reasons for their migration. As mentioned above, unemployment in the region reaches almost 20% and is extremely high particularly among the Roma. The unwillingness of many employers to employ Roma complicates things even more. High competition in the labor market and widespread nepotism coupled with anti-Roma prejudice leaves them no way to improve their living situation. However, as our respondents stated, people want to live better lives. People who decide to migrate are often those with no other possibilities.

“Even if there are some job opportunities, they [entrepreneurs] employ only their relatives or other non-Roma.” (Ms. Alica)

“It has been a strategy for a long time... people do not have jobs. I do not understand why all agricultural co-ops were closed and people fired. The same with other state-owned businesses. No one has a job now. (...) It would be better if people had jobs. I know I’m not well educated. On the other hand, you can’t even get a cleaning job. They require courses for being a cleaner... and then you may earn 350 Euro a month. It is crazy.” (Ms. Júlia)

Housing is another area which the informants saw as troubling and causing many people to leave. Horná Dolná’s Roma population used to enjoy relatively high living standards acquired during socialism. With the transition after 1989 and its detrimental impact on the Roma population, living standards for Horná Dolná’s Roma gradually deteriorated even though they can at least live in the houses built during the socialist era. However, there is hardly a house in the Horná Dolná Romani community occupied by only a single nuclear family. Regular family houses were turned into multi-generational houses shared by members of extended families.

“People have trouble getting along but if there is nowhere to go, you have no other option but to learn to live together. Four families live in this one house, every family has one bedroom. Everybody cooks for their own family. We have no privacy. It is very hard to live in one room with children who are almost adults.” (Ms. Alica)

“Everybody wants their own house. That’s why everybody leaves.” (Ms. Júlia)

It is extremely difficult to build a new house or to buy/rent new apartments. For Roma, it is literally impossible to buy a plot outside the Roma colony or to buy/rent flats among the non-Roma. Inter-ethnic

tensions and anti-Roma prejudice in Horná Dolná confine the Roma in the segregated part of the village.

Even if they have a plot of land in the colony they lack money to build a house. Many of them manage to at least start the construction but soon run out of money. In such cases, migration is a fall-back and a chance to earn more money to continue with the construction. When asked who the people migrating to Canada were, our respondents replied:

“Those were the people who for instance started building their own house. They built the basic walls and that was it, money was gone and they just couldn’t continue. Since they left, the situation improved a lot. They send money from Canada to their relatives and the house stands, is insulated and covered by a roof...” (Mr. Milan)

These are the so-called “winners from socialism” and their children who can still benefit from the social capital acquired during socialism. Their social networks, skills and social intelligence allow them to actively seek solutions to their situation and adopt active strategies of solving life difficulties such as unemployment or poverty. To be more specific, it is predominantly young Roma between the ages of 25 to 40 who leave in search of better life opportunities as they see no chances of advancing their socio-economic status in Horná Dolná. Our respondents described them as “young, ambitious and skilled”.

“Our young children want to live a new life. They don’t want to live like us. They are more open-minded, want to have better education, better jobs and better conditions for living.” (Ms. Alica)

“My son has his new family. He finished university, had a baby and now he wants to live a proper life. And here there is no chance.” (Ms. Júlia)

The hopeless situation of many Roma can be described by the story of a young man who also left for Canada:

“One of my friends also went to Canada. They [immigration clerks in Canada] could not believe he couldn’t get a job here in Slovakia. And then he showed them his undergraduate diploma from university and asked them how come he can’t get a job with this education. Then they realized he was right.”(Mr. Milan)

The study found striking evidence of guilt the Roma feel for leaving the country. On numerous occasions they tried to justify their migration by pointing out their reasons for migration as well as by stressing that they did everything that was required formally by the state or informally by the majority society:

“...First of all, he finished his studies and then he left.” (Ms. Júlia)

“...But the migration was OK... he went to the social assistance office to prove he had no obligations. And he de-registered from everywhere, the labor office, the Social Insurance Company.” (Ms. Alica)

Respondents also compared the majority’s perception of Romani migration with the non-Romani one by pointing out that (for instance) the media repeatedly blame them for doing something wrong. Thus they tried to justify migration by emphasizing every person’s right to go anywhere he or she wishes to.

“If you behave and you want to find a job there, why is everyone so upset with this?(.) Not only Roma left. Many “whites” migrated as well even earlier and no one blames them.” (Ms. Júlia)

The sense of ‘presumption of guilt’ was eminently present throughout the entire interviews. Anything they do to improve their lives is suspicious to the majority. If they are unemployed and live only on social benefits they are blamed for exploiting the social welfare system. If they want to find a job nobody trusts their skills and working habits. If they migrate

they are suspicious for potentially exploiting the receiving country's social welfare system. As a consequence, the Roma themselves internalize the stigma. They tend to underestimate themselves and accept the image of 'bad Gypsies' from which they desperately wish to dissociate. Trying to convince the majority they are different on every occasion they explicitly emphasize they are "worthy" of living in this country.

Interiorized stigma and lack of respect from the majority society is one of the reasons for leaving the country. Our respondents pointed out that relations with the majority have been deteriorating in recent years. As mentioned earlier, municipal offices do not respond to the problems and needs of the Romani community in Horná Dolná. The majority population keeps them 'out' of common social space. If they want to rent or buy a flat in a block of flats in non-Roma part of the village owners of the flats simply reject them.

In the past, Romani children attended mixed schools together with non-Romani. Things have changed dramatically in recent years with numerous practices of segregation occurring in local schools. A school located close to the "Romani colony" is slowly becoming a school only for Romani children. Even if children attend mixed schools, Roma pupils are in separated classes. While having common meals in the school canteen Romani pupils have to sit at one separate table. Other Romani pupils wait in a line until others finish their meals and then take their places at the table. They also use separate cutlery and plates. The following story of a Romani mother describes the current situation:

"School established one class for Romani children in a church building. There was no blackboard or bathroom, the classroom wasn't prepared for teaching. And the main problem was that we [parents] couldn't escort our children into the class. We had to wait on the street (...) it was ordered by the priest. And I wanted to know what the classroom looked like, with whom my son would share the desk, and who the teacher is. So I decided not to send him there as long as they don't let me in."
(Ms. Alica)

Very low majority acceptance of Roma also affects communication with public officials. As our respondents pointed out, Roma usually do not get enough information about services provided by municipal offices or various social assistance offices. They have to make much bigger efforts to receive certain services and, most importantly, must learn to be assertive in order to get what they are entitled to.

“I told her [the public official]... ‘you always help all non-Roma children and never provide us with any information’. You have to start yelling at them, otherwise you get nothing. They simply ignore you.”(Ms. Alica)

Inter-ethnic tensions are strengthened also by the increase in violent attacks by far right extremist groups in Slovakia (and media coverage of them). Roma fear these so much nowadays that they are constantly prepared to ‘defend’ their community.

“Once we got the information that Kotleba’s¹⁰⁵ people plan to come to our village, Roma were so afraid. But then we realized there are 1,500 Roma adults to defend the community. We have to do it ourselves, nobody will help us. The Horná Dolná mayor wouldn’t do it.” (Mr. Milan)

In the course of the interviews, several other negative interactions with non-Roma from Horná Dolná were spontaneously mentioned. Children are not allowed to play at public playgrounds, non-Roma verbally abuse them calling them racist names in the streets. All of these manifestations of non-acceptance play a crucial role in creating negative ‘self confidence’ in the Roma. To be welcome and counted as a fully-fledged member of a ‘common community’ is a very important factor of one’s well-being which is very difficult to maintain for Roma.

“On the one hand, they say you are free and equal. On the other hand you face all of these things... definitely it is also behind decisions of many Roma to leave the country.” (Mr. Milan)

105 Marián Kotleba is the leader of an extreme right-wing political party The People’s Party – Our Slovakia.

The rose-tinted picture of Canada as an accepting and fair country also confirms the lack of equality and genuine freedom in Slovakia as perceived by our respondents. State welfare and job opportunities in Canada are only part of the advantages.

“In Canada, no one makes any differences” (Ms. Júlia)

Feelings of ‘being accepted as human beings’ play a crucial role in looking for a new life abroad.

Arriving in Canada

Departure for Canada is a much more complicated process than leaving for the EU countries with their policy of free movement and open labor markets, such as the United Kingdom. Functional social networks therefore play a major role in organizing Horná Dolná’s Roma departure. Roma in Horná Dolná can be described as rather active in terms of searching for strategies of securing a livelihood. Long-term history of emigration to either the Czech Republic or the United Kingdom from the region suggests relatively good social capital enabling them to help themselves even in dire situations. It seems that the Roma community from Horná Dolná preserved the legacy of socialism to some extent – they are the Roma who somehow, *inter alia*, through internal and international migration, managed to avoid absolute poverty and maintain at least remnants of their social status gained during socialism. As a result, even today they relatively successfully employ various defense strategies, such as migration. Thanks to their social skills and functional social networks within and outside their immediate community they know what to do in order to leave for Canada. In 2012, around 200 Roma from Horná Dolná left for Canada following an example of a few other families from the region that had left for Canada in previous years. First emigrants from the region left in 2010-2011 and provided considerable assistance to those coming to Canada in 2012 in larger groups. The emigrants also help the newcomers with financial costs of the journey and let them stay in their houses in Toronto.

Although it was not explicitly mentioned in the interviews, it appears that most travel arrangements are made by several individuals from the community who have social networks and skills allowing them to, for instance, book flight tickets – Roma from Horná Dolná know whom to contact when they want to leave in order to get flight tickets and secure transport to the airport in either Vienna or Warsaw. Transport is usually managed by local Roma entrepreneurs who, for business purposes, own vans taking up to nine people. The fee for transport is 350€ and family ties play an important role here, too – family members who stay in Horná Dolná chip in for the ones who leave in order to pay for the transport as well as for the flight ticket. It is also common that those already in Canada send money to those in Horná Dolná wishing to leave to let them pay for the flight tickets.

“You know, those who were leaving knew they could get help from those who were in Canada. It wasn’t necessarily only family but others too, they sent some money...” (Ms. Alica)

Mutual help is reinforced by the fact that emigration to Canada works by a snowball effect. The ones who left step-by-step help other family members come to Canada. Respondents explained this mutual help by solidarity and social or family cohesiveness, which enables Roma to leave the country.

The transport thus takes them to either Vienna or Warsaw although Horná Dolná Roma prefer flying from Warsaw as, supposedly, Roma are not welcome to fly from Vienna. Our respondents could not explain why Vienna airport officials would not let them fly to Canada and ventured several possible interpretations.

“Vienna is against it [Roma leaving for Canada]. They don’t have to let you in the country, they can even block you at the airport. That’s why we don’t travel from Vienna anymore (...) It could be because of Hungarian Roma who travelled through Budapest or Vienna. And then there was a fuss from Canada. (...) Or the ones who were returned from Vienna simply didn’t

synchronize what they were saying. Instead of saying ‘holiday’ in Vienna they said ‘emigrant’ and Vienna didn’t let them go.”
(Mr. Milan)

Here they emphasized their good intentions again saying that they should be let into any country as long as they behave and are not trouble-makers - as if trying to refute expected allegations.

Separated family members stay in close touch via internet communicating almost every day with their loved ones through Skype, looking at pictures from Canada and learning about the way of life the emigrants live now.

“We talk through the computer, she shows us everything, what it looks like over there. We have a cousin there, her son, another cousin and other family members. So we talk about their lives over there. (...) They say the life is better there than here.”
(Ms. Alica)

After arriving to Canada Horná Dolná Roma claim asylum and become regular asylum seekers living in an asylum centre. According to our informants there are two ways of staying in Canada – an asylum (*azyl*) and a refugee (*refudží*). The main difference is that being on *azyl* means being locked up in an asylum camp while being on *refudží* means staying with relatives or friends who vouch for the asylum seeker.

“For instance if you had a family there you could move in with them if you didn’t want to be on azyl. They [the authorities] wrote down your name and everything and then you only go to check in once in a while to that azyl. You don’t have to be in the camp but can be like visiting a family and you just go report to azyl.” (Mr. Milan)

However, it seems that both *azyl* and *refudží* denote a status of an asylum seeker. This confusion implies rather poor orientation within Canada’s asylum system. Except for the residency (either in an asylum centre or in private accommodation) the respondents could not explain

the difference between these two statuses. It is plausible that terms *azyl* and *refudží* are derived from the vocabulary used in the respective environments. It is fair to assume that in asylum centers both personnel and residents speak about ‘waiting for asylum’ (*azyl*) and residents are referred to as asylum seekers. However, the general public may often use the term refugee for both asylum seekers and recognized refugees that have been granted asylum. ‘Refugee’ might be a term used widely outside the asylum centre among people which is why we think Horná Dolná Roma may use this term to denote the residency outside the asylum centre. Of course, this is an assumption that should be treated with caution as we did not get a chance to interview any respondents that actually had been in Canada. Either on *azyl* or on *refudží* they wait for the immigration clerks’ decision in their asylum procedure. As explained by our respondents it can take two days or it can take six months. What matters the most is how immigrants appear to the immigration clerks who scrutinize whether they behave, actively seek employment or whether they are trouble-makers whose only aim is to exploit Canada’s social system. Trouble-makers have no chance of staying as opposed to those who behave.

“From what I heard, they take to you some kind of a court trial and they look at what you do. If you do good and only want a better life they let you stay. But if you make trouble they send you back.”(Ms. Alica)

“An immigration clerk decides based on your behavior whether you are a trouble-maker. People who make no trouble are allowed to stay. And of course, they can see your activity, if you look for a job, if you are trying hard enough.”(Mr. Milan)

Canadians are generally viewed as fair, judging only based on individual merits and making no differences between Roma and non-Roma. The main criterion is hard work and thus anyone who is willing to try hard enough can be successful in Canada. This is in stark contrast to Slovakia where Roma have no chance of living a dignified life even when they are educated.

The flats in which asylum seekers from Horná Dolná live in are located in blocks which they share with a number of people of various ethnic backgrounds. The area is described as very nice with a pool and a park in the centre, a camera system and a doorman.

“They also go out, they are not scared. So far they had no problem with anybody.” (Ms. Alica)

The quotation implies one of the major reasons for leaving Slovakia – fear. In Slovakia they feel like second-class citizens pushed to the outskirts of society:

“Why do they treat us, Roma, like this? Like outcasts? We went to school with ‘whites’.” (Ms. Júlia)

In Canada they feel safe and respected. Anyone can get a job if one wants to; children go to school and get assistance from social workers who come to pick them up in their homes; they receive food aid and clothes from charity if needed. Health care is for free as long as one is properly registered; children born in the country acquire Canadian citizenship automatically after one year of life with their parents being entitled to apply too. It seems that this rose-tinted picture is too good to be true. And as one of the respondents acknowledged, much information is actually misinformation. He later implied that situation on the job front is not as ideal as it would seem – work is usually very hard and does not pay well. Nevertheless, migration to Canada is seen as a positive experience anyway.

“I salute the young ones who left. Many thanks. Because they make the effort to leave. Here, there is nothing.” (Ms. Júlia)

Return as a Failure vs. Return as a Success

Returns from Canada are expected after achieving one’s goals – saving enough money to build or finish a house and have a decent life. The respondents based this assumption also on the examples of Bystrany and

Žehra where Roma working abroad, mainly in the UK, used their savings to solve their housing situation. A difficult housing situation is also one of the major reasons for migration as due to financial hardship families are forced to share houses. Interestingly, they do not expect to cross the Romani ‘colony’s’ borders even when buying a property as “*they [the non-Roma] wouldn’t sell us anything here [outside the colony]*”.

“Here, among the Gadje, it is impossible. Maybe in a block of flats through a real estate agency you could buy a place but hardly because you have to get neighbors’ consent whether the Roma can move in.” (Mr. Milan)

The distance between the Roma and non-Roma in Horná Dolná is so large that Roma do not expect to be accepted by the non-Roma population even if they acquire socio-economic status comparable with the majority. In terms of Roma and non-Roma relations Slovakia comes low in comparison with most countries including the Czech Republic.

“I did live in the Czech Republic, too. But you wouldn’t see such racism and such problems as you do here. If I wanted a flat anywhere I could buy it or rent it.” (Ms. Alica)

Returns are also associated with the fact that they see migration as something they could be punished for. They fear that as a result of them leaving, the authorities, i.e. labor office and Social Insurance Company would not register them back and they would therefore lose entitlement to any state social support. Public officials at Social Benefits Offices and Labor Offices often treat their Roma clients with disrespect using their position of almost unlimited power (Grill, 2012) which deepens Roma distrust in the state apparatus. Once again they emphasize they did nothing wrong and followed all rules related to migration:

“But I think if he de-registered from the labor office and from everywhere they have to register him back when he returns, right? Not only Roma left but many Gadje, they even left before us.” (Ms. Alica)

As if saying that nobody would dare to not register Gadge returnees, the informant strives to convince herself they must have the same right to be re-registered. The need for approval and confirmation that indeed they have done nothing wrong and have the right to leave if they want to is tangible throughout the whole interview. Migration for Roma is thus even more daring experience than it is for non-Roma. While non-Roma are praised for leaving and celebrated as courageous, Roma are automatically suspected of exploiting foreign social systems thus tarnishing Slovakia's good name abroad. Adding this stigma to all the other hardships of migration, Roma risk even more.

Some people from outside Horná Dolná (from Levoča) returned already but this is regarded as early returning and a failure. One of the returnees was sent back from the airport in Vienna due to her "saying something wrong". Another family was sent back from Canada because they were not willing to work hard and lead a decent life:

"One family returned but that's because their father 'worked' only with his hands, you know what I mean? (...) They didn't catch him stealing but he simply figured out that unless he works there he can't make it. And he didn't want to work so they returned."(Mr. Milan)

Planned return is therefore seen as a part of the migration process. On the other hand, returning early without achieving one's goals is judged an individual failure, showing unwillingness to work hard.

Conclusion

In the present paper we have drawn a rough picture of migration of some Horná Dolná Roma to Canada. The decision to claim asylum in Canada has been shown to be a result of rational consideration as asylum provides a certain element of security in the initial phases of migration. Unlike regular migration to the EU countries, it allows whole families to travel together which is important in the Romani community. Several

main reasons for migration have been identified. On the one hand, poor chances of impoverished Roma to enter the labor market and advance their socio-economic standing lock them in the vicious circle of poverty and dependence. However, it is not only dependence on state welfare but also on the majority's good will as poor Roma have virtually no power to advocate their needs and interests. Abysmal poverty and continuously growing inter-ethnic tension crush many Roma's hopes for a better life for either themselves or their children. Migration to the western countries, perceived as advanced and tolerant, is seen as perhaps the only way to escape the 'Gypsy' that the majority in Slovak society ascribes to them. Abroad, in countries used to cultural diversity, many Roma hope to pass unseen without being labeled as 'Gypsies'. As is often the case, the Horná Dolná Roma also internalize the stigma ascribed to the Roma although they wish to dissociate themselves from 'maladjusted Gypsies' and repeatedly emphasize their good intentions and behavior. The interviews thus revealed relatively strict social division within both the Horná Dolná Roma community and larger population of Roma. The respondents strove to convey and maintain a positive self-image by emphasizing that Horná Dolná Roma are law-abiding (loyal) citizens as if assuming suspicion on our side. When it comes to migration the respondents needed reassurance their relatives did nothing wrong when they left the country as if trying to refute all expected allegations in advance. Presumption of guilt was eminently present in all our respondents' narratives whether it related to their lives in Slovakia or their migration. It was also confirmed by their unwillingness to speak to anyone (researchers or journalists) who is interested in them migrating to Canada. Fear of accusations and of potential worsening of their image was among the main barriers in communication with the Horná Dolná Roma during the fieldwork. Migration and Canada as the receiving country is then often presented as an idealistic dream in which all problems are solved. However, it was sometimes implied that this rose-tinted picture is rather unrealistic and much information is in fact misinterpreted and embellished. It is plausible that deeper field research would have revealed a more accurate picture of Roma migration to Canada with its negative as well as positive aspects.

Migration to Canada is a relatively new phenomenon among the Roma and there have been only few returnees so far who. Nonetheless, they are perceived by the rest of the community as failures. Although return is a part of the migration plan for most Horná Dolná Roma early returnees coming back home with no savings, some of them even indebted, are seen as unsuccessful. Interestingly, the blame is usually not ascribed to any external factors, such as competitive conditions in the Canadian labor market or refusal of Canadian authorities to accept Roma from Slovakia. Those returning early are perceived as failing to work hard enough to earn Canada's acceptance. From these migrants our respondents strove to dissociate themselves. They looked down on them. Even though migration is presented as a means of upward mobility, Horná Dolná Roma do not expect to cross borders of their 'colony'. Their socio-economic advancement will be confined within their local community as they do not anticipate change in the majority's attitudes to them. Inter-ethnic relations are perceived as given even though the Roma are not content with them.

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7. "IT'S BETTER TO BE A GYPSY IN CANADA THAN BEING A HUNGARIAN IN HUNGARY": THE 'NEW WAVE' OF ROMA MIGRATION

Judit Durst

*University College London, Department of Anthropology
United Kingdom*

"Step aside and wait for further investigation!" the black Immigration Officer instructed my Roma friends, a well-dressed married couple, as we exit the airplane terminal, having landed at Toronto International Airport. I could easily have slipped by, being 'fortunate enough' to have a white complexion - unlike my Roma companions with dark completions, but, instead, I stop and ask him what is the issue with my friends, why they were stopped. The black officer, once an immigrant himself, didn't seem to show much sympathy towards these Roma travelers, and casts a bewildered eye on me: *"Why are you interested? Do they belong to you?"* After a lengthy explanation in which I tried to get him understand that we are together, that we came as tourists to visit our Gypsy friends from Hungary, and we would only stay for a fortnight (as can easily be checked on our return tickets), I also incidentally revealed that I am a sociologist. He then immediately felt inclined to bombard me with a plethora of questions:

"If you are an expert, they must be your co-workers. So, tell me, why are so many [Gypsies] coming these weeks? Sometimes fifty [Roma] in one single plane. They all come from the same place, Miskolc, as your friends are from (he could tell by looking at the passport data). Why are they coming in crowds? I'm telling

you, because they want to exploit this country's generous welfare system. You're telling me this is not the case? Then what? They came to work? We [Canadian citizens] don't have work, either! What do they want? They should go home and sort their problems out at home."

This account is from a May 2012 trip to Canada in which I went to Toronto to do some brief, pilot fieldwork on the Hungarian Roma community that had migrated to this Canadian metropolis in recent years. This fieldwork on migration was a natural continuation of my previous ethnographic work on poverty in Borsod, one of the most economically backward regions of Hungary, where one third of the Roma population in Hungary live (Kemény and Janky, 2004). In the last two to three years, 'Canada' had been one of the main topics of local public discourse among the poor and not-so-poor Roma, as well as among the poor, not too highly educated, unemployed non-Roma¹⁰⁶ - and not only in my (previous research subject) village of Lapos,¹⁰⁷ where ninety-five percent of the local population was Gypsy, but everywhere else in the region, especially in Miskolc, the capital of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county. 'Canada' was synonymous with the 'Land of Opportunity', a 'Good Business' that was worth investing in; it is a 'Garden of Eden', where there is no starvation, indeed, you can eat as much as you want. Canada was the chance to escape from the harsh reality of one's daily life of destitution.

106 Academic literature on Hungary's largest minority group interchangeably uses the designating term: Gypsy or Roma. Although I'm fully aware that the term Gypsy might sound derogatory to 'politically correct' readers, the people I encounter during my fieldwork most often refer to themselves as Gypsy in everyday conversation. Every morning, when we woke up, my host family's little child greeted us jokingly: "Good morning, Gypsies!" Therefore, in this text, I alternately use the term Roma/Gypsy, always keeping their own denotations when citing them. The Gypsies use the term 'Hungarian' to refer to non-Gypsy. In a comparative perspective, it is striking that, in Hungary in recent years, one of the most important distinction-making characteristics used to assert one's social status is one's ethnic belonging. (cf. Feischmidt, 2011). On the level of public discourse, the society seems to be split into two (not interchangeable) categories: the Roma and the non-Roma, or Gypsy and non-Gypsy, population. This might be the case in other Eastern European countries (such as Slovakia), but not in more multi-ethnic societies like Romania (Pulay, informal communication).

107 All over the text, I use fictitious names - both for places and for people - in order to retain my informants' anonymity.

At that time, it seemed to me that almost all the Gypsies I talked to wanted to try to move to this transatlantic, multi-ethnic country, famous for its welcoming, friendly, anti-racist, all-encompassing society, with a generous welfare system. The only ones who hesitated were those who had too much to leave behind: an asset like a valuable (self-owned) home, secure prospects for their personal business initiatives, and/or a good local schooling situation for their children – basically, those who held a well-respected status in their local communities. As one of my friends in this circle put it:

As you have witnessed, we have also been hesitating for a long time whether to go [to Canada] or not. Once, we even got two [plane] tickets [to Toronto], we had relatives there who'd have put us up in the initial period. However, we decided not to go. If I tell the truth, I didn't go because I didn't want to be a refugee. After being 'somebody' at home, I didn't want to put my children in a situation where they would see their father as a refugee."

This statement leads straight to the main inquiry of my pilot study, both in Toronto and then, later on, amongst the return migrants in Borsod County, Hungary. Namely, what factors have triggered Roma migration to Canada in the past few years (since 2008), once the visa requirement was lifted? Can it be considered a 'new wave of migration' as far as the pattern and volume are concerned? Why is the destination country Canada, rather than any other European country? What facilitated the mass migration trend amongst these poor people with seemingly limited resources, who appear – not only superficially, but also according to the research literature – to be one of the groups with the least capacity to practically choose migration as a livelihood strategy, as many do not even possess enough material goods to even invest in the first step of the move: buying their air tickets.

From my ethnographic experiences, I assumed that this latest transatlantic movement to Canada could be labeled as a 'new wave' or new pattern of migration (Cf. Vidra and Virág, 2012): being 'new' not only due to its sheer volume, but also in terms of its characteristics. The previous

wave of migration, between 1998-2001, was described by researchers as ‘not considerable’ in its numbers and simply as a strategy of some more affluent Roma groups, who were either Vlah Gypsies from the capital (Budapest) with considerable entrepreneurial skill or highly qualified musicians, or young intellectuals (Kováts, 2002) – that is, people with greater migration potential. However, the ‘new wave’ seemed to consist of a mass movement of a variety of groups defined as having low migration potential: poor, low-educated, lower class Roma, as well as non-Roma. The (many) non-Roma refugees I personally met, or heard of, in Toronto, that claimed to be Roma for the sake of receiving refugee status, raised a second question for me: Does this new wave of migration have a ethno-cultural feature or it is better understood as an economic strategy of the poor, independent of their ethnicity?

This leads to yet another important question: Once started, what perpetuates the migration process in the case of the Hungarian Roma moving to Canada? Although it is obvious from the research literature that the migration network and the so-called ‘migration industry’ are the facilitators that sustain the process (Massey at al., 1993; da Haas, 2010; Vidra, 2012), in reality, how do these networks and industries operate in the case of the Hungarian Roma migrants?

Although ‘network’ has been one of the key words in the research literature on migration, the network theory approach does not explain why everyone does not take advantage of the opportunity to move (Black at al., 2006). That is, why do some people move whilst others belonging to the same network do not move? What are the motivations behind not moving for those who do not choose migration as a ‘viable livelihood strategy’ (Van Hear-Nyberg-Sorensen, 2003)?

And last, but not least, if migration is a self-perpetuating social process, as the research literature suggests, why does it, on some occasions, simply cease – for example, as recently happened in this particular case of Hungarian Roma migration to Canada?

In order to answer these questions and to be able to understand the whole process of migration in regards to some Roma groups from Hungary to Canada, I not only carried out short-term, pilot fieldwork in

Toronto but also conducted a survey amongst both those in Toronto and those who have already returned home to Hungary.¹⁰⁸

“We are all economic refugees”: Comparing previous waves with the ‘new’ wave of Roma migration to Canada¹⁰⁹

A previous migrant’s account

Economic theories of migration (micro or macro, neoclassical, or the new economics approach) are the most developed to explain the social process of migration. Their common central assumption is that international migration is about redistribution of labor. Consequently, migrants are largely equated with workers and economic theories are used to explain everything in terms of labor migration, namely, as the international movement of economically-active individuals (Massey et al., 1993).

108 All in all, my Roma co-worker and I spent six weeks in Toronto, living in one of ‘the buildings’ in the metropolis where many Hungarian Roma families live. We gained access to this observance point through acquaintances of ours, a Roma family with children who moved there 10 months ago, arriving from a middle sized settlement in Borsod County. I, myself, spent only two weeks there. However, my co-worker returned later, for an additional month, to carry on with the fieldwork. Although I was unable to be present, I looked upon this second round as a methodological experiment for me. Apart from providing me with a write up of his research (fieldwork) diary, we Skyped each other regularly and discussed observed events. As a result, the insight gained from his work has organically joined my own and I will not only base my arguments on my own observations and experiences there in Toronto, but also on his accounts, which can additionally be understood as ‘through a Roma’s lenses’. I also carried out a migration history survey amongst both those migrants who were living in Toronto and those who had already returned home. On top of their migration histories and (future) migration potential, the questionnaire asked the migrants about their social, economic, and demographic characteristics. We interviewed 130 migrants in Toronto. The sample size of the Borsod survey is around 800. The return migrants’ sample was collected using a snowball method and the respondents are mainly from Miskolc and the surrounding settlements. Although this return migration research and its associated data analysis is not yet completed, I will use some of its preliminary findings here to support some of my arguments.

109 These two categories serve only to distinguish the timely dimension of a person’s migration process. I call ‘previous’ (or ‘early’) migrants those who left Hungary for Canada before December 2001, when Canada introduced visa requirement towards Hungarian citizens. Respectively, I call ‘new migrants’ those who immigrated to Canada from 2008 onwards to the present, in the so-called ‘new wave’ of mass migration of the poor, after the visa requirements were lifted.

At first sight, this explanation seems to be more valid in the case of the ‘previous’ or ‘early’ rather than the ‘new’ migration wave of the Hungarian Roma – for those who went to Canada in between 1998-2001. According to our interviews with some earlier migrants from Borsod, these were people of younger age, economically active, with around eleven years of schooling; skilled workers, mainly having vocational training in the construction industry, who found it difficult to earn enough money in Hungary to support their families. The main purpose of their migration was to find a better paying job outside Hungary. Most of them moved to Canada on their own: to reduce the risk of migration, many employed the help of their transnational migrants network (i.e. a brother, other relatives, or friends living in Canada already) (Hajnal, 2002). They would reunite with their families in Canada only after some months or sometimes even a year after having settled and having become established on the Canadian labor market. For example, here is Jani’s story: Jani can be considered a typical ‘previous’ Roma migrant from Avas, one of Miskolc’s residential areas mostly populated by Roma and also the place from where many Roma (and non-Roma) migrated.

Jani moved to Hamilton, a small settlement not far from Toronto in the spring of 2001. He went on his own, leaving a wife and two small children at home in Miskolc, to follow his brother who had already begun working there. He bought his air ticket from his savings.

“It was different in those days. In those days, only the normal ones went; not like now when one and all are going, even those illiterate, know-nothing Gypsies. At that time, there was no scrap metal collecting. Nobody thought of collecting scrap iron.¹¹⁰ In those days we went there to work. And, if you worked there, you had everything. You just took up the same rhythm of life as they [the Canadians] lived. But if you don’t work, it’s a different story. Then you need to do something, something like

110 In recent years, almost all ‘new migrant’ Roma go regularly to collect scrap metal from the streets of Toronto. His is their additional income earning activity, complementing their main income source, the state welfare.

collecting scrap metal. But with this view of life you won't fit in anywhere. You don't work, you live on welfare, and you cost money to the state. Meanwhile if I work, I pay tax, I live a normal life, and the State earns money through me, by letting me lead a normal life, letting me work. It is good for the state and good for me, too."

Jani's opinion of the 'new' migrants' economic practices in Canada can be read as a highly judgmental critique of his fellow Roma. Firstly, he uses the same generalizations (the social practice of judging this 'newcomer' group by 'lumping them together'; a practice which is often the critique of Hungarians' (non-Roma) behavior towards the Roma – treating them as one selfsame homogenous group. Secondly, he assumes that the 'newcomers' didn't "come here to work." As I will demonstrate it later, this is not the case and the 'new' migrants' move to Canada can clearly be analyzed as labor migration – if we understand the meaning of work (or labor) in a broader sense, as the Roma themselves do. Jani's (unconscious) drive to negatively judge the 'newcomer' migrant Roma can be better understood from the below citation. It may also be analyzed using Elias' analytical framework 'the Established and the Outsiders' figuration (Elias, 1994) – we only need to replace the word 'established' with 'previous migrant' and the 'outsiders' with 'newcomer' migrants. As Elias put it, "an established group tends to attribute to its outsider group as a whole the 'bad' characteristics of that group's 'worst' section. (...) In contrast, the self-image of the established group tends to be modeled on its exemplary, most norm-setting section, on the minority of its 'best' members" (ibid, p. 5).

Jani's statements clearly show his fear: the newcomers are threatening his 'established' position as a Roma migrant. Due to their 'bad behavior', they are leveling down, discrediting, and ruining the reputation of the whole Roma migrant community.

Let's return to Jani's own account: After seven months of living on welfare and working under the grid, Jani managed to find a 'proper', that is, formal, or reported job in the construction industry.

“These new Roma (migrants) have spoiled it all. Nowadays, the Canadians do not even wish to speak to Hungarians... however, Hungarians were welcome in Canada in those days. We had a good reputation (as hard workers); they knew that you could work even twenty hours a day if it’s needed, you don’t shout back as the Canadian, the Indian, or the Sri Lankans do. In the beginning, I worked in a salad factory. Boring, you don’t need to know anything; you’re just cutting peppers and all kinds of vegetables. But considering that you don’t speak the language, don’t know the city; it was an okay job that enables you to survive. ‘Cos you can’t really make a living off of welfare. Then I moved to Toronto and worked for a cleaning company. It was an unreported job, too, and nobody spoke any English. Here, I was taught the language by a (Hungarian-speaking) Czech entrepreneur whom I worked for. Once you have learnt the language, you can speak and the world begins opening up to you. Whilst I earned \$8.00 or \$9.00 in the cleaning company, just like I got at the construction industry, all of the sudden I started to earn \$18.00 per hour. And it was a legal, reported job with a proper insurance number, and so on. I quit getting welfare. Since then, I’ve had a good life. My children went to school, I worked with nice people and I wasn’t exploited or deceived anymore.”

Jani considers himself an economic refugee.

“You can claim refugee status if your life is in danger...We who leave (Hungary) are economic refugees. ‘Cos we flee from poverty. Sure there is racism in it for, as many of us said, you don’t get a job (in Hungary) because your skin color is black. There is racism, for sure. But whether one’s life is in danger, I can’t tell that...If somebody comes to Canada from Somalia, that is okay. I had a Somalian mate; he couldn’t leave his village for three days, for if he would have left his home, he

would have been shot dead. He is a refugee. But I, whose life is not in danger, am only an economic refugee, who only flees from poverty. On the other hand, you need the refugee status since it gives you the right to stay in the country, to get health care, etc. Otherwise, you would be an illegal migrant and they would throw you out immediately.”

Although the Immigration Board rejected Jani's refugee claim (he reflects that he knows he 'made a mistake') after almost three years of having stayed in Canada,¹¹¹ to date, he continues to migrate. He has worked in the UK in a bread shop, in Ireland on a farm, and just recently in the Netherlands for three years in the construction industry. Prior to the interview, he had just returned home with his family to Miskolc to discover that there are no jobs for Roma people throughout the entire region. Therefore, he is planning his next move – this time to Belgium, where not only does he have a relative but also knows from experience that it's easy to find regular menial labor. Jani is one of many Roma from Miskolc who can be classified according to academic literature as a 'chain migrant'. However, they can also be described as 'forced migrants' who migrate out of a 'necessity for livelihood' as many of have emphasized, just like Jani.

“I wouldn't go anywhere if they would give me a job paying 300,000 (Hungarian forints, equivalent to CAN \$ 1,200) a month. Why would I go? Then I could have a normal life, my kids would go to school, we'd have our friends around, I could regularly see my parents if I want. This (migration) is a livelihood necessity. That's why I said we are all economic refugees.”

111 When asked, Jani admitted that he didn't turn up at his hearing: “At that time, I was thinking with a child's mind. I didn't take the whole legal procedure seriously. I was young.”

The 'new migrants' stories

As I stated above, the migration process experienced by those Roma who left Hungary in the previous wave between 1998-2001, like Jani, seem at first sight to be more grounded in an understanding of the framework of labor migration than the new wave. However, contrary to all appearances, we will soon see that the 'new wave' of refugee migration can also be interpreted as partly labor migration – if we consider 'labor' or 'work' in terms of how the Roma migrant themselves consider it to be.

What is misleading in regards to the new wave of movement is that, on the surface, it seems as if this particular group's (namely, the Hungarian unemployed Roma [and non-Roma] lower class people) international migration would be fed by the differences not in the level of wages between the sending and the receiving countries but by the disparity between the two countries' social welfare systems. Applying the logic of the economic model of labor migration, we should refer to this pattern as 'welfare migration'. However, choosing this alternative, but, nevertheless, economic explanation of the current (but temporarily coming to an end) migration process of the Roma and non-Roma people from Hungary to Canada, would be over simplistic and concealing. Instead, we will try here to demonstrate that this transnational movement should rather be seen as a multiplex, multi-layered social process. Admittedly, my research is still rudimentary in its development; however the foundations of this argument are able to be made. According to this process, not only economic factors (making a better living) but also the political climate (a rise in hate crimes and anti-Gypsy campaigns waged by the vigilant far right movement and the Hungarian Guard), social factors (ethnic discrimination, among others, specifically, on the labor market) and psychological motivations (e.g. post-traumatic stress) all play a part in triggering the transatlantic movement of those Roma who profess they wanted to get away from the socially and economically destitute situation in their home country.

The desire of both Roma and non-Roma from the Central Eastern European region to migrate has been significantly growing in recent years and is well demonstrated by survey results on the subject of the Hungarian

residential population's migration potential. Recent surveys show the "highest ever migration potential" measured in the country in recent decades (Sik, 2012). From 2004 to 2011, Hungary's migration potential doubled, not only in the Hungarian national sample, but also in the Roma subsample, too. A survey that came out in 2011 shows that 17% of the country's population had planned to migrate at the time of the interview. Within the Roma subsample, this proportion was even higher: every fifth Roma respondent (20%) planned to move (Bernath, 2012, personnel communication). Although this number is still lower than it is in other European countries, it is a trend that is significantly on the rise.

The survey also indicated that among those who plan to migrate, students and the unemployed are overrepresented. As far as the target countries are concerned, Hungarians' top target destinations are Germany, Austria, and the UK, in respective order (Bernáth, 2012). However, the preliminary results of our own survey, conducted during the summer and autumn of 2012, indicates that the pattern is different for the Roma: the vast majority of the respondents said Canada was their target country and when asked about their next possible migration plan, many of them named the UK and some Germany.

Almost all researchers state how difficult it is to get reliable statistical data on migrants who leave the country. We only know their numbers from the receiving country's immigration statistics.¹¹² However, data from the Canadian Council for Refugees seems to support our ethnographic findings. According to its statistics, there was a vast increase in the number of Hungarian refugee claimants arriving in Canada in the past few years. While there were only ten Hungarian citizens who claimed refugee status in Canada in 1994, this number has steadily increased after 1998 (982 people claimed asylum that year). In 1999, 1,579 people arrived in Canada as refugees. By 2000, this total was 1,936 (Kovats, 2002). After a temporary break, due to Canada's introduction of visa requirements for the

112 Another problem is that there is no official data on the number of 'unreported' or 'irregular' migrants, those who moved in search of informal or unreported job or to work in the informal economy (Portes, 2010), unless they claimed refugee status.

Hungarian citizens, the Hungarian Refugee Claimants' numbers started to grow rapidly again from 2008 onwards. In 2011, a total of 4,423 'Roma' left Hungary to claim refugee status in Canada: this is almost double the statistics (2,300) from 2010.

There is a long-standing debate amongst researchers about the characteristics or patterns of Roma migration to Canada, whether these can be regarded as labor migration or asylum seeking (cited by Vidra, 2012). According to the official status of these migrants, it is technically refugee migration (cf. Kovats, 2002). Of the 800 migrants (from Hungary to Canada) that we interviewed to date, there was not a single respondent who had not migrated there as a refugee or, further, who did not claim to be a refugee.

The question to naturally arise from this line of inquiry is: Why does (almost) every Roma (and some non-Roma!) people want to make their move as a refugee? And why have these people chosen Canada as their migration destination? Our survey provides some insight into these questions; however, we have to treat our (preliminary) findings carefully, as they are not a representative sample of the whole Hungarian Roma population that has migrated to Canada.

First of all, migration to Canada has definitely been facilitated by a 'transnational migration network' already in existence (Hajnal, 2002). According to our survey, almost all of the respondents said that they had family, friends, or acquaintances in Canada who helped them through the first critical period following their arrival and who also assisted them in finding (informal) work.

Secondly, over half of our sample additionally stated that the receiving country's social and economic structure (cf. Massey, 1987) and its immigration policy made their migration possible. A common and formulaic answer to the question "why did you choose Canada to migrate to?" was the following: "Because Canada gave us refugee status" or "I wouldn't have had the talent to go to another country and support my family there: to feed them and shelter them until I find job there. Canada backed the Roma, supporting them with food and accommodation."

Our survey also provides us with some idea about the pattern of this 'new wave of migration,' in terms of mapping the social and demographic characteristics of this migrant group from Borsod County.

According to both our (preliminary) results and interviews conducted with both those who remain in Toronto and those who have already returned home (to Borsod County), it seems that there is indeed a new pattern to the Roma migration to Canada that has occurred in the last two to three years. Whereas only the more affluent and some lower-middle class Roma managed to migrate before 2008, in the last two to three years, the uneducated, lower-class are now also choosing migration as a viable livelihood strategy in an attempt to escape the hopeless economic and social situation they face in their home country. This new wave has additionally been further assisted by previous waves. As one of our respondents put it: *"the middle-class families helped their poor relatives to move to Canada."*

However, not everybody who migrated had 'well-to-do' relatives. Those unlucky ones who didn't acquire this social capital, but still desperately wanted to escape the destitute economic situation at home (long-term unemployment, accumulated debts including unpaid utility bills, etc.), had two choices. Many of them sold all their assets (if they had any): cars, furniture, even their flats. Some accepted the "help" of informal moneylenders (one of the agents in the 'migration industry' that makes it possible even for the poorest to migrate). We will soon see (in the case study below) how the whole migration process plays out for the two groups.

Amongst the sample of 130 'new migrants' (those who migrated in the last two to three years) we surveyed in Toronto, the educational level is notably low. Almost 60% (mostly those from Miskolc) had one to three years of vocational training. The other 40% (mostly Roma from rural areas) had only finished primary school (eight years of primary school). Their low educational status (and a lack of command of the English language) makes it difficult to get jobs, even unreported ones. One Roma man aptly explained their labor market situation in Canada by saying that, *"we are uneducated, therefore, we can't take up any job but dosser work"* (in Hungarian, 'csicska munka').

Although, for a layperson, it may seem counterintuitive that Roma migrants might complain about their inability to speak English, which hinders them from finding a decent job in Canada, there is one obvious explanation for why they do not manage to gain command of the language. Even at first glance, the preliminary findings of our surveys on current and the already-returned migrants were, in fact, surprising to me: out of the 130 respondents in Toronto and 800 returned migrants in Borsod, only ten (!) attended the free English language classes whilst in Toronto. As well as a being a service provided to refugees, it is a precondition for immigrants receiving state benefits to attend the compulsory English language classes (three times a week, for three hours in the morning, free of charge). As those surveyed put it, with a bit of “cleverness,” one could find a way to escape from this “unnecessary” duty.¹¹³ When I asked the respondents why they didn’t want to study English for free, almost all of them reasoned equivocally: they did not have time for this. The men were busy with collecting scrap metals and garbage, meanwhile the women needed time to cook and to do other household chores.

One way of interpreting the migrants’ aversion to attending the allegedly compulsory language classes is that it is part of their overall economic and social practice: they came here to work, not to go to school. Schooling would only take time away from their work, from garbage rummaging, scrap metal collecting, and/or from other casual, informal types of work. So, the background behind many in this group’s poor English language skills itself can also support our thesis, namely, that Roma migration to Canada may be interpreted as labor migration (Vidra, 2012).

At the same time, there is another easily distinguishable, highly educated group of Hungarian Roma people in Toronto, whom one can meet at the Roma Community Centre, a highly active volunteer organization dedicated to supporting and celebrating Romani culture

113 A well-established Hungarian Roma migrant, for instance, might make an agreement with a Canadian English teacher to issue a fake attendance certificate for the fee of, say, CAD 200. No wonder some Roma migrants have come to the conclusion that “one can arrange everything with a bit of cleverness.” As many also said, “even in Canada, people can be corrupted.”

as well as defending the rights of Roma refugees in Canada. While this group's members are highly educated, and well meaning, it does not seem to have much interaction with the uneducated Roma from Borsod.

What is common to all the Hungarian Roma migrant groups in Canada, independent of their various social statuses and educational levels, is that – when it comes to the Canadian political discourse – they are all lumped together as ‘bogus refugees’. This loaded title is used freely, despite the fact that most Hungarian Roma refugees, educated or uneducated, have fled from ethnic discrimination in their home country, experienced on the labor market, in the schools, and in the health care system.

Although almost all Hungarian Roma migrants consider themselves ‘real refugees’ on the basis of their everyday discrimination and stigmatization in their home country, it is worth investigating on what basis a refugee claim may be considered ‘justified’ according to the law.

The rough definition of a ‘Convention refugee’ is a “person in need of protection.” This protection can be necessary for many reasons, including protection against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 1 of Immigration and Refugee Protection Act).¹¹⁴

All the way up to December 2011, when the new immigration law was introduced, refugee claimants (in our case, the Hungarian Roma person or family) had approximately one year from arrival to prove that he or she is a Convention Refugee and/or that their sending country poses a “risk to life or a risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment and/or a danger of torture, all within the meaning of sections 96 and 97(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act” (IRPA).

If we take this text literally, we might conclude that many Roma migrants in Canada cannot be regarded as ‘conventional refugees’. However, if we listen to the stories told by those Roma who are able to articulate their feelings about what it means to be a Gypsy in present day Hungary, we

114 As presented in the official letter from the authorities addressed to my host family in Toronto. During my stay, they were summoned to appear at a scheduling conference to fix a date for their refugee claim hearing. This is the kind of letter that all Roma migrants dread getting. For, in most cases, it means that - in a maximum of three to six months - the family will be sent back home.

might stop for a minute to consider what the terminology defined in the article above ought to cover.

Some refugees decided to flee from Hungary for political reasons. Some migrated to escape the ill natured, anti-gypsy social milieu which has caused some of their children to suffer from psychological troubles, including post-traumatic stress disorder related to past anti-Gypsy attacks against them. One woman had this story to tell:

“A Canadian can’t grasp it, that’s fine, there might not be a life threatening situation, however, there are sometimes, but there are generations who have to grow up with the recognition that you are second rate, inferior, you don’t count as a human being...For goodness sake, I bleached my skin, almost my entire life, to whiten it. I always bleached my hair and never dared to wear as colorful a flower-patterned blazer as I’m wearing now. For, I thought it “looks Gypsy” (in Hungarian: “cigányos”). Now, here in Toronto, I started to grow my hair long, even putting in black hair extensions and wearing what I want to wear. For the first time ever in my life I feel free. I don’t know what’s gonna happen to us, I fear. I do not want to go home. If I need to, I’d rather get married [in Canada]”.

Even those less-educated Roma migrants who couldn’t articulate their experiences as ‘Gypsies’ quite as eloquently as the above-cited degree-holding Roma woman have expressed similar reasons for emigrating. When asked about their ‘story’ (the reasons why they fled from Hungary which they must present at their refugee claim hearing), all our informants and survey respondents stated the same factors: poverty, unemployment, and racism (or, as many described it, a “hatred” for the Roma). They almost all had a personal account of various everyday humiliations faced based on their ‘visible’ Roma characteristics or origins (i.e. their dark skin color). Many reported racial discrimination on the part of a potential employer. The most prevalent story was the accounts of being turned down for a job because they were Roma; the job would go to a Hungarian:

“They told me on the phone that I could go for the job interview in an hour. By the time I arrived, they just had a glance at me and said the job is filled. It was enough for them to see my dark skin.”

Another frequent account is of bullying or abuse of Roma children at school or in kindergarten on the basis of their ethnicity. More than one woman told me a story akin to the following:

“I had an incident with my little son [which demonstrates this abuse]: many years ago, the nursery teacher scrubbed his little elbows and his knees, until they were almost bleeding, because she thought they were dirty.” Another experience Roma parents commonly recall is that their children were excluded in the nursery by the Hungarian kids who do not want to play with the ‘black’ ones.

Also, in almost all accounts, refugees mention some threatening incidents in which they had an encounter with a far-right vigilante group called the Hungarian Guard (Magyar Gárda), a paramilitary organization in Hungary, which is very active in Borsod County, especially in Miskolc, where the majority of the Roma migrants come from.¹¹⁵ Many recalled frightening memories of the period when the serial murders against Roma families took place (2008-2009). Those who came from rural Gypsy colonies, usually located on the outskirts of the settlement, reported ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’ in their children, conditions, for instance, induced merely by hearing a motorcycle approaching the Gypsy colony after twilight.¹¹⁶

115 The Hungarian Guard (Magyar Garda) is a semi-illegal paramilitary organization with clear ties to of the third biggest Hungarian political party, the far-right Jobbik Party. The Guard has several thousand self-appointed members who undertake, from time to time, law enforcement in their community (or other people’s communities) without legal authority. Their reasoning is that if the legal authorities can’t handle the “Gypsy problem” (sometimes they formulate it as the “Gypsy crime”), then they will sort it out for the sake of the (Hungarian) community members.

116 A common attack method, usually committed by young men on motorcycles, is to firebomb Roma families’ homes on the outskirts of the Gypsy colonies.

The Roma migrants' conviction that "nothing good can be expected by going home" was reinforced, for example, after they heard about the latest anti-Gypsy demonstration led by the Guard in Miskolc.¹¹⁷ Their transnational migration network, which has been functioning brilliantly and effectively thanks to newly available Internet tools, allows them access to updated information about what is happening at home with families, friends, and neighbors.¹¹⁸ The Roma migrants hear from relatives at home about the not-so-public slogans of the Guard in Miskolc, private (but public) statements like: "All Gypsies should be turned into soap" or "One should make Gypsy stew¹¹⁹ out of them" (instead of letting them come home from Canada and resettle).

However, this transatlantic migration seems to be a temporary social process. Our preliminary results show that the average duration of a stay in Canada for our respondents was fourteen months. Most of the Roma families were forced to come home after their refugee claims were rejected. Many decided to return to Hungary of their own free will after their friends or families were refused residency. Some came home even before their hearing process would have taken place due to homesickness, a serious illness, an urgent need to care for elderly parents, or just because they "had enough."

However, the majority of them were forced to return home once the Immigration and Refugee Board rejected their claims for refugee status.

117 On 17th October, 2012.

118 My host Roma family told me many times while I was with them in Toronto that they couldn't have moved so far from their home and families if they could not have managed to communicate with them every day via the internet. Whilst I was there, they started every single morning to switch on the computer, which every family in Toronto possesses. After greeting their families at home in Hungary, they exchanged the latest news about everyday life in Toronto and back at home. Occasionally, they even asked grandparents to look after their small children via the Skype camera while they popped out for a quick shopping trip. The very next day after I had left Toronto, and went to carry on the research in a Gypsy settlement near Miskolc, almost everybody there knew from their relatives in Toronto that I was "okay," and that I would not cause any trouble to them if they spoke to me about their migration experiences.

119 A play on words using the name of a (delicious) Hungarian dish of fried pork cutlets. The recipe has nothing to do with Gypsies, in fact.

The recent change in the Canadian Immigration Policy is a good example of the theory that migration is as much about state policies as it is about the mobility of people (Black et al., 2006). The mass migration of poor Hungarians, Roma or non-Roma (all declaring themselves Roma in front of the Canadian authorities), and the saturation effect it caused, resulted in a declaration by the Canadian Immigration Minister, Jason Kenney, that the Roma from Eastern Europe are “bogus refugees” and a national security threat. Kenney promoted the introduction of Bill C31, intended to protect the country against the mass migration of these “bogus refugees” from Eastern Europe who he contended “were economic migrants coming to take advantage of the generous provision of the Canadian welfare system” (Levine-Rasky, 2012). The new Law entitled “Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act” sorts refugees into ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ groups as Canadian sociologist Levine-Rasky put it. The new law was to designate some countries as ‘safe’ – to which refugees may be returned – in contrast to those that are not. On the list of the Designated Countries of Origin (DCO), Hungary (alongside with the Czech Republic and Slovakia) appears as a safe country. Accordingly, since the enforcement of the new Act in December 2012, refugees from Hungary are taken as ‘irregular arrivals’ and are not entitled to any provision from the state.

Although this latest ‘new phase’ in the Canadian migration story once again seems to come to an end for the Hungarian Roma with the introduction of a new regulation by the Canadian government, the (politically) disturbed migration trend seems to have already found its way to other destinations (Cf. Kováts, 2002).¹²⁰ With a knot in their stomachs, many of the Roma refugees in Toronto are now awaiting their official removal letter from the Refugee Board and are already planning to move forward. Some are planning to use their migration network to go to the UK in search of (unskilled) works. Some will come home temporarily, just to save enough money for the next journey, and will travel on either to

120 The political interruption of the social process of migration between the two countries is historically nothing new. A previous example took place in December 2001 when Canada introduced the visa requirement for all Hungarian citizens entering the country.

Germany or to Malta. Malta is a seemingly new target country, where a few Roma have already got their foot in the door of the (informal) service sector, facilitating more relatives and friends to follow in their footsteps. And no wonder: the ‘push factors’ that are the incentives for Roma to migrate out of Hungary (e.g. poverty, unemployment, and racism) are still prevalent, if not worse than before. Many of those who plan to continue to migrate stated almost unanimously that, these days, Hungary “is not a country where people like Gypsies.” At the same time, due to the overwhelmingly good experiences of Canadian Roma migrants, the ‘culture of migration’ (Massey, 1993) – that is, the “culture where migration is considered to be the only way to improve one’s standard of living” (Hearing at al., 2004) – is widely diffused nowadays amongst poor Hungarian Roma from economically disadvantaged regions in Hungary.¹²¹

The life of migrants in Toronto

I would now like to consider the migration stories of two Roma families, both which can be regarded as ‘ideal types’ of the migration process from Hungary to Canada: whilst the first one exemplifies a (so far) ‘success story’; the other one is a prototypical example of unsuccessful or ‘failed migrants’ (cf. Vidra, 2012).

We look first at the ‘success’ story: Turdy (alias Zolika) moved with his family (wife and two young children) from a middle-sized settlement in Borsod County to Toronto in the beginning of 2011. Turdy and his wife are in their early thirties. They belong to the Roma lower-middle class. They have completed primary school (eight years of formal education), one or two years of vocational training, and went on to work for many years in menial labor. Even though they had worked hard doing exhausting, semi-skilled physical jobs, they were not able to earn enough money in the past

121 It is so widely diffused that the Canadian Embassy in Hungary recently initiated a four-week billboard campaign in Miskolc discouraging Roma from seeking asylum in Canada, highlighting the changes to the refugee system. The posters say that unjustified refugee claimants will be deported and sent back home much more rapidly than before. (HVG-online, 20130118/itthon).

few years to be able to support their family or even pay the utility bills necessary for keeping their house up, now in a state of disrepair.

After a few years, Turdy reached a stage in his and his family's life where he was fed up with their destitute economic situation. At the same time, both he and his wife's parents died, freeing them of the obligations related to strong family ties (Granovetter, 1987). Freedom, though gained within sad circumstances, still facilitated their free movement.¹²²

“Just think of it: I work day and night, me and my wife, too. [One day] I had a craving for canned Sardines. And my wife says to me, ‘do not buy them, Turdy,’ for every penny has its place (in the household budget). Then I sat in my car and thought about it: you work hard and you can’t even buy a 300 forint (CAN 1.2) can of sardines. And you have, every single month, an outstanding (utility) bill. And these bills are just piling up. Right then and there, I just decided to try [to move to] Canada. I didn’t see other way out [of the poverty]. It was just after my father, and Kate’s (his wife) parents died, too. You ask us ‘why [we came] Canada [and not somewhere else]?’ I came here because they (his migrant friends already in Toronto) said: ‘Canada is good money.’ They said, ‘you could save up a hundred thousand (forints, around \$400) in a month from your welfare [check].’ And I needed one million forints (\$4,000) to get my house done [renovated, back in Hungary]. So, I tried and came here.”

Turdy's motivation for migration was clearly economically motivated: his goal was to get his family out of poverty. He hoped to not only to have a better livelihood temporarily, in their new home in Canada, but also to save enough money so that they could one day return to Hungary. In fact, practically none of the Roma migrants I met in Toronto planned to leave their home country, Hungary, forever. They saw migration as a temporary

122 Also see Portes (2010) on the downsides of social capital. As Portes states, one of the negative consequences of social capital (in terms of one's strong social ties with kin) is that it restricts individual freedom.

economic strategy worth investing into in order to get out of poverty (cf. Stark, 1991): A poverty both caused and exasperated not only by unequal access to social, economic, and political resources (unequal opportunities in education and employment) but also by mainstream anti-Gypsyism in Hungarian society.

Turdy also had clear political motivations for migrating, too: to escape the widespread, everyday experience of ethnic discrimination against Gypsies in Hungary. Not just Turdy, but also almost everyone I spoke to mentioned, when I asked about leaving Hungary, that “it is not good to be Gypsy in Hungary.”

After brooding over his hopeless, destitute economic and social situation at home, Turdy decided to invest in the process of migration. He sold the family car, used up all his wife’s severance pay, and even borrowed some money from close family members to buy airplane tickets for his family of four: he, his wife, and their two children.

His migration network strongly facilitated this transatlantic move. Migrant friends and family provided information about life in Canada and gave the useful tips and tricks as to how to make ‘quick money’. Additionally, his network actually provided accommodation for him and his family in the first period after his arrival to Canada. The ‘transnational migration network’ (Hajnal, 2002; see also Lewitt, 2001; Portes, 2010) is the strongest facilitator of Roma migration: not only by disseminating the ‘culture of migration’, but also by reducing the cost of migration.

Let us listen to Turdy’s own account:

“You come here [to Toronto] and you don’t have any money on you. And you need money for everything. Your first three months go by, as you save up every penny and you just manage to eat. I swear to you, that is how it is. We came out here, another family, a friend of ours put us up, but not for free. Nothing here is free! Our first welfare [benefits] went to this family who gave us shelter. While we were living with them, we didn’t have a penny. We gave our welfare to them for putting us up. When we came here, it was winter; the days were so cold

that you couldn't even go out on the street, 'cos you didn't have (proper) clothes for it. I managed to buy my first (winter) hat after the second month - for five dollars."

One of the central features of this migration network is the principle of reciprocity regarding all social practices or business conducted amongst its members. This network – a source of social capital for those who belong to it – can be seen as a web of mutual obligations according to a code of norms, with reciprocity at the center: A web of “social chits” in which its members provide different kinds of ‘help’ (access to scarce resources) to other members in need with the expectation that these favors will be fully repaid sometime in the future (Portes, 2010). The writer Paulo Coelho (2005) coined the phrase “favor bank” in one of his novels: a system, he says, that governs most of our lives. In what way, you ask? We can say, rather significantly, since those who have not accumulated any ‘social chits’, any obligation or favors to be returned from the other members of this transnational migration network, are resource less during the process of migration. Either they will not be able to migrate, despite their desire to do so, or they might be the ‘losers’ in the migration process, an ‘unsuccessful migrant’, as we will soon observe in our second, ‘ideal typical’ migration story about Esther, a mother of four from a Gypsy colony near Miskolc.

Another main cost-reducing factor for poor, lower-educated Hungarian migrants in Canada is the affluence and openness of the Canadian society. Many Canadian families dump their abundant superfluity in the bins back home – goods that will no longer be needed in their new households. On the streets of richer neighborhoods in Toronto, one can find almost everything what one needs to start a new life: second hand furniture, cutlery, old and (even sometimes) new clothes. Occasionally, one can even find treasure boxes filled with antique jewelry and watches. These consumer goods or products are in such good condition that not only poorer Roma (and non-Roma) but also better-off, educated, upper-middle class new Roma immigrants will use them to start their new life in Canada – with almost no initial costs, one can begin again.

During one of our many conversations in Toronto, Turdy once said to me:

“Here, you become a millionaire in no time. In three months you can start a completely new life. Back at home, a whole life is not enough to start up a new life. I’m telling you, you come here [to Toronto] and you have nothing: no fork, no knife, no spoon, no carpet, nothing. In three months, you have a flat and everything. You have a full life. ‘Cos it’s a full life for me (in Hungarian, “fullosan élek”). Here, all my clothes come from the garbage. I have trousers, t-shirts, and shoes for the kids – everything from the garbage. Here the rubbish bin (garbage can) is like the “Chinese market” at home. Indeed, it is even better here - you find designer clothes in the garbage, not only those ‘made in China’ [poor quality garments].”

‘A full life’ or a ‘millionaire’s life’ (in Hungarian: “fullos élet”) for the Hungarian Gypsies from Borsod County means when the basic needs, plus a bit more, are met: one has everything that he/she wishes for his or her family: enough food, clothes to wear, a furnished flat, a television, and even a second hand car. For migrant Gypsies, having these things means satisfaction with their lives.

Migration and the informal economy

What factors enable somebody to become a successful, or fortunate, migrant in Canada? It is common knowledge in the Hungarian (Gypsy and non-Gypsy) migrant communities that one cannot make a living from receiving welfare exclusively – not even in Canada. Therefore, the key to success is to make some ‘quick money’ on top of the welfare allowance. There are many ways of achieving this end: all you need is ‘cleverness’ or ‘craftiness’, as many informants put it. In this respect, the only difference between the Gypsy and non-Gypsy migrants is that, while the Gypsies will celebrate their ‘cunningness’ or ‘craftiness’ (i.e. the art of navigating the informal

economy, which needs both skill and a special personal quality (Pulay, 2012)) aloud, non-Gypsies seem to keep quiet about it (cf. Stewart, 1993). The latter also conduct their 'small informal businesses' and employ their own 'small cleverness' to acquire quick money, but, unlike their Gypsy comrades, they do not speak about it publicly. The scale of these crafty 'businesses', as they call them, is wide: ranging from the most innocent informal economic activity like scrap metal collection, to more fraudulent activities like acquiring extra state benefits on top of their welfare allowances (i.e. state supported 'dietary allowances') or even illegal enterprises like credit fraud.

I would like to clarify at this point that I interpret the economic practice of 'cunning' or 'crafty' business amongst Hungarian welfare-dependent migrants in the theoretical framework of informal economy. According to the official definition, as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO), informal economic activities are those practices that generate income but fail to be registered by the relevant authorities and, thus, avoid taxes (Kim, 2005). In the case of our refugee migrants, collecting scrap metal is such an activity, since it is a kind of unregistered self-employment. Economic anthropologist Keith Hart, who coined the term 'informal economy' and applied it basically to self-employed, informal workers (in contradiction to wage-earning employment) in African urban settings, has emphasized the dynamics and diversity of these activities (Hart, 1973).

At the same time, economic sociologists stress that there is a universal character to informal economy, noting its 'cushioning affect' in advanced countries in relation to the marginal segments of societies – a sector that would otherwise have meager access or be completely deprived of subsistence. Therefore, societies would be politically less peaceful without informal economy's income generating opportunities (Portes, 2010). Portes also points out that combining welfare with off-the-books temporary work has become a 'way of life' for many marginalized groups all over the world (cf. MacDonald, 1994). The Hungarian migrant (Gypsy and non-Gypsy) welfare claimants are just one of many examples of this practice. While, it is not my intention here to detail how these 'crafty businesses' are practiced, I would like to emphasize that, according to the Gypsies I lived together

with in Toronto (non-Gypsies refused to discuss their informal economic practices with me), the ‘crafty businesses’ they are engaged in are, by definition, victimless. Indeed, in their minds, such a business can only be called ‘clever’ or ‘crafty’ if it provides them with quick money but does not hurt anybody. One informant defined it like this:

“What do I call cleverness?! When everybody makes his own business, makes money of it, but still can be restful in his sleep.”

When we say practices that do not hurt ‘anybody’, in this context we mean does not hurt ‘any individual person’ who has a ‘face’. As these ‘businessmen’ see it, the state (any state), is a faceless entity (Hajnal, 2002; Horvath, 2001), therefore, it is not vicious to rip it off. A good example here is the case of the ‘diet money’. In Canada, people with special dietary needs are entitled to an extra social provision called ‘diet money’. The maximum allowance per person per month is \$250 – almost half of one’s monthly welfare allowance. To acquire diet money, one need only find a mediator, a key agent in the migration industry. The mediator is usually a more established Gypsy migrant, who will take the client to a Canadian doctor who provides him with the necessary medical certificate of ‘having special dietary need’. It costs approximately \$100, out of which the Canadian doctor gets fifty dollars. It is a good business for everybody, except the state.

Some people may feel that the way of life described above is nothing to brag about and might wonder why low-educated Roma would actually celebrate their ‘cleverness’ or ‘cunningness’ so openly and proudly. Why, for instance, would they celebrate having to make a living on the informal economy? This ‘cleverness’ is indeed something they are proud of. For low-educated people, as the vast majority of the new Roma migrants in Canada are, finding a regular, stable job on the formal labor market with which they can support a family is almost impossible. If they are lucky, they can be offered unregistered work, but this is usually unstable and badly paid. Still, some Roma migrants in Toronto were employed (still unreported) in jobs. Frequently, the businesses are owned by well-established Canadian citizens of Hungarian decent who were once migrants themselves. However, the

jobs are always in menial labor; for instance, packing at factories or working in construction. Due to their unreported nature, these jobs are neither safe nor long lasting: they never last over three or four months. Additionally, it is common for workers to get less money than they were promised for the work. It is no wonder that they prefer more 'calculable' economic activities that promise 'quick money'. In the survey that we carried out in Toronto amongst Hungarian migrants, everybody who had arrived in the last two to three years had the same answer to the question about their means of livelihood: "*We get welfare benefits and, on top of that, the men collect scrap metal.*" They told us that one can earn \$700 (HUF 160,000) a month if one is "clever" or "good at" it. In this case, cleverness means that he has the skills to differentiate valuable scrap metal from cheaper varieties and is able to sell it to the scrap yard. A good scrapper has a good knowledge of public spaces and knows where one can find quantities of good quality scrap metal on the city streets. One also has to be industrious enough to be able to find enough scrap metal per day, given the growing competition as an increasing number of migrants arrive on the scene.

Migrants consider their scrap iron collecting and garbage rummaging activities "work" and accordingly construct their identity as (informal) migrant workers around this work. Their economic and social practices are very similar to other informal workers. For example, one can draw parallels with Brazilian catadores, who collect and sell recyclable materials at garbage dumps in Rio de Janeiro (Miller, 2009). In the context of the officially unemployed, welfare dependent Hungarian migrants in Canada, I would concur with Miller and Perelman (2007) that we should "integrate poverty studies and the anthropology of work" (Millar, 2009: 26) as well as conceptualizing informal labor as a form of work, rather than framing the activities of the poor and officially unemployed as survival strategies of those members of society on the margin. Within such a context, we can indeed consider the refugee migration process that is experienced by the Hungarian Roma (and non-Roma) a form of labor migration.

As demonstrated above, migrating to Canada is only a good strategy if someone can make use of the opportunities provided by the refugee provision

system, as well as the formal and informal economy, ‘cleverly’. ‘Cleverness’ or cunning means finding economic opportunities that produce ‘quick money’. Although this quick money is accrued mainly through borderline informal (in that they are unreported) economic activities (collecting scrap metal or returning recycling bottles to supermarkets), sometimes they cross the line of illegal businesses. A common example of this is credit fraud.

In Canada a refugee is a solvent, creditable person. They even get their welfare allowance by credit card. Low-educated migrants who have never before experienced the advantages and disadvantages of an advanced economy’s financial culture have quickly learnt through their migrant friends that “*in Canada, credit is the essence. Refugees become millionaires from credit.*”

For example, according to some, it is one sort of ‘cleverness’ to buy a valuable mobile phone with a monthly contract using their credit card, even if they have little money at the moment of their purchase. Resale of the phone to another person will yield quick money and be economic success for many. The fact that they have to pay installments at a high interest rate is a matter for the future – a future where they may not even be in Canada.

The problem for these ‘businesses’ with the quick money made from illegal activities within the informal economy is that it is restricted to that short period of time until the formal economic institutions (banks, mobile phone companies, etc.) find out that they are being ‘ripped off’.¹²³ This realization may take some time, but it definitely comes sooner or later. Although formerly it could be said it was worth the risk: as one of the previous Roma migrants put it, “this country is not clever yet, there’s still time to be craftier” (Hajnal, 2002). These days, Canadian institutions have wised up to these practices. As hundreds of new migrants, rather than just a few, try their luck with these strategies, it becomes increasingly obvious what and how they are doing it and institutions will catch up with and put an end to it. Nowadays, due to the saturation effect, there are not many banks that would give a credit card to a new Hungarian refugee.

123 According to contemporary definitions, illegal economy “encompasses the production and distribution of legally prohibited goods and services” (Portes, 2010: 133). This includes activities such as credit fraud.

This saturation effect has also led to the creation of the “making of the Hungarian refugee” as a problem in Canada. Contrary to the situation in Western Europe, where researchers have aptly described the ethnicization of a migrant group: e.g. the formation of the phenomenon of “making of the Roma/Gypsies” from all the Slovakian migrants in the UK (Grill, 2012), we can witness in Canada the “nationalization” of all refugees from Hungary. Paradoxically, those who have been stigmatized at home on the basis of their ethnicity, now have to struggle with the stigma of their nationality. A Roma migrant woman happily wrote about it on Facebook shortly after her arrival a year ago. She said that, for the first time ever in her life, she feels free: *“my skin color is not my scarlet letter (the basis for being stigmatized) anymore.”* The catch 22, however, is that she now has to suffer from bearing the label of being a Hungarian refugee. In response, she decided to change her identity strategy by actually using her - now beneficial - skin color: *“I’d rather [tell people I am] Italian or Greek, than admit to being a Hungarian.”*

In this context, it is also understandable why those more affluent Roma musicians from Hungary who migrated some time ago and are now Canadian citizens are reluctant to speak Hungarian in public spaces. They do not interact with Roma who have recently migrated (except if they are ‘decent families’) and do not live in the same building as them. In fact, even the more established, middle-lower class Roma migrants look down upon those of their poor, lower-class, uneducated brethren who have most recently migrated.

Once again, we can observe here the same logic inherent in all the Established-Outsiders relationships that we analyzed earlier. We see how the established migrants stigmatize the newcomer migrants, labeling them as “know-nothings”, “untalented”, “different way-of-thinking” people. All the while, the newcomers represent a threat to them, too: they will downgrade the whole Hungarian migrant community’s image in the mainstream society’s eyes – especially for the Gypsy community, an already stigmatized group. Therefore, the Established feels it necessary to constantly make distinctions and differentiate between their own group and the others, marking them as inferior and with less human worth (Elias, 1994).

Turdy's opinion about his fellow Gypsy migrants in Toronto demonstrates this logic well:

“The problem is that these newcomer Gypsies have ruined our good reputation...I've been thinking about it a lot...I bet the only solution could be if someone, a well-educated Gadjo¹²⁴, would select the normal [Gypsies]. Those like me...or Caspar¹²⁵ – the ones who want to break out of poverty, of stigmatization. One should select the normal Gypsies according to cleverness, education, and attitude. Then I would separate them from the worse Gypsies. You know, those whom you can decide at the first sight that [they] can't think of anything else but roguish [criminal behavior]. I would lock up these worse ones and let them live in their own, separated environment. And then we can see what the Hungarians think of the Gypsies?! [I would say to the Hungarians] ‘You judge them, but don't judge me!’ Only in this way I could stick to myself. Otherwise, the whole situation is hopeless.”

The established Roma migrants blame the newcomers for causing their situation to deteriorate in regards to every aspect of life in Canada. It is not only that they are no longer able to get credit: almost all other money making opportunities will eventually cease due to this latest mass migration of the new Roma migrants. Even collecting scrap metal has become harder since summer 2012. This was the point at which Canadian authorities themselves became ‘craftier’: they borrowed Hungarian-speaking policemen from Hungary to get the Roma out of the practice of scrap metal collecting.

A scrapper shared his experience with this change in affairs:

“Nowadays, there is a Hungarian policeman in every police car. The Hungarian policeman says to you (in your own language), ‘My Brother, what are you doing here, collecting scrap metal?!’

124 A non-Gypsy

125 My co-worker, who asked me to call him ‘Caspar Iron’ (in Hungarian ‘Vasas Gazsi’) in this text to retain his anonymity.

One of these kinds stopped my brother the other day. My brother answered that 'I'm only picking up rubbish from the street, why, is it not allowed?!' Then the policeman told him it was not. My brother didn't understand why not: 'I'm not cheating, not stealing, not robbing anyone, so, what's wrong with it - to pick up metal from the street?!' The policeman explained to him that you can't collect metal when you are on welfare. You should pay tax after collecting metal, even at home (in Hungary). Full stop. He even asked for his welfare identification number and arranged to get his welfare money withdrawn for three months. And he was a Hungarian policeman. Yet, I can't be bothered; I'm still going to collect [scrap metal]."

When a newcomer's migration is unsuccessful

According to established migrants, another problem with new migrants, apart from the saturation effect they create in terms of the Canadian informal economic market, is that there are many uneducated Gypsies amongst them who do not even have the 'talent' of 'Gypsy cunningness' and who can only make money through illegal activities. Many established migrants mentioned to me that, after many years of maintaining a friendly relationship with the Hungarian Roma 'metal collectors', nowadays, the Toronto scrap yard even has a little sign posted up on the board saying (in Hungarian) "we don't buy stolen tracks."¹²⁶

Many examples of our second ideal prototype, the 'unsuccessful migrant', can be found within this group of newcomers. Some of them sold

126 During my stay in Toronto, I sometimes visited the scrap yard with my Roma friends. Every time, they were welcome by the friendly greeting: "Szozsi Mo?" (in Romani: "How are you doing?"). When I asked the yard's workers about their experiences with the Roma, considering their derogatory note (about stolen tracks), mentioned above, they said, "in every nation there are good and bad people, one can't generalize." However, my Roma friends emphasized that, from time to time, although Canadian people have been helpful with them so far, recently, they have started to eye Hungarians suspiciously because of the 'knowing-nothing' newcomers.

all their assets just to buy the plane tickets while others managed to move to Toronto with the ‘help’ of informal moneylenders. There are some illegal (but definitely professional) ‘migration agents’ and some are Hungarian businessmen, whose business practices are catered to address the needs of the uneducated poor. They not only lend money (with an interest rate ranging from twenty-five to a hundred percent) to them, but also arrange to buy their plane tickets and provide them with (bus) transport from Miskolc to the airport – either the one in Budapest or in Vienna. These agents have their own people in Canada, who welcome the migrants upon their arrival in Toronto and begin collecting their monthly welfare allowance (in some cases they simply confiscate the bank card through which all their welfare money is transferred).

Another important agent in the migration industry that specializes in services for the uneducated poor, and who usually does not speak a word of English, is the ‘interpreter’. Interpreters are usually established Hungarian migrants, who claimed and gained their refugee status many years ago and have since become Canadian citizens. Some of them realized that they can make a good livelihood out of this business: the price of a piece of advice or a brief visit to a local Canadian doctor or other administrative office goes for between \$20-50 (or, as the Hungarian Roma always convert into Hungarian forints, HUF 5,000-12,500).¹²⁷ However, there is also a subgroup of interpreters (especially amongst the older generation of the Hungarian migrants who became Canadian citizens a long time ago) who have taken it on as their ‘mission’ to help defenseless, low-educated Roma migrants (Vidra, personal communication).

The disadvantage of having an interpreter’s help became obvious during my fieldwork. For the low-educated Roma, lacking cultural capital (formal education and a working knowledge of English), their interpreter becomes their ‘Lord’, the one whose local knowledge and organizational

127 The migrant Roma, who mostly have no more than eight years of schooling on average, prove to be brilliant mental mathematicians. Their everyday practice of converting all the Canadian prices into Hungarian forints suggests that, although living abroad, they are still very ‘Hungarian’ and their main aspiration is to save up enough money to facilitate a better life when they return to Hungary.

skills determine their 'life and death'. They can become so dependent and become so accustomed to being ripped off by their interpreter that, after some time, they cannot even recognize it anymore. The incident described below demonstrates this situation quite well.

One day, my Gypsy host family and I went off on a trip to the Niagara Falls, a sixty-kilometer drive from Toronto. Finding our way from the city to the motorway proved to be tricky, so, we thought we had got lost. Turdy's automatic reaction was to instruct his wife: "*Let's call Ani¹²⁸, right now, and ask her how to get to the motorway.*" This short phone call would have cost him twenty dollars, but it would cost Ani, their otherwise helpful interpreter, only two minutes of her time.¹²⁹

This incident is only a tiny illustration of how defenseless migrants can be without speaking the language of their host country and how they have to live at the mercy of their interpreters. This defenselessness applies to many aspects of everyday life in Toronto: from the visit to the welfare office, where a good translator can easily arrange some extra provisions for the Roma refugee, to seeing a doctor, arranging one's driving license or the most important event in a migrant Gypsy's life, the legal hearing. Here, even a mistranslated word can change the outcome of the judgment of his/her refugee claim.

For the majority of Roma migrants, Canada is – or was – a good experience: Canada means a "*full life*", a "*Canaan, regarding food*". (That is to say, as many of them put it, "*you can eat as much as you want here, unlike at home.*") For other migrants, moving to Canada proved to be a bad idea, an unsuccessful turn of events, given the outcome of their migration experience. Although, according to our survey, this 'unsuccessful' group makes up approximately no more than 10% of all migrants, their experience is not without a cautionary message.¹³⁰

128 Their interpreter

129 After a few minutes, my Gypsy co-worker and I managed to convince Turdy that, rather than calling Ani, we could just stop and check the route on the map that we bought on our arrival. Finally, we found our way to the falls and saved twenty dollars for the day.

130 We asked the following question in our survey: "Do you consider your move to Canada a good or a bad experience; do you have a good or a bad memory of Canada?" I consider migrants 'unsuccessful' if they said that Canada was a bad experience for them.

Esther's case is a good illustration of the 'unsuccessful' migration in this group. Esther left Petersland in February 2010 with her husband and four children. She left the settlement in Hungary with twenty other Gypsy families.

"The whole plane was full of us Gypsies. The previous flight was all Gypsies, too. We went on the same bus from Petersland to the airport in Budapest, but we were not allowed to speak to each other: not on the bus, nor on the plane, either. All us Gypsies told the same story when they arrived to Toronto; that we fled from the Guard. It was silly and they didn't swallow it. You want the honest truth? We all went because we were penniless."

According to Esther, they were 'coaxed' to migrate, persuaded to make the move by relatives and neighbors from the settlement who had just come back from Canada, saying that it was 'Canaan' and, of course, by moneylenders who lent them the money for their plane tickets.

Esther's biggest hope was to "make some money" out there in Toronto and to "have a better life." Instead, she ended up living in a big block of flats, the West Lodge, where almost all the Gypsies from Petersland lived at that time. Some of them were luckier than Esther. Esther's rented flat was full of bed bugs. One of her adolescent sons' legs was so badly bitten that he needed several months of medical treatment for the bed bugs after their return to Miskolc. However, the main reason Esther decided to go home was the drug issue. Her boys, both in their late teens, had such easy access to marijuana and other drugs and hung around with such dangerous gangs that Esther started to fear for their lives. They did not go to school. As the boys themselves said: *"We were afraid of the niggers there."*

So, after five months, Esther decided that it was better to move the family back home, although, to date, she has yet to pay back her debt (with significant interest) to the local (informal) moneylender.

What Canada means to Esther, looking back after one year after returning home, is very different from the experiences had by more successful migrants:

“It was not a good experience for me. It’s better for me to be at home. What comes to my mind regarding Canada? That building, the stink, drugs. The people there are out of their minds; they go there to rip each other off. We didn’t bother with anybody though; my husband went to do ‘garbage’ [rummaging] and I was at home with the children and didn’t really go anywhere. I planned to stay there for one year, however, I couldn’t bear to be locked up and [I had] all the worries about the boys. They were so spaced out; they could get drugs so cheap. At home, at least they have to work to be able to buy it. But out there, everything came so easy for them. It got dangerous, so I decided to take them home.”

The above Roma Canadian migration story can also be read as a metaphor of how the habitus of the poor Gypsy survives residential changes, whether a transnational movement or just an intra-country migration. Due to a lack of (even weak) ties within the receiving country’s community, Roma migrants coming from Petersland, a rural settlement near Miskolc with a significant local Roma population, they continue to live in Toronto almost identically to how they did in their Gypsy community back home. They created an ethnic enclave in the heart of the metropolis by once again ending up in residentially clustered neighborhoods. This area was once a flourishing neighborhood in Toronto (at least, according to the established migrants) but has now, in the last two years, been turned into ethnic enclaves of the Hungarian Gypsies. West Lodge, the infamous block of flats where Esther and her family once lived, accommodates almost five hundred Roma families. Everyone lives off of social welfare. It gained its reputation as “infamous” by the media, the established migrants, and by the police who all dubbed it a “dangerous place.” Before I went there myself in order to visit some Roma migrant families whom I got to know through an interpreter friend of mine in Toronto, even my host family, Turdy, and his friends warned me: *“You should not go there, that is a dangerous place, a ghetto, they will kill you there.”* This reaction struck me as ironic since it is a typical stigmatization of many urban slums, some Gypsy villages in

Hungary, and all over the world. Yet, admittedly, it is a stigmatization that gains power partly from the reality that, among the dwellers of these slums, drug addicts also live here.

Nowadays, the majority of the tenants come from the same rural settlement in Hungary: Petersland. This is partly because Canadian landlords are not willing to rent out flats to Hungarian refugees anymore – only in West Lodge. On the other hand, people from Petersland, who do not speak English, do not feel safe anywhere except amongst each other. This is how the ‘red belt’ of Toronto came to be created in the past few years.

In West Lodge, one can observe pastimes from rural life in Petersland’s Gypsy colony. Youngsters on drugs crowd the entrance lobby queuing up for (and obstructing others from) the elevator. Crying babies in buggies cram the upper corridors. Women offer tit-bits of their

cooking to their next-door neighbors; the time of day, mid-afternoon or ten o’clock at night, does not seem to matter. The vibrant life of the Hungarian rural Gypsy colony has been recreated. Non-Gypsy neighbors (mostly Asian or Canadian welfare recipients) complain to the local authorities about the “unbearable amount of noise” coming from their new Gypsy neighbors’ apartments. They say they also find the ‘rural’ Gypsy colony lifestyle intimidating.¹³¹ However, there is a mutual fear of the ‘other’ within the West Lodge neighborhood; non-Roma, Canadians feel unsafe with their Roma neighbors, but also the Roma themselves are scared of the ‘others’ that live amongst them (‘niggers’,¹³² drug addicts, etc.)

131 It is a commonly observed conflict in Europe, too, within neighborhoods comprising of Roma and non-Roma migrants. One of the reasons for the conflict is, as Grill put it, that “the Roma sense and use of public space does not fit in easily with local practices.” For the Hungarian Roma migrant coming from a rural Gypsy colony, spending leisure time in the lobby or in the public corridor of the block of flats, even at late hours, is “simply part of their daily habitual sociability, but it is also a practice that makes them highly distinctive” and even an “unwelcome, intimidating sight” in the eyes of their non-Roma neighbors. (Grill, 2012: 46).

132 Migrant Gypsies call the Afro-Americans ‘nigger’ (in Hungarian: ‘Feka’), and they are scared of them since they believe many of them are involved in drug traffic.

Class-related or ethnicity-related migration?

This new migration pattern to Canada seems to be more class-related than ethno-culturally defined. That is, it is not at all specific to the Roma. In fact, we met many Hungarian (non-Roma) migrants in Toronto who come from Miskolc, or other cities, and who are only claiming to be Roma to be entitled to the refugee status. 'Switching ethnicity' is a beneficial economic strategy for migrants coming from Hungary to Canada. One of the entries in my Roma co-workers fieldwork diary goes like this:

"I met with an interesting thing today: Hungarian people from Hungary who are not Roma. I asked them how come they are here. They didn't want to answer. Then one of them said: 'It is better to be a Gypsy in Canada than a Hungarian in Hungary. But if they force me to go home, I'll be Hungarian again; I will not want to hear from the Gypsies then.' I think it is disgusting, tasteless. I'm sending my word to the members of Jobbik [a right wing political party with ties to the Magyar Garda], that they should filter out these people who declare themselves Gypsy in Canada and then upon returning home, join the Hungarian Guard. I have to laugh."

These two-faced Hungarian migrants typically did not want to answer our survey questions, or even talked to us, even briefly. They seemed to have something to hide.

However, of the Hungarian non-Roma refugees, originating from all over Hungary, we have met some who had frequent interaction with the Roma migrant community. Not only did their Hungarian children play happily with their Roma migrant friends, living in the same block of flats in Toronto, but also there were examples of 'mixed marriages' among young Hungarian men and Gypsy women – a social relationship that is far from commonplace in Hungary these days.

I have chosen to include the story of one Hungarian young man from this latter group. Although this migrant group deserves much more thorough research in the future, based on the ethnographic experience I

gained both in Toronto and Miskolc, I believe his story to be in some way a kind of typical narrative for this group.

Robi is in his mid-thirties. He used to live in one of Miskolc's better housing estates, the third block of Avas. Since it is an ethnically mixed part of the city, he had not only Hungarian but also Roma friends, too. Regarding his family circumstances and social status, his life didn't differ too much from the Roma living in Avas. However, his life got off to an unfortunate start as his father died when he was six years old and his mother then went on to have nine children from three different fathers.

Regarding his social status, he was in the same position as many of his Gypsy friends in the city: he had eleven years of schooling with vocational training in the construction industry. He never worked as wage laborer. He enjoyed autonomy and worked as a self-employed peddler. He recently became unemployed, as his business fell apart. He moved to Toronto two years ago with his sister, after his cousin coaxed them to leave Hungary; first migrating to the UK and then, when that did not prove to work out, to Canada.

When I asked him about his ethnic affiliation, he tried to avoid the answer jokingly: *"I don't know. You should ask my mum."* However, his Roma girlfriend did not leave room for doubt about his ethnicity:

"Why do you always have to joke?! Just look at him, how white he is. There is no one who would say you could be a Gypsy. You know how it is: one recognizes it immediately who is Gypsy. Not only his family members but also all his friends are Hungarian," she asserted.

After a while it became quite obvious that Robi was only reluctant to admit in front of me that he used the opportunity to identify himself as Roma in Canada merely for the sake of the refugee status.

Later on, in the course of our long conversation, it became clear that he considers himself a non-Roma Hungarian: somebody who has a higher social status than his Roma girlfriend and her other Gypsy friends. This sense of status is confirmed by a Hungarian ethnic identity that is not stigmatized and by his Hungarian friends, who all have a higher social status.

However, it is important to reiterate that, despite the fact we have focused here on a description of the new wave of migration as a mass outmigration of lower-class, poor, low-educated Roma (and non-Roma) families, there is no exclusive homogeneous stream of migrants coming to Toronto. Some highly educated, relatively well-off Roma intellectuals have also recently moved to Canada. A few of them have even publicly demonstrated their well-grounded reasons for leaving their anti-Gypsy home country behind.

What awaits Gypsies when they return home from “doing Canada”? (in Hungarian: Kanadázó cigányok)

We mentioned previously how greatly Roma migrants fear receiving their asylum refusal letter. They have good reasons, too. The account below foreshadows the kind of social milieu that welcomes many a migrant Gypsy back in their hometown, after returning to Miskolc.

One evening, a van carrying an extended Roma family and their friends back to Toronto from Niagara Falls, was knocked off the motorway by a lorry. The lorry did a hit and run, leaving behind the broken van. As a result of this accident, an eleven-year old boy died, three adults were put into intensive care at the local hospital and almost all of the passengers had more or less serious injuries. The family had only wanted to see Niagara Falls, a ‘must see’ for almost all Gypsy migrants in Toronto, on their last day in Canada before they were forced to return home to Hungary.

Friends and acquaintances in Hungary heard about the tragic event just hours after it took place via Facebook and by speaking to the family via Internet video calls. What was shocking, was that, even under these tragic circumstances, people from the extreme right (members of the Miskolc Hungarian Guard) felt no shame in posting comments on Facebook, directed towards their Gypsy acquaintances (more accurately, their enemies) from the same settlement, stating that *“it’s a shame that only one of you died”*, and *“should all the fucking Gypsies have passed away in the accident, it would have been better for everybody.”*

This story, although extreme in its callousness, is indicative of the ill-natured social context in which Gypsies and non-Gypsies are forced to endure in Miskolc and of the general political climate, together with its far right local government, that dominates the surrounding settlements. Regardless of their ethnic affiliation, the ruthless remarks of these individuals lacked all human feeling and sympathy for the victims of this road accident. However, if you ask a Gypsy from this area, they would tell you this is the crux of daily life in this region.

Another striking example of this disheartening social milieu is from another settlement near Miskolc. In this case, the local municipal leadership called an exclusive meeting behind closed doors to discuss the ‘issue’ of the returning Roma migrants to the township. According to one of our local informants, the crucial dilemma was whether to welcome back the Roma who have already returned (or were soon to return) from Canada or to try to displace/relocate them somewhere outside the border of the settlement. In the eyes of the local leadership and their followers, excommunicating them would be the best opportunity to get rid of the “*undeserving poor*” who have anyway “*betrayed the Hungarians,*” and ruined “*our country’s good reputation abroad.*” The returnees were also seen as having created an unbearable social burden upon their return, which the local government was not prepared to deal with. As one of the local clerks put it, “*it is proved that they [the Gypsies] are not welcome anywhere in the world, so why should we need to welcome them [back home] to our settlement?!*”

Concluding remarks

While many elements of our research and analysis are still rudimentary in terms of their development, I hope that I was able highlight here some of most important features and patterns that we identified in this latest Roma migration wave to Canada.

For us, the most striking discovery is that this wave appears to feature a new pattern of Roma outmigration from Hungary (cf. Vidra-Virág, 2012). Up until two years ago, only those who possessed either some social

and cultural capital (secondary education or some entrepreneur skill) or economic resources (savings or property) could choose a transnational migration strategy. Yet in the past two to three years, Gypsies (and non-Gypsies) from the lower strata population have also managed to migrate, especially – or mainly – from the most economically and socially backward region of Hungary, Borsod County, known for its vivid anti-Gypsy, racist far right movement. Migrants decided to move not only for economic reasons, but also to flee from a social environment engulfed in hatred against them, a place where being a (visible, that is, black) Gypsy means being the lowest-of-the-low on the social strata and where one can expect to be treated like an inferior, undeserving being; unworthy of assistance or taxpayer's money, unfit for the decent, upright mainstream society, the rightful subject for multifaceted discrimination on the labor market, in education, and in healthcare.

We have also been able to demonstrate how the prevalence of 'professionalized' informal emigration brokers (primarily moneylenders) has recently facilitated migration even for uneducated, lower-class Roma groups with no resources. Out of all the migrants in Toronto, this group is the most defenseless. Not speaking a word of English, they can only manage their migrant life at the mercy of their Hungarian interpreters. With few exceptions, these two agents of the migration industry, the informal travel brokers (money lenders) and the interpreters, can make a good deal of money off the ignorance and neediness of poor, desperate people. The poor and illiterate, serve as a good basis for one's profit-making economic activities – a maxim that holds true not only in terms of Hungary, but also for Canada and everywhere else for that matter (cf. Yasar, 2008).

It is also important to note that, although the culture of migration has spread out widely from the better-off, middle class Roma to the lower-class Gypsies, this minority's very lowest class has still missed even this opportunity. While this is partly because their social networks do not contain migrant members, it is also partly due to their larger family sizes (meanwhile the migrants have around three, they have five or six children on average) (Durst, 2007) and they simply are not able to afford to take

even the first step in the migration process: collecting the money to travel. Another reason they have also stayed behind is due to the strength of their family ties (and obligations). For those with many children and a large extended family, the greatest possible resource to insure their survival, the possibility of migrating (including even moving from their village) is unimaginable (Durst, 2011).

Another important element of the Roma's recent migration story is the relationship between poverty and development. The positive benefits of migration for the poor, the important role played by migrant remittances in poor people's livelihoods (cf. De Haan, 2000 - as cited by Black et al., 2006), is clear in the case of Hungarian Roma migrants. The vast majority of our migrant respondents (both returned and current) reported that they had managed to save up money whilst having been in Canada. Many sent back remittances regularly, almost every month or every other month, to their parents to pay for the rent of their council flats or to start renovation or refurbishment of their houses (having left them in the care of their parents or other close relatives at home). In the case of the young adults, some sent money back to pay a mortgage on their first home or for saving up to buy a new house when they return. However, family networks and resources were not just mobilized for the starting point of a migration journey – either when money was collected at home or sent from Canada to finance a migration trip for lower class migrants or when the established migrant family members send air tickets from Canada to their poorer family members at home. These networks come into play on their return, too. Those from Miskolc who did not have a place to stay when they were forced to leave Canada moved into the homes of their parents or siblings until they managed to find their own accommodation.

However, unlike other returned migrant groups (cf. Portes, 2010; Lewitt, 2001), remittances sent back home by the Roma from Canada do not facilitate the social mobility of the returnees and their families. These remittances are not spent on their children's education, on better healthcare, or starting up a new small enterprise but on everyday subsistence. They are used for renovating houses, settling outstanding utility bills, and, in many cases, for covering daily subsistence in a future period when the returnees

will be left without any social benefits or state support. For they all know, based on the experiences of friends and relatives who have already moved back to Hungary, that they will not be eligible for unemployment benefits and/or social welfare for at least one year after returning home.

Last but not least, I would like to draw attention to the multiple policy implications of this latest Hungarian Roma migration story. With its new Immigration Act, Canada has indicated that the Eastern European Roma's economic and social problems should be sorted out in their home country.

Another one of my intentions in the context of this piece is to draw attention to the increasing emigration flow that is currently taking place, which the media has dubbed the 'new exodus' from Hungary. This departure from Hungary pertains to both Roma and non-Roma people and demonstrates that the social process currently taking place can and should be understood against the backdrop of the rapidly deteriorating economic and political situation in this country. Further, the rise and empowered presence of vigilant far right political movements, with their anti-Gypsy and anti-Semitic hate campaigns against minority groups – their chosen scapegoats during this time of worsening economic circumstances – is not to be taken lightly. This is another, worrying, dangerous social process taking place in Europe today that is putting people's lives at risk.

The majority of the Roma migrants in Canada are in a sense economic refugees – even according to their own accounts – who have to face discrimination of all kinds in their everyday lives from birth to death. As we have observed, many of them have chosen migration as a short-term economic strategy. Many would have stayed in Hungary, should they have been able to find regular employment there. They have invested in the process of migration in the hope of saving up some money and being able lift themselves out of poverty when ultimately returning home.

All in all, one of the core messages from this latest mass Roma migration is that: as long as the state and the local governments do not promote economic development, creating more job opportunities for unskilled laborers – a workforce in which the Roma are overrepresented (Kollo, 2000) – the culture of migration will be the only viable livelihood strategy for many able bodied, working age people.

Nonetheless, I add a thought here – with a bit of sarcasm – that some Hungarian, anti-Gypsy, Nationalist ‘wishful thinkers’ probably would not mind if this is exactly how the situation evolves, that Roma mass migration to the West continues, since Gypsies represent, in their eyes, the most troublesome, malfunctioning, unmanageable social problem the country has, or will ever have, to face. They might wistfully think that this would be the easiest way to rid Hungary of the Gypsies and solve the Hungarian “Gypsy question” once and for all.

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**Zsuzsanna
Vidra**

ROMA MIGRATION TO AND FROM CANADA

THE CZECH, HUNGARIAN AND SLOVAK CASE

Zsuzsanna Vidra is a Research Fellow at the Center for Policy Studies, Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. She holds a PhD in Sociology from École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris. Her areas of research include the construction of ethnic identities, poverty, educational inequalities, labor market strategies of Roma communities, discrimination and media representation of minorities. She has worked in a number of international collaborative projects: Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe (EDUMIGROM, European Commission Seventh Framework Program, 2008-2011), Identities and Modernities in Europe, Roma migration to and from Canada, among others. Currently she is principle investigator of the CEU team in the Tolerance and Social Cohesion research initiative that explores and seeks to understand tolerance of ethnic, racial and religious diversity in European societies (ACCEPT PLURALISM, European Commission Seventh Framework Program, 2010-2013). Dr Vidra also contributes to Faces and Causes of Marginalization of the Roma in Local Settings, a joint research initiative of CEU, UNDP Bratislava Regional Center and the Open Society Foundations.



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