

HATE SPEECH AGAINST THE ROMA IN ROMANIA

Discourse Analysis on Three Romanian
Newspapers' Internet Forums

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Picture 1: "nero - burning rrom" (Netx 2008).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 "AGGRESSIVE STINKING GYPSY WOMAN"

In May 2007 Roma journalist Andreea Pană followed Traian Băsescu, the President of Romania, to a supermarket in order to ask his opinion on a topical referendum of that moment. As she was filming the President with her mobile phone, the President got angry with the persistent journalist from a TV station owned by a political opponent. Băsescu asked her: "Hey Chick, don't you have anything to do today?" (*Mai, păsărica, tu nu ai treaba azi?*), and confiscated the phone from the journalist. The President forgot to turn the recording off and disparaged the journalist to his wife, saying: "How aggressive this stinking Gypsy woman was!" (*Cât era de agresivă țiganca asta împuțită!*) The utterance was recorded on Andreea Pană's phone and later made public by *Antena 1* TV station (Romani CRISS 2007).

The actors of the incident were poles apart in many ways: the President representing white male domination over a woman of minority ethnic origin. Mr Băsescu's usage of dismissive and sexist references under threat from a media representative, and the boundaries of private and public spheres further emphasized the juxtaposition between the Romanian President and the Roma journalist who were both pictured as offenders and perpetrators at the same time.

The President's comment became a major scandal in Romania and also received media attention abroad. The President's spokesman mediated apologies from the head of state and stated that Mr Băsescu was sorry that a private discussion had leaked out and asked Ms Pană to accept his apologies. Băsescu's explanation for the unsuitable phrase was that he had been under political and media pressure, and his unintentional reaction did not represent in any way his attitude to the Roma community (Ruse 2007). Later on, the President insisted on having a right to privacy

even as the head of state and compared the incident to communist secret service Securitate times, when people were judged on remarks made in private life (Capatos 2007).

In consequence, the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD) cautioned the President for discriminatory speech. In response, a prominent Roma NGO Romani CRISS announced a Letter of Protest (*Scrisoare de protest*) accusing the NCCD for having chosen a lenient verdict and called for a public apology for the whole Roma community. Romani CRISS also pointed out that in his press-release the President was in fact sorry for a private message turning out public. However, the President appealed all the way to the High Court of Cassation and Justice to get the NCCD's decision annulled. The Court issued a decision with confirmation that "stinking Gypsy" indeed was a discriminatory comment although the President got away with impunity (Realitatea.net 2009).

The case was closed but the discussion has remained heated since 2007 and *Țigancă împuțită* has become a political joke in Romania. The Internet discussion forum of the biggest newspaper *Jurnalul Național* gathered more than hundred replies in few days for a thread discussing the President's apologies for Ms. Pană and a current affairs programme on *Realitatea TV* used the case *Țigancă împuțită* as it approached President Băsescu's relationship with mass media. It also did not go unnoticed that the President's comment ended up in *Amnesty International Report 2009* (Realitatea.net 2009).

1.2 STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

President Băsescu's gaffe might be the best-known example of *hate speech* – any form of communication that defames a person due to his or her belonging to a certain racial, ethnic, religious or other group – against the Roma people in Romania that this study concerns. The reputation of the Roma might not be great shakes anywhere but

“the Gypsy problem” may be best illustrated by the *anti-tsiganist* (anti-Roma) sentiments in Romania where the Roma constitute a significant ethnic minority, proportionally probably the largest in the world.

To a large extent, the anti-tsiganism in Romania is due to economic and social factors; the socio-economic position of the Roma in Romania is below average according to indicators such as life expectancy at birth and the net primary education enrolment rate. The miserable living conditions, unemployment, inadequate health services and low level of education, together with the discrimination of the majority has led to a vicious circle of poverty and criminality which holds many of the Roma permanently outside the society, producing simmering ethnic strains in Romania. In order to understand the prevailing situation, Section 2 revises the main points of the Roma history in Romania, starting from the Indian exodus some thousand years ago, to a summary of the current issues.

It is especially on Internet forums that hate speech is running wild and this is why the comments people leave in the Internet forums from three Romanian newspapers' Internet forums were chosen as the main source of data for this study. The data collection was done according to the evolving principles of Internet ethnography – a fresh sub branch of the traditional ethnography that studies “cyber” or “online” communities on the Internet, instead of the Pacific islands or African villages. The comments were translated from Romanian to English and further analyzed using discourse analysis that tries to reveal the underlying references and implication of the comments. Section 3 discusses the methodological aspects of this study, focusing especially on the usage of material from the Internet as a basis of a social scientific study. As the opinions and comments cited in this study are mainly collected from Internet forums, the comments are not considered to be representative of Romanians in general. Furthermore, although this study covers a lot of information on the Roma, it should not be considered as a study on the Roma – the emphasis is on the negative remarks people make on the Roma on the Internet forums and the suggestions they have for solving the "Gypsy problem."

As the focus of this study is especially on the anti-tsiganist comments of the Internet forums, hate speech provides a conceptual framework for analysing the comments. The concept originates from jurisprudence and the attempts to constrict injurious speech, which has led to heated dispute between the free speech devotees and those who want to curb this right. Brief summary of this discussion, the legal framework of hate speech and the definition of the concept is provided in Section 4, before turning to more detailed discussion of the comments.

It is principally the Roma who emigrated from Romania that have received attention outside Romania for begging, engaging in criminal activity, living in miserable self-constructed dwellings and having been raided by ultra-nationalistic groups. After Romania joined the European Union in 2007 the Romanians have been free to travel to other EU countries without visas and as a result of this a significant number of Romanian Roma have fled the country, especially going to Italy. Furthermore, the haphazard similarity between the words 'Roma' and 'Romania' has been misleading as many people think that 'Roma' simply means a person coming from Romania. The difference is congruent in Romanian, where the official and politically correct designation for the Roma is '*rom*' (plural '*romi*') and for the Romanians '*român*' (plural '*români*') and therefore there is mass support for changing the official designation from '*rom*' to '*țigan*' (plural '*țigani*'), the Romanian equivalent for 'Gypsy.' A large number of the comments covered this issue, which is discussed in more detail in Section 5.

However, for some commentators on the Internet forums the change of designation is not sufficient for tackling the "Gypsy problem" – many want to get rid of the Roma for good. This is suggested either by expelling the Roma to India, the country where they once left from, or exterminating the whole population. As the comments cited in Section 6 show, the annihilation fantasies follow the logic of the anti-Jewish purges under the World War II Nazi regime, referring to the Roma as "dirty," something that prevents the realization of the "pure" Romania. This notion enables further discussion

on the ways the ethnic purges are justified and how people are categorized into groups of desired and undesired. However, before getting to the fantasies of extermination and expulsion of the Roma, the next section begins with the theories of the Roma origin and their arrival in the Romania of today.

2 THE ROMA IN ROMANIA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In order to properly understand the hate discourse against the Roma in Romania, it is essential to give a summary of the historical factors that have led to the current situation where people are fantasising on Internet forums about the idea of Romania without the Roma. The Roma have a long history and the theories of how and when they actually arrived in Europe, abound. Reading Internet discussion forum comments, one realizes that the online debaters are often well aware for example of the Indian origins of the Roma, as can be seen in the following two comments; “Stefan Michiu” and “Garfield, motanu” (‘tom cat’) responding to an *Evenimentul zilei* article about the Romanian Roma in Switzerland:

Clarifications

from Stefan Michiu, Sunday, 8 February 2009 – 14:51

Some clarifications: the *tigani* are indo-europeans, therefore being accused of racism if you have something against their behaviour, is nonsense, unfortunately, we are of the same race. They don't originate from Punjab, but from the neighbouring state, Rajastan. Prudently enough, out of fear of some eventual claims, India doesn't recognize them [the Roma] having left from there. The "endliche Losung" ['final solution'] by deportations to India has also occurred to me, but I think the problem lies rather on imposing such severe laws that would oblige people to respect them by drastic measures. Nowhere else in Europe are they as bad and shameless as in Ro, in other places they respect the law. (Stefan Michiu 2009).

wrong!

from Garfield, motanu ['tom cat'], Sunday, 8 February 2009 - 18:09

The *tigani* are not at all Indo-Europeans. They are 100 % Indians, Rajahstan being part of India. Gm. (Garfield, motanu 2009).

In order to grasp the meaning of the online comments, a brief account of the major historical, social and demographic factors relating to the origins of the Roma people, are provided in this section.

This section begins with an overview of the early theories of the Roma origins and how physical anthropologists and historians have arrived at them. After that, a brief account is given of the early encounters that ended in slavery in Moldavia and Wallachia, that together with Transylvania constitute today's Romania. A growing sense of solidarity among the Roma tribes followed the complete abolishment of slavery in 1864 – it was in the 19th century that the Roma were little by little thought to be a uniform ethnic group, whose members were externally identified with each other due to common heritage as there appeared more theories of the Roma origins. An outcome of this development was the first progressive social movement among the Roma, and also the race-based oppression during World War II. Some reflections on the notorious Ceaușescu era follow, and a look at the so-called transition period of the 1990's, before closing the section with current social and demographic data.

2.2 THEORIES OF ORIGIN

I therefore come to the conclusion that the Gypsies together with the Indians constitute one people. This sheds new light on their origin and their whole history, now that we are in a position to compare the linguistic evidence with all the other historical conditions and characteristics of the Gypsies, we find that they match and correspond entirely. The character of the Gypsies, their first appearance in Europe, their fortune-telling, their feigned Christianity, their abundant livestock, silver and gold, their thefts, their long robes and the big pendants they still wear, all of this fits the Indians much better than any other nation. Their physiognomy as well is similarly Indian. (Rüdiger 1996 [1772]).

The origin of the Romani language and the Roma people has long been a mystery because of the lack of written sources of information. It was 1772 when German linguist Johann Rüdiger published "On the Indic Language and Origin of the Gypsies" that showed that there was a grammatical connection between the Romani language and the Hindustani spoken in Eastern India (Rüdiger 1996 [1772]). These observations discredited the previous theories of the biblical explanation, or the Egyptian origins (the origin of the word 'Gypsy') and suggested that the Roma had at one time left India (Mayall 2004, 11). Furthermore, the phonetic similarity and basic

vocabulary of the languages, especially words that refer to geographical terms and kinship, support the Indian migratory theory. Rüdiger lists words that are similar in the Romani and Indic languages, and these connections are further strengthened by other studies such as Alexandre Paspati's *Études sur les tchingianes* (1870) and August Pott's etymological dictionary from 1845 (Matras 2002, 3). The lexical and structural connection provides good evidence, which convincingly demonstrates the Eastern origin of the Romani language.

However, linguistic evidence is not sufficient to prove the ethnic origin of the speakers of a language. Around the turn of the 20th Century, long before genetics, physical and biological anthropology were the branches of scientific study that attempted to explain human evolution and the origins of different peoples. Also humanist and social sciences were striving for accurate measurement and comparison in the aftermath of Linnean taxonomy and Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859). Thus, the answer to the riddle of the Roma origins was sought from the physical racial features that could locate the Roma within the human family tree. Until the first decades of the 19th century, the theory of the Egyptian inheritance persisted. According to an early prominent anthropologist Johan Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), this theory was based on the cranial similarities between the Roma and the Ancient Egyptians (Mayall 2004, 120).

The Gypsies are dolicocephalous and medium height, with bronzed skin and black eyes and hair (Pittard 1917).

Consequently, the linguistic proof encouraged the skull measurers to travel to India with their sets of calipers and goniometers. An American ethnologist Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903) was convinced of the Indian origin of the Roma due to the physical resemblance with the Indian natives. Yet, a Swiss anthropologist Eugène Pittard (1867–1962) encountered difficulties in proving his hypothesis on the Indian origins after having recorded the physical dimensions of hundreds of men and women. (Fraser 2000, 23). Needless to say, the anthropometric methods have long been ditched as statistically inadequate and ideologically dubious, although they

sometimes struck lucky. In addition to the 19th century discoveries, the subsequent genetic studies add an irrefutable argument about the original home of the Roma (Kalaydjieva et al. 2005, 1084–1094). Nevertheless, over the thousand-year and six-thousand kilometre journey from India to Europe, the Roma have been influenced by multitude of languages, cultures and nations, and therefore the cultural relationship is fragmentary at best. However, as “Stefan Michiu” and many other commentators suggest, one popular option for “the Final Solution” would be to deport the Roma to India, to their “native country.”

Although the hypotheses abound, there is no definite information on the reasons or precise date of the Roma exodus. Furthermore, scholars are not unanimous as to whether there were more departures than one, or if the Roma left as one group. According to one view, the Roma are believed to be descendants of a low-caste people, the Doms (of which the Romani name of the Roma, ‘rom,’ also used in Romanian, is a variation), who are described in early texts as a “caste of wandering musicians” or “low-caste black-skinned fellows.” Some scholars believe that the Roma were Northern Indian warriors who escaped the Ghaznavid empire and started to travel to the West in the twelfth century. However, this rather late date is at variance with the Persian, Armenian and Byzantine scripts that place the first appearances of the alleged ancestors of the Roma, centuries earlier. (Fraser 2000, 25–42).

Țigan, (pronounced as ‘tsigan’) the Romanian equivalent for ‘Gypsy,’ originates from the Greek *‘Atsinganoi’* as the Roma were referred to in the Byzantine Empire. Presumably the first written Byzantine reference comes from the Georgian legend of Saint George that was composed around 1068 although it is not certain that the people “Atsingani” in question would be the Roma of today. (Fraser 2000, 46). Nevertheless, the multitude of academic disputes about the origin of the Roma, the date of the exodus and the alternative routes to Europe, do not alter the fact that the Roma have been on European soil for roughly a thousand years. Anthropologically more significant than the shape of the skulls and the distinctive appearance of the

Roma people, is their perseverance in preserving their culture and exiguous absorption into the mainstream cultures.

2.3 SLAVERY IN WALLACHIA AND MOLDAVIA

*Come running, beloved brothers all
Today, come running all;
For freed we are, by the
Rumanian prince.
Let us cry out with full voice,
So let it be!*

(Colocci 1889, cf. Crowe 1996, 120).

The history of the Romanian Roma goes naturally beyond the birth of the Romanian nation-state in 1859, when Wallachia (also written as Walachia) and Moldavia were united by *domnitor*¹ Alexandru Ion Cuza. It was the Treaty of Trianon² and the 1918 annexation of Transylvania to Romania that was confirmed in 1920, that changed the relative political strength of the area to a great extent. The era of the Great Romania (*România Mare*) lasted only until World War II when the Soviet Union conquered Bessarabia (which covers most of today's Republic of Moldova and parts of Ukraine) in 1940. The current borders have remained despite the disarray of the war when the former Romanian People's Republic (*Republica Populară Romîună*) was declared in 1947. Hence, sticking to the national borders of today's Romania does not help us understand the multifaceted events that underlie the present conditions - the history of Romanian Roma is interlinked with the other histories of the region, especially that of Hungary.

¹ *Domnitor* was the official title of the ruler of the United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia.

² The Treaty of Trianon was the peace treaty concluded in 1920 that established the borders of Hungary, annexing Transylvania under Romanian rule.



Picture 2: Map of Romania with the historical principalities (Romanian Tourist Office 2009).

The travelling people had made their way to the Balkans by the 14th century when the written sources about the Roma start to abound. The first references from the area of today's Romania are found in a Wallachian document from 1385 and another around 1400 in Transylvania (Achim 2004, 10). The position of the Roma took an unusual turn in Wallachia and Moldavia that five centuries later formed the Kingdom of Romania (*Regatul României*). As distinct from the other parts of Europe, it was in these two regions that the Roma were enslaved upon their arrival; ironically enough, the first document discovered about the Roma is a confirmation of Voivode Dan I, that his uncle had donated 40 Roma families as slaves to the Vodița monastery (Fraser 2000, 58; Crowe 1996, 107; Achim 2004, 13).

The arrival of the Roma in Europe coincided with the transition from feudal to market-oriented economy. Differentiated exchange created a need for specialized

craftsmanship often mastered by the Roma. Thus, they filled a niche between the feudal lords and the peasants and as foreign infidels they were isolated with little influence over their position in the society. In Wallachia and Moldavia the slavery, understood as total ownership over human beings as a commodity, evolved as the church and the *voivodes* (as the sovereign princes of the region were called) strove to acquire more power. These state institutions secured their economic independence by imposing more demands on the Roma (and other enslaved groups like the Tatars, see Achim 2004, 27) and restricting their mobility rights. (Hancock 2007, 17–18).

Historian Viorel Achim claims that by the 15th century the exploitation of the Roma had become so widespread in the region that the word '*țigan*' had in fact become a synonyme for 'slave' (Achim 2004, 29) – the word has still negative connotations that are discussed more detail in Section 5. Moreover, the Roma were often denied the use of the Romani language, or the ability to practice traditional customs, and there was a wide set of vicious punishments for the disobedient or those attempting an escape. Illustrative examples of the non-existent legal protection come from the Wallachian 1818 Penal Code passed by the Ottomans:

§2 "Gypsies are born slaves"

§6 "Any Gypsy without an owner is the property of the Prince" (Hancock 2007, 21).

In early Hungarian writings the Roma were referred as Pharaonic People (*Pharaó Nemzetség*) as they were believed to descend from the Ancient Egyptians (Kogalnitchan 1837, 2). Under the Hungarian reign, the Roma enjoyed a higher reputation than their co-tribesmen in Moldavia and Wallachia. For instance, in King Sigismund's court (1387–1437) the Roma were highly regarded "castle musicians" and their skills in metal forging were valued in arming the royal soldiery (Crowe 1996, 70). In Transylvania the slavery never took as exploitative forms as in her Eastern neighbours and had disappeared by 1790, almost a century before the other parts of today's Romania. Ian Hancock suggests that this was due to the Western influences from the Austro–Hungarian Empire where the liberal ideas of the

Enlightenment had first gained ground (Hancock 2007, 23). One Internet forum commentator, “vali” reflects on the slavery in the following words:

Tigani

from vali | 21/03/2009 00:50:52

we have enslaved them for hundreds of years and now don't know how to civilize them. Maybe it's our curse. (vali 2009).

It was also in Habsburg Hungary that Empress Maria Therese (1740–1780) and later her son Emperor Joseph II (1780–1790) made it their goal to transform the Roma into “New Hungarians” (*újmagyarok*). In 1773 the Empress ordered all Roma children over five years of age to be forcibly adopted into Hungarian families. Subsequently, Joseph II issued the statutes *De Regulatione Zingarorum* (1782) in Transylvania that contained several obligations and restrictions for the Roma, for example “Gypsy children were to be sent to school” and “Gypsies would be allowed to perform music only when there was no work to be done in the fields.” (Achim 2004, 71–73).

In the 19th century the nationalistic movements spread throughout Europe reorganizing the political map. In Wallachia and Moldavia, the independence movement emphasized the lineage from the Romans from whom the Romanians inherited their language Romanian (Verdery 1991, 31) that is mainly spoken in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. This Latinist theory functioned as an argument for adopting Western values and legislation in the aftermath of the French Revolution. However, it took decades to realize the ideas of “*Liberté, égalité and fraternité*” and the complete abolition of slavery came about only in the newborn unified Romania in 1864 (Hancock 2007, 25). Yet, the decision was not only ideological – industrialization and the altered modes of production had reduced the need for free labour, and as Romania was one of the last dark corners of Europe tolerating slavery, it became unavoidable for Romania to follow the developing European standards of human rights.

2.4 EMANCIPATORY MOVEMENTS AND THE *PORRAJAMOS*

It is only after the Great Unification in 1918 that a great number of Roma were brought under the same state and Romanian citizenship. If the previous centuries were characterized in Moldavia and Wallachia as an era of balancing between slavery and traditional nomad lifestyle, and in Transylvania as early attempts to transform the Roma into Hungarians, the first half of the 20th century witnessed the struggle for emancipation and political organization of the Roma in contrast to the awakening anti-tsiganism and attempts to eradicate the “Gypsy problem.”

Looking back to the demographic structure of *România Mare* (the Great Romania), it appears rather heterogeneous in nature. The Treaty of Trianon not only nearly doubled the area of Romania but added an extra 1.6 million defeated Hungarians to her population, decreasing the proportion of the ethnic Romanians from the pre-Trianon 92 % to only 70 % in 1920 (Dunn & Fraser 2005, 95), the biggest minorities after Hungarians being Germans, Jews, Ukrainians, Russians and the Roma (Achim 2004, 147). Ever since this historical treaty, ethnic Romanians have not been overwhelmingly numerically superior, which has led to constant power struggles in Romanian society and simmering ethnic tensions.

As for the Roma population, it could not be considered homogeneous either. Some groups stuck to the traditional clan-based nomadic lifestyle, but the majority adjusted little by little to a sedentary way of life among the ethnic Romanians or Hungarians. Romanian sociologist Ion Chelchea categorizes the Roma according to their level of assimilation, understood as a complete absorption into the dominant culture: “those who still exhibit genuine external Gypsy traits (...), those who are on verge of assimilation (...) and those who consider themselves to be assimilated” (Chelchea 1944, 84; cf. Achim 2004, 146). The categorization goes also for the linguistic composition. Already during the inter-war period the number of Romani speakers had diminished greatly: in the 1930 census only 37 % registered their native language as Romani while the rest of the Roma had adopted either Romanian or Hungarian. A

significant factor for the assimilation process was the agrarian reform after the World War I that encouraged the Roma to leave their traditional livelihood and to settle to practice agriculture. The Roma took advantage of the new situation to move up the social ladder, but this process did not necessarily require complete absorption. (Achim 2004, 146–154). Historian David Crowe argues that the characteristic flexibility of inter-war Romanian society made it possible for the Roma to “affirm themselves in society” without being forced to “renounce their origins” (Crowe 1996, 127).

The still organized network of the Roma NGOs dates back to this era of social mobility and the relatively liberal atmosphere. The year 1933 saw the establishment of two Roma associations, The General Association of Gypsies in Romania (*Asociația Generală a Țigănilor din România*) and The General Union of Roma in Romania (*Uniunea Generală a Romilor din România*). The core programme of the both organizations was to promote Roma culture and revive pride over the ancient origins, but instead of co-operation, the two had battles over members from the Roma community. However, Viorel Achim interprets the new political formation as a sign of modern pluralism – old social organization led by *bulibașa* (leader of the kinship group) started to develop alongside its wider communities where the sense of solidarity transgressed the customary village and clan boundaries, although the Roma still identify themselves often with patrilineal groups, even if perceived as a homogenous group from the outside. (Achim 2004, 153–157).

It was also in the 1930's that racial theories started to gain ground in Europe. As opposed to the 19th century scientific skull measuring, the new theories from Nazi Germany were more politically motivated and aimed at racial purification, with notorious results. Gretchen E. Schafft discredits the German and Austrian anthropologists for having taken the discipline to such pragmatic and positivist proportions that they believed in “improving the biological structure of the population by (...) sorting those people into desirable and undesirable groups” (Schafft 2002, 119). It all started with the fascist takeover and founding of the Third Reich in

1933, which consequently led to gradual segregation and placing restrictions on civil rights for the Jews and other enemies of the state. As for the Roma, the first “Aryan paragraphs” covered only the nomadic Roma, but the situation escalated quickly to purify society from all “blood-sucking parasites.” From Nazi-occupied Europe the Roma were transported to concentration and death camps where the Roma were considered to be of second-lowest category, only above the homosexuals. (Barany 2002, 102). The *Porrajmos*, a Romani term for the Roma Holocaust (literally meaning ‘devouring’), ultimately led to annihilation of half of the Roma people in the Nazi-occupied areas (Hancock 2007, 34).

Viorel Achim states that although the Romanian Roma were listed as a distinct group in the 1930 census, they were perceived predominantly as a social category and there were no signs of organized anti-tsiganism in the inter-war Romania (Achim 2004, 164). However, the fashionable eugenics, that was the scientific justification for the Holocaust in the Nazi regime, had already spread to Romania, which was expressed in the establishment of The Institution of Hygiene and Social Hygiene (*Institutul de Igienă și Igienă Socială*) in Cluj in 1919 (Turda & Weindling 2007, 3). Although scholars are not unanimous in the role of eugenics and physical anthropology in the fate of the Romanian Roma (see Bucur 2002, Achim 2004), it could be worth considering if there was a connection between the enthusiasm in racial issues and the sudden classification of the Roma as *racially* distinct from the ethnic Romanians. Moreover, the significance of the “Jewish problem,” may have triggered the expansion of the extra-European, impure category along with the Jews, to other minorities.

The *Porrajmos* of the Romanian Roma is often associated with Marshal Ion Antonescu who seized the power in 1940 and declared in 1943 that: “there is no other solution than the movement of the minorities (...) and to eliminate them out of Romanian society” (Benjamin 1993, XL, cf. Achim 2004, 167). However, the extermination of the Roma never became a systematic, official policy in Romania and the Roma were not treated as one people, the nomads being more “dangerous” and “undesirable” among the Roma. The major contribution of Ion Antonescu to the death toll of the Eastern

European Roma were the massive deportations of the enemies of the state to Transnistria (nowadays the eastern swathe of the Republic of Moldova) in years 1942–1944. Again, the purge began with the nomadic Roma, and altogether approximately 25,000 Roma, roughly half of them sedentary, were deported from Romania. The settlement failed completely as the Roma were not provided with even minimal living conditions, proper shelter, or sufficient nourishment. It is estimated, that before the evacuation of Transnistria in 1944, roughly half of the Roma had died out of hunger, diseases and cold. (Achim 2004, 167–179). For many commentators, like “bbbb,” the Marshall still appears as a nostalgic figure:

Social integration

from bbbb, Tuesday, 6 January 2009 - 15:26

15 years ago they spoke us about discrimination, and that we had to behave with them like they were some trinkets!

It's a pity that Antonescu didn't terminate his mission, and that the Russians came. Today we also would be like Austria or Germany. (bbbb 2009).

Since there are few Roma historians, anthropologists, human rights lawyers or other scholars, and the general interest in genocide studies have long focused on the Jewish Holocaust, the horrors of the *Porrajmos* have gone widely unobserved. This is also due to the lesser importance of the “Gypsy question” during the World War II, which made the ethnic cleansing of the Roma also less planned, less accurately documented and less extensively reported by the perpetrators. On the other hand, as the Roma culture has relied heavily on the oral tradition and lore, there is also lack of written evidence on the victims' behalf.

2.5 CEAUȘESCU'S ERA

Nicolae Ceaușescu was the notorious Head of the State Council of the Romanian People's Republic (*Republica Populară Română*) from 1965 until he was unseated and executed during the 1989 revolution. Together with his wife Elena Ceaușescu, the dictatorial couple turned the country into a massive experiment in personal cult,

megalomaniac industrialization and building projects, with a paranoid all-encompassing secret service *Securitate* and ambitious family planning. Within two decades Ceaușescu's peculiar form of National Socialism evolved into a nation-wide one-man political theatre that ravaged the country's economy. According to the former head of Radio Free Europe's Romanian Broadcasting Department, Nestor Ratesh, Romania had become the "Ethiopia of Europe" by the 1980's (Crowe 196, 143) when Ceaușescu tried to meet the rampant foreign debt by exporting almost all production. Finally, before Christmas 1989, the people's disaffection with their leader led to the only bloody revolution in the series of communist regimes' collapses.

According to Viorel Achim, it is paradoxical that reconstructing Roma history for the Ceaușescu's era "is even more difficult than for the years of the Second World War." The archives of the administrative actions still remain closed, and will be for many years to come (Achim 2004, 189) and there are few anthropological or sociological studies made about the Roma in Ceaușescu's times. An American anthropologist Katherine Verdery writes: "Eastern Europe was less known to anthropology than was New Guinea." Besides the general anthropological interest in "primitive" cultures, this was due to the distrustful atmosphere beyond the Iron Curtain that actually made the research difficult if not impossible in some countries. Firstly, the research topic had to be carefully chosen; it could not show any criticism towards the socialist system and the anthropologist had to take the safety of the informant into close consideration. Furthermore, the anthropologist ran a great risk of being accused of spying. As a matter of fact, there was a great need for information for the Cold War machinery that had an affect on the wherewithal for the research projects. (Verdery 1996, 5–7).

Another explanation for the exiguous data of the Roma policies is simply the lack of them – the social history of the Roma intertwines with that of the ethnic Romanians and Hungarians in the socialist Romania. As Nicolae Ceaușescu solemnly articulated it in a speech³:

³ Information of the year or context of Ceaușescu's speech not available.

Romania is the fatherland of all the ethnic groups within its borders, where all nationalities can and must live together in fraternal relations in the common quest for socialism and under the common leader of the Romanian Communist Party (Crowe 1996, 139).

At the heart of the socialist doctrine lay internationalism that aimed to fortify solidarity among the same social class (following Marx's definition as common relationship to the means of production) instead of the nationalist or tribal identification. According to the political slogan "Workers of the world, unite!" it was also in Romania that Ceaușescu tried to eradicate the ethnic boundaries and build the universalist "New Man" (*Omul nou*). Achim claims that the Roma actually benefited from their poor background and non-existing property as the "communist ideology favoured the ascension of the poor" (Achim 2004, 190). This was particularly so in Romania where the Father of the State, "The Genius of the Carpathians" and "The Danube of Thought" had made it to the top from peasant family roots without proper education.

Moreover, the communist ideology was inclined to homogenisation also in economic terms. A swift turn to heavy industry created an extensive labour market, which also provided work for the often-unschooled Roma. In fact, the communist countries had a distinct aversion towards unemployment, and high employment rates were more important than real efficiency. For the Roma this meant a coerced abandonment of their traditional means of livelihood, like hawking, fortune telling and music playing, all of which were declared illegal (Ringold et al. 2005, 91). The Roma were also provided with houses although some stuck persistently to their wandering way of life: "the Gypsies continued to live for a time in tents pitched in the yard, with the house used as a stable for the horses." Further efforts to "civilize" the Roma included compulsory education, registration of the Roma without official identification documents, legalization of the marriages between the Roma and the non-Roma, programs to supervise their hygiene, to name but a few (Achim 2004, 191).

Although he could not be criticized for his actions, Ceaușescu's supposed pampering of the Roma aroused resentment, feelings that seldom burst into open ethnic conflicts in the Socialist Romania. There were even rumours that Ceaușescu himself had Roma origins. These accusations were eagerly "proved" in the after-math of the revolution; it seemed unfathomable for the Romanians that the ruthless kleptocrat could have originated from within (Dan 1998, 71). The following two comments reflect today's notions on Ceaușescu's Roma policy:

Ceausescu did not succeed...

from LINUX, Friday, 2 January 2009 - 16:26

...to integrate the *romi* in 45 years. They tried everything, "murders," obligatory work places, free houses... what do I speak about houses, entire blocks that in few days became real ghettos without window glasses, doors, floor. Integrateeeee... but with whom do they want to be integrated. [...] The European community made the fur flying when the *romi* were refused the exit from the country but now they have realized what a monumental mistake they have made, but it is too LATE now. (LINUX 2009).

To Linux

from etienne, Saturday, 3 January 2009 - 12:48

Well Linux, Ceausescu protected the *tigani* better than the Romanians. In Communism you could say that you are whatever, only you couldn't say you're a Romanian or they pressed you about any small thing. The *tigani* were free in Ceausescu's times. Who had a permission for special commerce if it were not *tigani*? All the moneylenders and sellers of Kent were *tigani*. In the military, they had lots of *tigani*. These, like the Jews, should be taken back to where they came from and give them some land, where they by themselves could earn bread by working. And how they would leave the country to hunt hares. (etienne 2009).

The patriarch of Romania was executed with his wife on December 25th 1989. On a European scale, these rather dramatic events illustrated the need to rebalance the proportions of power at stake – the burden of the "Great Man" of Romania had become too heavy. For Romanians the shooting that was promptly televised in Romania and the rest of the world meant more than just a symbolic gesture of change: the country started its lengthy path from an oppressed backward Eastern periphery "Back to Europe!" (*Înapoi in Europa!*), as the transition is often addressed in Romania.

2.6 TRANSITION PERIOD

In the literature relating to political science and economics, the period of system change from a centrally planned economy to a free market is referred as transitional. The idea of transition implies a process of thorough replacement of one system with another until the traces of the old system have vanished. In *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next* Katherine Verdery discusses at length the adequacy of this concept, and claims that it is not suitable to describe the whole of the former Soviet countries (Verdery 1996, 16). She states that the outcome of the process varies to a great extent within the former Soviet countries. Instead of speaking about “transition *to*,” she prefers to use “transition *from* Communism” (ibid.).

In the Romanian case, the form of post-Ceaușescu politics under the successive president Ion Iliescu (1990–1996 and 2000–2004) *seems* to have altered to a great extent, but actually it was the Romanian nomenklatura that held the reins of power after the collapse of the Ceaușescu regime. Many of the high-ranking officers of the Romanian Communist Party (*Partidul Comunist Român*), including the new president, changed their membership cards for those of the new ruling party National Salvation Front (*Frontul Salvării Naționale*) (Deletant 2001, 35). For the Romanian man in the street this was a disappointment. The downfall of Ceaușescu did not bring all the changes expected: there were still shortages, the top offices were still reserved for the former communist elite and the borders “to Europe” remained closed. After decades of swallowing their anger, the Romanians were at least free to show their emotions though the object remained obscure. Who could possibly be responsible for decades of hardship and oppression?

The emergence of the nationalist movements throughout the Eastern Europe after the fall of the wall overtook both the Western observers and the supporters of communist internationalism. Katherine Verdery claims that: “sudden appearance of national movements and national sentiments (...) was evident all across the region” (Verdery 1996, 83). In Romania, it became promptly evident that the Roma were among the

sufferers of the change of the regime. As the heavy industry shut down, it was the Roma who were the first fired, which led to the vicious circle of poverty and criminal activity combined with growing anti-tsiganist sentiments. In the 1990's Romania witnessed numerous outbursts of violence towards the Roma, who were beaten and whose houses were set on fire, often without police's intervention, like in Hădăreni 1993. Furthermore, in some of the lynchings the police were active participants. (Anăstăsoaie & Fosztó 2001, 358–359).

Another indication for the altered attitude towards the Roma is the judicial recognition of the Roma, although not specified, as a national minority in the 1991 constitution:

(1) The State recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities, to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

(2) The protecting measures taken by the Romanian State for the preservation, development and expression of identity of the persons belonging to national minorities shall conform to the principles of equality and non-discrimination in relation to the other Romanian citizens.

Although this legal action emphasized that ethnic minorities belonged to a different, non-Romanian category, it also inspired the Roma to cultivate their traditions, language and culture and widen the network of Roma NGOs. In addition to the national measures taken to respect the distinctiveness of the Roma, at least at constitutional level, the democratization and opening of civil society in Romania made it possible for the international organisations to establish their offices in Romania and start monitoring the minority rights situation. It is worth mentioning that the grimmest years of mob violence were in the beginning of the 1990's when the Romanians were still learning to live without an omnipotent father figure. However, the violent intentions have not disappeared but they have moved to the Internet and manifest themselves as hateful messages towards the "undesirable."

2.7 TODAY'S SITUATION IN HOUSING, EDUCATION, HEALTH-CARE AND EMPLOYMENT

It seems that there is more coverage of and reports on the Roma situation in the former Soviet bloc than there are working solutions for combating the misery in which many of the Roma live. This chapter deals shortly with four aspects of poverty; in housing, health-care, education, and employment that the Roma face in Romania and more broadly in the former Soviet bloc.

Poor living conditions are one of the most blatant deprivations in the quality of life that the Roma encounter. The Roma live often on the fringe of the towns in self-made huts without running water, sewerage or sufficient heating. Travelling in Romania, one can even see the Roma living close to dumping places where they rifle through garbage in order to add to their meagre livelihood. Conditions that have resulted in negative stereotypes like dirtiness and squalidness have also been turned into entertainment in Romania: during the monitoring period of the first half of the year 2009, there was a popular reality-TV show *Șatră* ('tent') aired in Romania where Romanian celebrities one at a time spent 24 hours in sordid huts among the Roma. One commentator "gheorghe" comments on the program in the following way:

... I'm happy as well...

from gheorghe, Monday, 22 June 2009 - 22:50

oh finally something of good quality. We Romanians have so much to learn from the Gypsy culture, these reality-shows are welcome on the screen. I applaud for the initiative ... Pardon me ... I have to vomit as well... (gheorghe, 2009).

Moreover, temporary and illegal housing are matters that cause constant friction between the Roma and the landowners. The evictions can easily evolve into conflicts: there are documented cases when the evictions have been poorly planned, uninformed and even violent in Romania (Florea 2008, 109–116). The consequences of homelessness, temporary or inadequate housing extend beyond the lack of modern conveniences. The inadequacy of clean water and proper sewerage coupled with low level of hygiene is a perilous combination that predisposes sufferers to many illnesses: for instance tuberculosis and meningitis are more common among the Roma than

among the general population (UNDP 2002, 64). Hence, the poor living conditions, insufficient access to quality health-care services are closely linked to poor health and even 10–15 years lower life expectancy compared to the general population (Sepkowitz 2006, 1707).

All the programs that target the Roma inclusion emphasize education as a key factor. However, at present a great share of the Roma children do not even complete primary school, which hinders the future prospects of employment and economic independence. According to a UNDP report, the enrolment rates for secondary education were only 17 % among the Romanian Roma, compared to 85 % of the majority group, and only a few per cent on the tertiary level (UNDP 2006, 31). Differences between the sexes were yet more striking. Due to the traditional family model of the Roma families, “a Roma woman acquires maximal authority within the household only by marrying and giving birth,” which further complicates women’s possibilities for education as women are rather expected to raise children than go to school (ibid., 34).

A special concern regarding the Roma education is the segregation of the Roma children. According to an Open Society Institute monitoring report from 2007, it was the prevailing practice to put Roma children in special schools or classes with children with learning disabilities or other defects (Open Society Institute 2007, 331). Moreover, 13.5 % of Roma pupils were reported studying in a school or a class where “most of them are Roma” (ibid., 361). On one hand, the explicit ethnic segregation is due to spatial partition of the towns and villages – in many places the Roma live separated from the other people and thus the ethnic composition of a school class follows the demographic structure of the district. On the other hand, Roma children are often stigmatized and believed to be slower or less able to learn and therefore they are put into classes with children who have learning disabilities. An outcome of this de facto segregation, is that Roma children score lower points in national exams, while their attainment in higher education is exiguous. Furthermore, partly as a consequence of low attendance to university level education, the Roma are also

underrepresented in the higher echelons of professions and governmental decision making; for instance, in the Romanian Parliament, there is currently only one Roma member of parliament (National Democratic Institute of Foreign Affairs 2009, 8).

Tigani in europa

from gia, Sunday, 8 February 2009 - 15:30

your false comments show that you don't know the reality of what the Romanian *tigani* do in Europe. Those don't know the word 'work', only begging, thefts and looting are their favourite activities. (gia 2009).

As presented in the above message, one of the most tenacious stereotypes presents the Roma as a people who loathe working and prefer illegal methods in gaining their livelihood. According to many commentators, this is thought to be consequence of their criminal and lazy nature. For that matter, many Roma throughout Western and Eastern Europe are unemployed, which the Roma informants interviewed for the UNDP report in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia listed as their most severe problem. However, there is no extensive data regarding Roma unemployment, while the whole concept of employment means different things for different people. According to the UNDP report, nearly 80 % of Roma perceive themselves as unemployed in Romania (UNDP 2002, 31–32).

Historically, as Romania switched to socialism and focused intensively on heavy industry, there was an abundance of work in the factories and mines even for the uneducated. However, the seizure of the Ceaușescu was followed by economic difficulties and many state-owned enterprises were closed. For example, in Hungary, two thirds of the work places that had employed the Roma, were closed, and many Roma have been since then without a permanent work place (UNDP 2002, 32). Furthermore, as the huge super market chains like Tesco, Billa and Auchan have overrun the markets, the traditional outdoor marketing that used to employ many Roma, has become more and more rare. The current employment trends also emphasize education, which further aggravates the situation for the unschooled. The Roma are also discriminated against in employment. The Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Alvaro Gil-Robles, evidenced this reading a job

advertisement in a Romanian newspaper, with a footnote adding: “no Roma need to apply” (Gil-Robles 2006, 26).

However, unemployment does not equal idleness: a great share of the Roma get their living from the informal sector and their employment falls thus beyond the official data compilation. Moreover, the official data do not include the use of child labour either – according to a UNDP report, a few per cent of Roma children between ages 5 and 9 have to work in order to contribute the family livelihood (2006, 48). In Romania, it is a common sight to see Roma children begging, selling flowers and cigarettes, washing windscreens and collecting recyclable materials.

As many of the comments that are further discussed in more detail indicate, a great share of the negative stereotypes regarding the Roma is connected to their alleged criminality and violent nature. Furthermore, the unfavourable image of the Roma as rogues and lazy further complicates the employment picture, which leads some into criminal activity. Roma criminality is a delicate issue and there is no specific data available of the ethnic origin of perpetrators (UNDP 2002, 72). Furthermore, as the estimations of the Romanian Roma population range from half a million to roughly two millions and the notion of who actually is a Roma is rather ambiguous, it is impossible to provide reliable statistics on any area. Some demographic factors are discussed in the following chapter that concludes this section.

2.8 WHO IS A ROMA?

According to Minority Rights Groups International, there are from six to eight million Roma in Europe, as many as there are citizens in Sweden and around 2 % of the whole European population (Minority Rights Group International 2007). In the Romanian census from 2002, approximately half a million people registered themselves as Roma but according to estimations of the European Commission and UNHCR, there would be from two to two and a half million Romanian Roma (ibid.). Thereby, the largest Roma

minority in Europe and probably in the world is found in Romania. It is also proportionally that Romania has the largest Roma minority, together with Slovakia and Bulgaria – this is why the Eastern European Roma are often associated with Romania, in addition to the haphazard congruence between the name of the country and the people.

To some extent, the history of censuses can be traced back to ancient China, in addition to which the counting of people has long been an important measure to regulate taxation. The first actual census was performed in the dawning nationalism in United States in 1790, after which it has been a widely used method to find out the demographic structure of the nations states all over the world. David Kertzer and Dominique Arel state in “Censuses, identity formation, and the struggle for political power” that the censuses are subordinate to power and in addition to chart the reality, the censuses shape and produce reality (Kertzer & Arel 2002, 2–7).

In different countries and in different times, there have been varying practices in defining people’s ethnic origin and the categories still play a significant role in the states’ minority policies. For instance, in Finland people are mainly categorized according to the person’s native language and in Israel religion is the defining factor. In France all the citizens are French and by the law, it is not even legal to make ethnic distinctions, and in Canada, non-governmental organizations have advised people to cross the option ‘Canadian’ in the census card (Kertzer & Arel 2002, 17). As the examples show, ethnic categories are all but clear-cut but they can have enormous consequences to people’s lives, the most extreme examples being the Nazi Germany definitions for Jews that got stricter as the “Final Solution” became more fundamental part of the Nazi policy.

After the notorious race examinations of the Nazi and Apartheid regimes, the contemporary censuses rely on the person’s own testimony on his or her ethnicity. It is here that the huge differences between the official and unofficial estimations of the number of Romanian Roma lie. Out of fear of discrimination, many Roma do not have

the courage to register themselves as Roma, especially as being Roma often stands also for being poor, criminal and uneducated. According to a UNDP and ILO report, it is especially true of the better-off Roma who are reluctant to cross the 'Roma' column (UNDP 2002, 24). The Romanian census counters have also been blamed for falsifying the results, belittling the Roma numbers (Thorpe 2002). One example of the difference between the official and unofficial figures comes from the Romanian local minority self-government elections that revealed that the actual number of the voters for the Roma representatives outnumbered the census results (Vermeersch 2006, 73). Moreover, as many of the Roma projects and funding run on the basis of the official number of the Roma, the "wrong" figures hinder the functioning of the Roma NGOs and projects and furthermore compound the political underrepresentation of the Roma.

Furthermore, ethnic identity is not an easy thing to define and it may be a vague concept for those participating in censuses. In addition to mixing it with citizenship, many Roma confuse it with linguistic or religious background. For instance, in Southern Slovakia and Transylvania, a great share of the Hungarian speaking Roma register themselves as Hungarians – by doing this, they are also allowed to apply for a child allowance if the child goes to a Hungarian school (Az Iskola Alapítvány 2008). In countries, where the Roma live among other ethnic minorities, many Roma would rather identify with the other ethnic groups. This is the case in Bulgaria, where the Roma register themselves as Turks, even if they do not know the language (UNDP 2002, 24). It is worth noting that the reverse phenomenon does not occur, no other minority would register as Roma. (ibid.).

When it comes to demographic variables, the charts show that Roma birth rates are higher in the whole of Europe when compared with those of non-Roma (UNDP 2002, 23). The large number of children among the Roma can be considered as a sum of traditional family model, low level of education and insufficient contraceptive advice. Even if the figures differ by countries, the Roma diagrams resemble the ones in developing countries, by contrast to the narrowing pyramids of the general

population. The data from the latest census (2002) show that the estimated total fertility rates for the Roma in Romania are 3,1 and among the ethnic Romanians only 1,4, which is one of the lowest in Europe (Ghețău 2007, 47) – in order to renew its population, the total fertility rate of the country should be around 2,1. This means that the population of Romania is shrinking, but the share of the Roma population is growing.

19 June 2009, 05:17

didos

A sad satisfaction.

In the years 90, 91, 92, the press accused Romania for bad treatment of the Roma. Back then, I said that the Western Europe will finally confront with the migrating people. After the Cumans, Pechenegs, Avars, Gepids, Visigoths and the Huns [ancient migrating peoples] follow the Romanian gypsies who will fill the Europe. Then the Europeans will find out with whom they are messing around. Unfortunately the things have evolved much quicker and now Europe has a problem that, to be honest, I don't see how she can resolve it. I'm not xenophobic, but the gypsies are a people that are incapable of civilizing. First of all they should be taught to work instead of stealing. (didos 2009).

As the aforementioned comment by “didos” shows, the growing Roma population raises fears about future where the Roma will one day take over Romania and the whole Europe, “fill the Europe” – if the education and employment figures of the Roma do not improve, there are more and more unproductive people in the ageing Europe.

2.9 CONCLUSIONS

As this summary of the history and demography of the Romanian Roma and their current situation in health care, education, housing and employment market shows, the outcast status of the Roma is a sum of complex factors, like their differing appearance and culture, and reluctance to assimilate into the prevailing cultures. On one hand, the resistance to assimilation has kept the distinct culture alive, through slavery in Wallachia and Moldavia and the *Porrajmos* during the World War II. On the other hand, the persistent culture of the Roma is continually in the firing line of the majority, which is manifested by direct violent attacks and extensive hate speech. Furthermore, severe poverty is both the cause and effect of the negative stereotypes

of the Roma that further impair the unemployment, low education, bad health indicators and miserable housing conditions, comparable to those in third world countries.

One place where the negative stereotypes can be read is the Internet discussion forums. The next section *Data and Methodology* will provide an overview of Internet ethnography and critical discourse analysis that were used for collecting the data.

3 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Fuelled by the expansion of the Internet, Internet forums, and online discussion sites, have become popular platforms for expressing one's opinions, exchanging information, or simply arguing over everything on Earth. There are special forums for almost every imaginable interest and political or religious conviction. It is also the case that most electronic newspapers have adopted a comments feature – leaving comments after articles has become a popular way of adding information to, or disagreeing with the articles. At its best, the comments are meticulously written and professionally argued pieces of additional information that inspire people to have sophisticated discussions. For instance, in the Romanian Internet forums, many people provide additional information on the Roma situation, personal and academic, which at its best enriches the discussion and provides alternative viewpoints to the discussed subject. This can be seen as a positive aspect of technology that teaches people debating skills and provides alternative perspectives to mainstream news. On the other hand, poorly moderated forums allow people to post exaggerated and emotional comments – by shouting loud one can get his or her voice heard and compensate the lack of substance in the message.

An American attorney Brian Cuban received national media attention in the United States when he campaigned against Holocaust denial groups on Facebook, in the aftermath of the murder of a security guard at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. in June 2009. He referred to the forums as “hate speech incubators that increase the possibility of violent action” (Crawford 2009). In Romania, these “hate speech incubators” are easily available in the open discussion forums of the national newspapers' online versions. Although much of the discussion is normal and harmless, there is an active scene of online-violence in Romania that targets the Roma,

Hungarians, Muslims and homosexuals, to name but a few. As discussed in the previous section, the enormous social and political changes in society combined with the current negative economic situation have combined in the construction of a deteriorating image of the Roma. Hence, it is often the Roma that are the subjects of hateful messages, as in the following response to an *Adevărul* article about the Romanian Roma in Italy and their negative impact on the national image of Romania:

28 June 2009, 21:24

ANdrei Vosntantin

sw

There should be born Hitler version 2 to erase this race of mongrels that only cause problems. They have put us to shame, because of them the Romanians have problems outside the borders, they have totally ruined our image, they only commit crimes... (ANdrei Vosntantin 2009).

3.2 DATA

The focus of this paper is on analyzing the hate discourse against the Roma on the Internet discussion forums of Romanian newspapers' electronic versions, the actual data being the comments that the readers are able to leave responding to an article. This "comments" feature has become popular throughout the world and in Romania the readers may leave comments to all the major newspapers' electronic versions.

To narrow down the number of newspapers' Internet forums examined, the newspapers were selected according to language, area of distribution, quality and content, and the number of readers. First, all the non-Romanian newspapers, like the Hungarian *Új magyar szó* ('New Hungarian Word') were excluded. Secondly, only newspapers published on the national level were selected, leaving big local newspapers like *Buna Ziua Braşov* and *Transilvania Expres* aside. The most widely read newspapers in Romania can be categorized into sports newspapers, tabloids with an emphasis on celebrities, rumour and pop-culture, and quality newspapers, with sections about internal and international affairs, politics, economics and culture. To keep the data representative, but still manageable, the final selection was

restricted to three biggest electronic quality newspapers, *Jurnalul Național* <www.jurnalul.ro>, *Evenimentul zilei* <www.evz.ro> and *Adevărul* <www.adevarul.ro>. The monitoring period was from January the 1st 2009 till June the 30th 2009.

The comments were collected from the Internet forums during August and September 2009. As the debates on the discussion forums normally last only a few days or a week after the main article is published, the discussions in question were usually already over when the data collection was performed: i.e. there were presumably no more new comments to the articles.

The next phase was to search for pieces of news concerning the Roma. All the electronic newspapers examined had a search option where the user can submit a query for word frequency in articles. In Romanian, there are numerous words referring to the Roma people:

<i>Țigan, țigancă, țigani, țigance</i> =	Equivalent to the English 'Gypsy', originating from the Greek <i>Atsinganoi</i> (masculin, feminin, masculin plural, feminin plural).
<i>(R)rom, (r)romă, (r)romi, (r)rome</i> =	Roma (person).
<i>Puradel, puradeli</i> =	Gypsy child.
<i>Pirandă, pirande</i> =	Gypsy woman.

However, as the purpose of this study is not to be an extensive study of the image of the Roma in the Romanian press, the data was further narrowed down by using the two most frequent entries to the collective group, *țigani* and *romi*. Both Romanian words are plural masculine words but they are used to refer to the whole community. Moreover, the word for the Roma has two forms, *romi* and *rromi*, that are used somewhat as synonyms. As the search engines of the electronic newspapers do not make a distinction between whole words or parts of words, the search for *romi* includes the variants with double "r." For the time being, the official term for a Roma person is *rom*, which should be used in official documents. The word comes from

Romani language where it means a “person of Romani descent.” The variant *rrom* comes from the Vlax Romani dialect that is spoken in Romania and elsewhere in South-East Europe (Hancock 2001, 183). The controversy over the official term used to address the Roma community is further discussed in Section 5. In this study, the Romanian terms ‘*tigan*’ (plural ‘*tigani*’) and ‘*(r)rom*’ (plural ‘*(r)romi*’) are used when the discussion is related to the name dispute. These terms are written in italics even in the citations to emphasize their Romanian origin.

The last phase of the data collection was to limit the number of comments to be sufficient, yet manageable. The samples were collected from 27 articles that covered three heated discussions: the Romanian Roma abroad (12 articles and 217 comments), Roma engaging in criminal activity (7 articles and 248 comments), and the dispute over what the Roma community should be called in Romanian (8 articles and 215 comments). The whole corpus comprises 680 comments, out of which 52 are included in the study and are further analysed in more detail in sections 5 and 6.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

When it comes to the methodological framework, Internet-based ethnography was used for collecting the data. Ethnography is a descriptive discipline looking at people’s lives and trying to understand how and why things are done in a certain way, through participation and observation. Although it may look like an overstatement, calling the copying of comments and “lurking” in Internet forums ethnography, the data collection was performed with a view to the new challenges of ethnography within the Internet environment.

Moreover, the ethnographic approach was framed within a qualitative critical discourse analysis of the comments, as recommended by an established linguist and a pioneer of critical discourse analysis Norman Fairclough (2003, 15). Discourse analysis is a broad term for methodological approaches that focus on analyzing the

means of communication like text, speech, conversation and written documents in their social context. Furthermore, the critical “mode” of discourse analysis emphasizes the power relations in the society, especially “the way social power, abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted” (Van Dijk 2003, 352). The method owes much of its popularity among the social and humanistic studies to Michel Foucault, who elevated the discussion about discourse from the linguist circles to wider use.

The following chapters will cover in more detail the nature of the Internet together with a description of Internet-based ethnography as a method collecting data. It is also worth considering the ethical aspects of this study before looking more closely at critical discourse analysis as a method of analyzing comments.

3.4 THE INTERNET

Marshall McLuhan wrote as early as the 1960's in *Gutenberg Galaxy* that the electronic age brings “the entire human family into a single global tribe” (McLuhan 1962, 8). This development has had everything to do with the rise of the electronic mass media, particularly the Internet. Manuel Castells states in his book *The Rise of the Network Society* (1996) that along with the information technology revolution, we have entered a new era where the newest mass media, the Internet, has partly absorbed the newspapers, television, radio and telephone in itself. The rapid growth and vigorous adoption of information technologies can be compared to the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century when the steam engine revolutionized transportation and gave birth to the industrial manufacture process. The *Spinning-Jenny* of the 21st century, the Internet, is a super network that enables unparalleled networking – millions of users can be connected to each other around the globe, in real time.

Looking at the 21st century, the Internet has become a superior media, whose usage is daily for most people in the high-income economies, in the form of information retrieval, e-mail, on-line banking, Facebook, on-line newspapers, blogs and discussion

forums. In September 2009, there were 1.7 billion Internet users in the world, though the technology gap between the developed North and the developing South is huge. In Romania, the number of Internet users has increased steadily by more than 800 per cent from the year 2000, and as of writing this, it is around 7.4 million – a third of the 22 million population. However, Romania trails far behind the Nordic countries where more than eight out of ten people are Internet users (Internet World Stats 2009). In addition to those Romanians who navigate the Internet comfortably at home, many rely on the numerous Internet cafés that are present in every larger town. Denise Roman calls this phenomenon *cyber-postcommunism*:

Cyber-postcommunism can at once offer a broad range of local and foreign messages, from cinema and fashion, Romanian humor or sci-fi clubs, to neo-Nazi, feminist, and queer-activism websites. The average consumer of the public Internet is young, urban, with some knowledge of the English language, and a fan of Western popular culture. (Roman 2003, 5).

The development of information technology has changed personal organization, to the extent that more and more of social life, and relationships now take place on the Internet. For human sciences, virtual relationships and Internet communities offer an almost infinite research ground, and tools for studying them, but also the boundaries and challenges of the research are new. How can persistent and descriptive research of human communities, ethnography, that has become the cornerstone of anthropology, adapt itself to the virtual communities? Moreover, what special problems lie in Internet ethnography and in what kind of situations can the yet evolving method provide a fresh point of view?

3.5 INTERNET ETHNOGRAPHY

To date, far more effort has been expended on predicting the revolutionary futures of the Internet than has been put into finding out in detail how it is being used and the ways in which it has been incorporated into people's daily lives (Hine 2000, 2).

Most research on the Internet has focused either on Internet usage as a network for business (ibid., 15) or alternatively, the darker side; the variations of online criminality. This study may touch on the nefarious aspects of the online world, but its emphasis is on the daily use of the Internet, and the ways in which many people have found a Speaker's Corner, a place for free expression while comfortably sat by their computers. As sociologist Christine Hine writes in the earlier quote, the research on the Internet as an everyday tool has fallen behind the views of the futuristic visions, even if 1.7 billion people already use the Internet at the turn of the 2010s (Internet World Stat 2009).

In the first instance, analysis of the new media fell naturally to media researchers, but anthropologists and sociologists soon found a brand-new field on the Internet where they could apply ethnographic observation. As a field, the Internet is still a newcomer and studying it with methods that were developed over a century ago on the Trobriands or Canadian glaciers might appear artificial and constrained – Internet ethnography, virtual ethnography, online-ethnography or webnography unquestionably does contain alien features when it comes to ethical questions or the mutual relation between researcher and researchee. However, the research subjects are still human beings, whose social relations are structured in new ways and take on new forms, this makes the Internet a suitable and interesting field for anthropologists and ethnographers.

Ethnography that is based on extensive fieldwork has traditionally required the anthropologist to travel to the far corners of the world, where he or she is committed to spend long periods of time surrounded by an unfamiliar culture, without the amenities of home life. Among anthropologists, fieldwork has become a *rite de passage* that is romanticized due to its hardships and indelible experiences. In comparison to this thrilling exoticism, the Internet ethnography that is done comfortably at home with only computer and Internet access, may appear too comfortable, and thus does not fulfil the arduous demands of fieldwork. It can neither depict the inter-personal relations comprehensively, lacking emotional nuances and non-verbal

communication. In this sense, Internet ethnography is comparable to “arm-chair anthropology,” where the anthropologist makes conclusion based on material collected by others. In any case, easy access to sources of information is an undisputable advantage when compared with the traditional data collection methods. Furthermore, the Internet ethnographies that are based on foreign cultures, also require knowledge of the actual field, before a competent ethnographic study can be completed. In this sense, Internet ethnography and traditional ethnography often supplement each other.

In discussion over Internet, it is often referred to as a ‘virtual’ world, which in laymans language means something that is unreal but may display some qualities of reality. However, Manuel Castells states that all reality is virtual as the reality we observe is always constructed through interpretations based on signs and meanings (Castells 1997, 373). In addition to that, Benedict Anderson considers all societies bigger than village communities, as fictional, always invented before their real existence (Anderson 1986, 19). In this study, however, the concept ‘virtual communities’ is used in its colloquial sense to stand for online communities that interact through the many forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) like e-mails, instant messaging, chat rooms and Internet forums.

Virtual communities do not function according to the logic of real life societies. In virtual communities the ties to the community may be less, besides which, there are no strict demands for honesty. Since everybody knows that the virtual interlocutor may be of different age or sex “in real life” than he or she claims to be, the matter does not really cause problems until the difference between the virtual identity and the “real” identity is realized in real life. Hence, virtual communities are indeed real communities that have their own rules and conformities to law. (Castells 1997, 372-375). As the Internet is an uncontrollable field of communication, where each opinion and political view is represented in its own pages and forums, the critical Internet user knows how to interpret the contents cautiously. This is indeed essential when analyzing the anti-Roma sentiments of the Romanian Internet forums – it is unlikely

that the people would express as strong opinions when interviewed in person and this makes the Internet data naturally unrepresentative of the whole nation.

Hence, when it comes to studying social interaction on the Internet, the starting point for the study is to acknowledge the fact that many people appear with false identities and may lie for one reason or another. The phenomenon is not utterly foreign to traditional ethnography either. Probably the best-known example of false statements within anthropology is Derek Freeman's *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (1983), where Mead's once-pubescent informants confessed having lied to Margaret Mead about their alleged promiscuity. In interviewing people or analyzing their oral or written statements the possibility of falsehood is always there, this is just more likely with Internet data.

Christine Hine states that by anthropological means, the Internet can be approached either as a cultural artefact or as a research field (Hine 2000, 14). This means that Internet usage can be studied as any other institution within the culture, or the whole research takes place on the Internet. Especially in the early years of anthropological Internet studies it is reasonable to make the aforementioned distinction and situate the research in question on the field of Internet studies.

Daniel Miller and Don Slater's *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach* (2000) largely represents the first category where the research is done mainly about Internet usage in Trinidad, with house-to-house interviews complementing the data from cyber cafés and Internet discussion forums. The anthropologists realized that Internet usage is an integral part of everyday life that links Trinidadians with other Trinis living in the diaspora. Thereby, the Internet does not constitute a separate 'cyber' space but a technical extension that merges with the real life. An example of an actual Internet ethnography is John Edward Campbell's *Getting it on online: cyberspace, gay male sexuality, and embodied identity* (2004) where the author explores online gay meeting points like chat rooms and virtual gay bars. Furthermore, Campbell did not just lurk in the virtual corners but interviewed some of the chatters. Even if virtual gay bars have their counterparts in real life, the communities studied by Campbell are not simply

extensions of real life, even if some of the members aim at founding a relationship outside virtual world.

When compared to traditional ethnographies, Internet ethnographies have unequalled possibilities in studying sensitive and intimate areas where people agree to reveal information anonymously that they would be not willing to share face to face with the interviewer. In addition to the aforementioned virtual gay bar, these kinds of areas include various online support groups, political discussion forums, religious Internet communities and criminal activities, to name but a few. The method is especially useful for the medical, psychological and legal anthropologists. Then the ethnographic field is difficult to classify in the *single location – multi-site* axis (Marcus 1995, 99); the field is constituted by activities of many people all over the world even if the actual field is only one forum, chat, newsgroup or web page.

The alarming rise of the eating disorders is a phenomenon that is closely linked with the emergence of the CMCs that, on one hand make the illness worse, by diffusing the image of eating disorders as a desirable lifestyle, and on the other hand can help combating the illness. The so-called *Pro Ana* sites that glamorize *anorexia nervosa* have been widely publicised and have been blamed for promoting a deadly illness as a fashionable way of life, an extreme discipline-oriented philosophy and an alternative youth subculture. On the *Pro Ana* sites *Ana* is presented as a personification of the disorder and a fictional authority who shows the way to perfection by sharing dieting tips and pictures of “perfect-bodied” models and film stars. On these sites, the eating disorder patients constitute virtual communities, where *Anas* support one another in striving for perfection but also in the process of recovery. Eda Uca’s *Ana’s Girls* (2004) is an Internet ethnography that focuses on *Pro Ana* sites with direct quotes from the users of the chats and discussion forums. Uca’s ethnography that aims to understand the controversial sites from the users’ point of view has certainly something to add to understanding eating disorders and in designing new treatments for them. In her ethnography, Uca does not claim a lot herself, but gives a voice to the users: even if the activities on *Pro Ana* sites are questionable, for many anorexics they are the only

places where they are understood. According to one anonymous anorexic, the community feels safe even if everybody realizes that it is not sound : "(W)e all wish we had the strength that this person leaving the community does" (ibid., 63).

When it comes to hate speech on the Internet, there are many distinguished studies on online enmity that mainly concentrate on the legal aspects of the intricate relations between freedom of speech, defamation and hate crimes. A useful study of this topic with an ethnographic approach is a communication sociologist Antonio Roversi's *Hate on the net: extremist sites, neo-fascism on-line, electronic jihad* (2008) for which he has browsed a myriad of sites with controversial content that he qualifies as hateful. Extremist sites include those of the Italian football fanatics, neo-Nazi groups and Islamist jihadists that have all "made hate and the exaltation of violence – and even killing and extermination – the main content of their presence on the web" (Roversi 2008, 1). What is especially praiseworthy in Roversi's work is that he presents an extensive analysis on the sites themselves with actual data copied from the sites. As Roversi states, it is somewhat obvious that uncertainty and fear give rise to "undefined sensations" that "demand to be changed – into concrete sensations – of hate, of rejection, of aversion" (ibid., 48) but like in *Ana's Girls*, the actual messages with, for example, threats like "(W)e massacre every Inter supporter we catch" (Roversi 2008, 54) contextualize the phenomenon for the reader. However, even if these messages give voice to the hate speech and are valuable data for the researcher, they are not meant to be used in a study. This leads to some ethical questions that are discussed in the next chapter.

3.6 ETHICAL ASPECTS OF INTERNET ETHNOGRAPHY

Ana's Girls is a good example of how ethnography has adjusted to the phenomena of the Internet. As online-anorexia has evolved simultaneously with the Internet, it is also logical that the method for studying it springs from the same period of time. However, Uca's book as well as the other ethnographies introduced in the previous

chapter comes up against the core problem of the Internet ethnographies: what right has the researcher got to study people on the Internet without them knowing about, not to mention consenting to the research?

Traditionally ethnographies have been categorized according to the role the ethnographer takes in relation to his subjects. Most ethnographies can be situated somewhere between pure observation and more participatory methods. In reference to the ethnographer's role, the father of the approach, Bronisław Malinowski encourages him to take part in the activities of the community: "it is good for the Ethnographer sometimes to put aside camera, note book and pencil, and to join in himself in what is going on" (1961 [1922], 21).

By contrast to Malinowski's words of advice, Internet ethnographers seldom take part in the activities of the CMC they study, nor do they ask any permission to use the data for research. We can assume for instance that Uca, Campbell or Roversi would not have received consent to use diet diaries, gay chat or football fanatics' words of abuse in their studies. Christine Hine compares this method, where the researcher observes the participants of a discussion, or a chat with a lurking researcher (Hine 2000, 25). A lurking researcher may use a pseudonym or even take part in a conversation but the researcher does not reveal that he or she is doing a research for the sake of authenticity. In that case, the subjects may never know that they have participated in research. When lurking ethnography is scrutinized from the viewpoint of the Ethical Code (1998) of American Anthropological Association (AAA) it certainly fails to fulfil many of the guidelines, like:

Anthropological researchers must do everything in their power to ensure that their research does not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom they work, conduct research, or perform other professional activities (AAA 1998, III A/2).

and:

Anthropological researchers should obtain in advance the informed consent of persons being studied, providing information, owning or controlling access to material being studied, or otherwise identified as having interests which might be impacted by the research (1998 III A/4).

In her “manual” about Internet ethnography Christine Hine refers to Shelley Correl’s study *The Ethnography of an Electronic Bar: the Lesbian Café* (1995), where the researcher also interviewed many of her subjects in “real life” (Hine 2000, 48). Correl’s approach is ideal in many ways and most likely according to the Ethical Code but also difficult to realize in most of the studies. However, the ethical code of the AAA does not refer to Internet ethnographies so strictly following the guidelines designed for traditional ethnography does not serve Internet researchers’ interests – within the boundaries of AAA’s Ethical Code many online studies would become impossible to carry out if the researcher could not ‘lurk.’ Besides, there are undisputable advantages in lurking, using this method at least the researcher’s influence and interference can be minimized (Beaulieu 2004, 146).

It is also worth considering to what extent the so-called Internet ethnographies resemble traditional ethnographies and whether it is justified at all, to call them ethnographies. Since traditional descriptions of far-away cultures and locations are so much more than mere interviews, it may be unfair to make comparison between comprehensive observations and online studies that mainly rely on textual analysis. Another important feature that is lacking in Internet ethnographies is the relationship between the researcher and his subjects. According to digital information researcher Anne Beaulieu, there has also been discussion whether the essential anthropological concepts like community and patterns of social interaction can be applied to Internet surroundings and whether the material is enough for anthropological analysis (Beaulieu 2004, 142).

In *Ana’s Girls* (2004) Eda Uca solved the privacy problems by changing the subjects’ pseudonyms for the sake of anonymity. However, she uses a lot of data from the personal profiles like the subjects’ age, weight, height and eating habits that could

reveal the real person behind the profile (2004, 89–104). John Campbell, for one, did “substitute a screen pseudonym for the participant’s actual nickname” as people sometimes use one name in their profile and another (or many) when they are chatting. He acknowledges, however, that ethical problems remain with nickname usage (Campbell 2004, 48). Antonio Roversi just used messages from the sites, but even that is not proof against tracing the writers – pseudonyms behind the messages could be easily found out by copying the text to a search engine.

All things considered, it seems that there are no watertight ways to ensure absolute anonymity even if the researchers use pseudonyms or direct messages. This is why Christine Hine advises online researchers to make their own judgements on how much they are ready to reveal from their subjects – every researcher is responsible for the outcome of his or her study and that is because it is not easy to give universal guidelines (Hine 2000, 24).

In this study, no given information regarding the messages, user names or pseudonyms has been censored. Firstly, this is because all the content of the discussion forums is public and access to these sites is open to everyone. In order to write on the forums, people only have to provide their e-mail addresses, which are not visible for the readers. Secondly, it is the newspapers responsibility to control what is being written on their discussion boards although the papers seem to exercise this responsibility varyingly: *Jurnalul Național* reminds the writers about possible censorship and has evidently at least an automatic censoring system for indecent words that are replaced by asterisks and upon leaving a message, *Evenimentul zilei* requires the online debaters to commit themselves to the terms of conduct that ban, among other things, “indecent language,” “incitement to illegal actions, violence or xenophobia” and discrimination in reference to “sex, age, religion or sexual orientation.” In September 2009, *Adevărul* did not seem to have an active policy for censoring the messages.

After having discussed the ethnographic method of collecting the data and the implications in applying it in the Internet environment, it is time to consider the tools for analyzing the data. As mentioned before, this is done by utilizing critical discourse analysis, as is explained in the following chapter.

3.8 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

As opposed to formalist approaches that study the language in isolation, the discourse analysis considers:

Texts as elements of social events [that] have causal effects – i.e. they bring about changes. Most immediately, texts can bring about changes in our knowledge (we can learn things from them), our beliefs, our attitudes, values and so forth. (Fairclough 2003, 8).

In other words, the texts do not only reflect the world but also make an active impact on it, they order the reality and make it meaningful. By using language, the author simultaneously structures and constructs his or her world (Jokinen et al. 1993, 18). The notion that reality is composed of an ongoing process of social interaction falls within the theoretical orientation of social constructivism. Thus, discourses, for example the understandings of illnesses in Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1961), do not float in the air, but are founded on the myriad of different ways that human communication renew relationships. Fairclough fathoms the concept of discourse as follows:

I see discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world (Fairclough 2003, 124).

The efficacy of the approach lies in its ability to reveal how “things could be different”, as psychologist Carla Willig puts it (Willig 1998, 94). Fairclough for one shows this by analyzing agency in Tony Blair's political speeches: the actors in political discourse

are often vaguely defined entities, such as “governments,” “multi-national corporations” or “capital” – as opposed to real persons in decision-making. In another context, say domestic work, using passive forms and speech about “domestic re-organization” would sound awkward and clumsy (Fairclough 2003, 13). When it comes to critical discourse analysis, the aim of the approach is to reveal power relations beyond the speech: what do the verbal choices or selected agents reveal?

There are many ways of performing discourse analysis. Some approaches focus meticulously on grammatical details while others emphasize the use of words and their implications. In this study, the importance is laid on the lexical discourse of the Roma: what are the words with which the Roma are addressed? In a broader sense, what qualities are given to the members of the Roma community and what are the historical, social or political issues that the commentators tend to refer to? For instance, many commentators were aware of the Indian roots of the Roma, which was a constant argument as to why the Roma should not be called Romanians or they should be deported to India. Thereby, Indian origins constitute a discourse that reinforces itself on the discussion forums. Other prevalent discourses are the aforementioned name dispute, the concern over the deteriorating national image and the ways to solve the “Gypsy problem.” The critical approach tries to reveal the consequences of hateful on-line bashing and links it to the existing social problems.

According to Teun A. Van Dijk, “CDA [critical discourse analysis] is not so much a direction, school, or specialization next to the many other ‘approaches’ in discourse studies” (2003, 352). Rather, it is a viewpoint or perspective that the researcher takes towards his or her subject. Due to its rather subjective nature, critical discourse analysis is best used in decoding speech that has harmful effects for a group “in realizing their capacity for culture,” as stated in the Declaration of Anthropology and Human Rights by American Anthropological Association (Committee for Human Rights, AAA 1999). Therefore, it has been used to uncover the causes and effects of the nations’ violent maladies like racism, xenophobia, homophobia and sexism. Roma

and Traveller⁴ researcher Jo Richardson, for instance, studies the UK anti-Roma and anti-Traveller discourse in *The Gypsy Debate: Can Discourse Control?* where she trawls through English and Welsh newspapers in search of answers to her questions: who is talking about the Roma and Travellers and how, and can the public discourse be blamed of the growing anti-Roma sentiments? (Richardson 2006, 3–4). An expert on urban anthropology SETHA M. LOW uses critical discourse analysis to examine the narratives of urban fear and its causes in two urban settlements in United States. She focuses on people who live or have lived in so-called gated communities and finds out that in many of the narratives the fear of “others” (people of different ethnic origin, that is) was a major decisive factor in searching for safety behind the bars (Low 2003, 398).

Nevertheless, while critical discourse analysis has many merits, it has also attracted criticism due to its subjective nature. For instance, sociologist Martyn Hammersley argues that critical discourse analysis loses its scientific credibility when it begins to suggest what the society “*can* or *ought* to be” instead of describing “how society *is*” (1997, 238; cf. Posteguillo 2003, 20). Here it stands in contrast with cultural relativism that has been an integral part of anthropological conception. According to cultural relativism, other cultures can be understood only through representations of other cultures’ reality that the researcher interprets to his or her own conceptions. This process of understanding another culture lacks evaluation: conventions of two given cultures cannot be ranked, however blatant they may seem. However, discordant notes have struck against strict cultural relativism even among anthropologists, which has led to ever growing interest in the human rights regime.

⁴ *Traveller* is a general name for semi-nomadic groups especially in the United Kingdom.

3.9 CONCLUSIONS

As discussed, Internet ethnography is a many-faceted and relatively new method for studying communities and cultures that are developed through CMCs. The conception of the field springs from traditional ethnography though the actual research extends many of the aspects of observational ethnography, as taught by early anthropologists. On one hand, applying this method for studying hateful discourse against the Roma in Romanian newspapers' electronic discussion boards may seem far-fetched as the observational side of the study has mostly been simply copying and pasting texts. On the other hand, the online debaters do constitute a loose community whose members are in interaction with one another and get to know each other's online identity on the forums – there are, for instance, many pseudonyms, like “Garfield (motanu)” or “iancu” that can be spotted in many different discussions.

This interactive feature of the discussion forums makes it suitable to analyze the messages with critical discourse analysis that emphasizes the socially constructive aspect of language. The choice of method, however, renders the nature of this study more subjective and therefore it does not stand up to a close examination from strict cultural relativist viewpoint. The designation of anti-Roma messages as ‘hate speech’ implies a certain evaluation. The concept of hate speech will be discussed more thoroughly in the next section.

4 HATE SPEECH

Cuvântul bun unge si cel rău împunge

(‘Good words anoint us, and ill do unjoint us;’ Romanian proverb).

4.1 INTRODUCTION

How good

from Dolfi, Tuesday, 10 February 2009 – 14:49

it would be to make soap out of the gypsies. I guess, the soap would be of very poor quality but everybody would buy it in order to support the production. Well, I would get loads of it! Soap with the scent of g.y.p.s.i.e.! Whatever you say, NOBODY among them is INNOCENT. To be stoned and burned alive, that is what the filthy deserve! But first, close them inside the same cell for few months with the human rights fools who are always defending them, and I say, eventually we would be held responsible for their behaviour! (Dolfi 2009).

The comments on the Romanian Internet forums regarding the Roma minority are an apt example of the so-called hate speech. Even if some of the comments are decent and harmless or even favouring the Roma, many of them are characterized by drastic juxtaposition between the good, honourable and hard-working Romanians in contrast to the evil, criminal, dirty and lazy Roma. Moreover, the language of the comments is often harsh with words of abuse and references to violence and even annihilation of the whole community. As the above comment – one of the most extreme examples during the monitoring period – shows, the hatred against the Roma stimulates the commentators’ imagination and makes them fantasize the most torturous and scurrilous ways possible to get rid of the Roma. At this stage, the question is not only about wanting someone’s nonexistence but also about transforming the group of humans in question into something alien and worthless, when their extermination becomes easy and justified – something of no value is easy to get rid of.

This section deals with the key concept of this study: hate speech. This rather ambiguous concept is formulated within legal framework, from where it has diffused

into wider use. The big question is whether the speech should be regulated, where Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech* (1997) gives some valuable perspectives. This section also tries to show that hate speech indeed can lead to injurious consequences, and to attest this, the role of hate speech in Rwandan genocide was chosen as an example. Overall, the purpose of this section is to provide concepts and tools for understanding the mechanisms of hate speech before moving to the more detailed analysis of the comments in sections 5 and 6.

4.2 HATE SPEECH

Hate speech is one of the core concepts when discussing about such complex phenomena as racism, sexism and discrimination. Traditionally hate speech is thought to refer to insults and hateful statements in spoken or written form that are directed against minorities of ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation, but widely speaking any slander against any group has been called hate speech (Walker 1996, 8). There is no universal normative definition for hate speech and the term has been used widely and freely in media. Essential about the concept is that it is a subjective attack against a single person or a group of people, and it is used to provoke negative sentiments. As the discrimination can be targeted also towards the majority and can be justified by other facts, like opinion or age, racism or racist speech are insufficient concepts because of the etymologic reasons. When discussing about the Roma in Romania, racist speech would be only partially apt concept as the roots of discrimination lie strongly on the history and different culture of the Roma. Therefore hate speech is justified as a general concept that does not make difference according to the group that is subjected to hateful messages.

Hate speech expresses, advocates, encourages, promotes or incites hatred of a group of individuals distinguished by a particular feature or set of features. Hatred is not the same as a lack of respect or even positive disrespect, dislike, disapproval, or a demeaning view of others. It implies hostility, rejection, a wish to harm or destroy, a desire to get the target group out of one's way, a silent or vocal and a passive or active declaration of war against it. (Parekh 2006: 214).

However, political theorist Bhikhu Parekh warns about conceptual confusion if the hate speech is being used to cover all insulting or unpleasant speech. He lists three conditions for hate speech. Accordingly, hate speech is a written or spoken utterance that firstly “singles out an individual or a group of individuals on the basis of certain characteristics.” Therefore, to make generalizations and call *all* Roma dirty or analphabetic because some underprivileged members of the community have limited access to sanitation and education services, can be rightly called hate speech. Secondly, “hate speech stigmatizes its target by ascribing to it a set of constitutive qualities that are widely viewed as highly undesirable.” In the case of the Romanian Roma, these qualities include criminal behaviour, ruthlessness, misconduct, mendacity, poverty, laziness and dirtiness, to name but a few. Thirdly, according to Parekh, by hate speech “the target group is placed outside the pale of normal social relationships.” Referring to the negative qualities given to the Roma, it is not even worth trying to have “normal social relationships” with them (ibid.).

Preconceptions

From Liviu, Friday, 23 January 2009 – 22:40

I don't understand why the whole world hates the Roma... I just don't understand. Seriously. (Liviu 2009)

... well, it's normal,...

from DiStefano, Saturday, 24 January 2009 – 10:04

...that you don't understand if you haven't got anything to do with them. In your naivity you can still suffer very very much. It's a pity if you have to deal with them!!! ...they have stealing, deceitfulness, kidnapping, roguery and all the other possible bad sides of the humans in their blood!!!...but they are not humans but animals!!!...we just add to the count that they are analphabets and dirty!!!...I could still say but... (DiStefano 2009.)

When analyzing the above excerpts from an *Evenimentul zilei* discussion in the light of Parekh's categorization, “DiStefano's” comment appears to be a typical example of hate speech. The commentator lumps together the whole Roma population and addresses it with clearly negative features like deceitfulness and dirtiness. Furthermore, “DiStefano” warns “Liviu” against having any contact with Roma – it seems it is not possible to have contact without getting into trouble. It is also worth underlining that in “DiStefano's” comment the root of the negative features of the

Roma are found in the ethnic origin, “blood.” Therefore, hate speech leaves no room for any discussion on the alternative reasons for the Roma’s underprivileged situation, nor does it contribute to the possible solutions for addressing the social problems, except in exiling or annihilating the Roma. Moreover, there were few “pro-Roma” comments or comments submitted by the Roma (although as the commentators write anonymously, it is impossible to tell who are behind the messages).

4.3 ALLPORT’S SCALE

In the aftermath of the horrors of the World War II, American psychologist Gordon Allport designed a five-step scale of the stages of discrimination (1954). On the first stage Allport placed “antilocution,” where people talk about a certain group dismissively and joke about them in light of negative stereotypes. In antilocution, the frame of reference can be that of humour although the innuendos are spiteful by nature. This stage could be also called hate speech. On the next stage, “avoidance,” the members of the group are avoided and the dealings with them are based on coercion. On the stage of “discrimination,” the prejudices are put into action and the members of the focus group are denied the same services as the general population. In the case of the Romanian Roma, this is manifested by active discrimination in the housing and labour market and in education and health care, as discussed in Chapter 2.7. On the fourth stage, there exists violence towards the group and vandalizing of their property. On the fifth stage, there are systematic attempts and plans to exterminate the group. (Allport 1979 [1954], 49).

Referring to Allport’s scale, discrimination against the Roma in the Post-Socialist Romania has existed up to the fourth stage of violence and property vandalisation: in the 1990’s there were incidents where the ethnic Romanians attacked the Roma settlements beating Roma and burning down their houses, for example in Hădăreni in 1993 resulting in the death of four Roma men (Barany 2002, 196). In Slovakia and Hungary, there are also reported cases where Roma women were coerced into

abortions, which would probably fall in the fifth stage (The Center for Reproductive Rights and Poradňa, 2003). However, Allport's scale is a suitable tool for analyzing the existence of hate speech in a given society and its distance from the violations of bodily integrity. Hate speech exists on all the stages of the scale while physical violence is limited to stages four and five. A notorious example of hate speech and its destructiveness in all the five stages is provided in the next chapter about the role of media in the Rwandan genocide.

4.4 HATE RADIO IN THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

The graves are only half empty; who will help us fill them?

(Radio host on air on *Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Colline*, cf. Li 2007, 90).

The Rwandan genocide in 1994 is undisputedly the most calamitous genocide in recent history; approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed within only 100 days. The role of hate speech on radio on behalf of the Hutu extremists, *Radio-Télévision Libre des Milles Collines* (RTLM) has been stressed as an essential component of the killings, and a reason why they evolved to such widespread massacres throughout the country. However, a Kenyan author Mary Kimani highlights that the RTLM did not invent the language used for disseminating hatred; the seeds of genocide had already been sown by preceding Hutu media, such as Kinyarwanda- and French-language magazine *Kangura* (Kimani 2007, 110). For instance, "The Hutu Ten Commandments" were published in the December 1990 issue of *Kangura*, where the Hutus were advised to "(...) stop having mercy on the Tutsi," among other commands (Gourevitch 2004, 137).

Hence, there had already been ethnic hatred and sporadic massacres against the Tutsi minority throughout the 1980's and it was only after President Habyarimana's private jet was downed on April 6, 1994 that the tensions burst into a full-scale pogrom. In a country where at the time only half of the people could read or write (UNDP 1993,

137), the radios with 25 % coverage were the major sources of information (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda 1998, 8). Therefore the RTLM could reach the whole country with its anti-Tutsi propaganda, which partially explains why the killings were not restricted to only few hot spots.

However disordered the Rwandan genocide may seem, the killings were accomplished in a highly systematic and organized way and the instructions were mainly given by the RTLM. The discourse of RTLM referred to the Tutsis as “cockroaches” and to their annihilation as “work” and the massacres were indeed carried out in shifts similar to working hours (Li 2007, 93-94). For one hundred days, “working” for Tutsi destruction replaced normal daily activities for many Hutus.

Historian Norman Cohn suggests that behind collective murder there always exists an ideology to justify the acts of violence that are otherwise seen as repulsive and criminal (Cohn 1967, 263–64; cf. Arnold 2002, 95). According to anthropologist Christopher S. Taylor, the mass-killings in Rwanda reflected local cosmology where the “free flow” of the bodily fluids is seen as a prerequisite for health while any “blockages” are considered representing a malfunctioning, an illness. This notion was transferred to the level of society where the Tutsi were represented as a social anomaly that caused a blockage in the society. Hence, their extermination was seen as a healing operation on a large scale, to liberate the country of “cockroaches” (Taylor 2002: 145). In many comments regarding the Romanian Roma, the Roma were addressed as a “disease” or as “parasites,” which leads to an impression that their eradication would be considered respectively “cleaning” or “healing,” actions that are generally considered positive.

It is difficult to say how the events would have turned out without the RTLM but the example shows that hate speech can be very effective in mobilizing the masses even to the highest stage of Allport’s scale, however harmless mere words can appear. The role of hate speech in the 20th century exterminations of ethnic and religious groups and political dissidents is widely acknowledged, which has eventually lead to legal

actions to ban harmful speech. The next chapter covers the controversy over the free speech versus hate speech from the point of view of jurisprudence.

4.5 LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Discussion over the concept of hate speech comes from modern international human rights doctrines and especially from the United States common law tradition, where the freedom of speech under the First Amendment of the Constitution has always been carefully nurtured. While in many, particularly European countries, including Romania, incitement to racial hatred or the denial of Holocaust have been banned, the United State judges have been reluctant to outlaw speech unless it explicitly incites criminal activity.

For example, in *Brandenburg v. Ohio* (1969) the United States Supreme Court reversed a Ku Klux Klan (KKK) leader Clarence Brandenburg's conviction for having organised a KKK rally; the burning of a cross and racist and anti-Semitic statements were unanimously considered as not incitement to criminal activity (like incitement to riot or obscenity). *Brandenburg v. Ohio* is often referred to as a concession to extremist groups and defamatory speech. (Levin 2003, 374).

However, recently the sacred nature of freedom of speech has been challenged in United States also. On April 8, 2003, the Supreme Court ruled that the states can punish the cross burners. On behalf of the Court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor stated that the liberties protected by the First Amendment "are not absolute," and hate speech, even in a symbolic form (like a burning cross) can be interpreted as a physical threat (Cortese 2006, 10). Coming mainly from the American legal tradition, the ambivalence between free and defamatory speech has found its way into wider discussions about where to put limits on free expression. The dispute is far from over, which is indicated by an increasing number of legal norms banning discriminative message distribution and actual cases dealing with allegedly discriminatory

statements. One regulatory mechanism is the international law that aims at harmonizing the fragmented legal praxis.

When it comes to Romania, the State is obliged to adhere to the international treaties it is party to. The main international legal instruments that bind the State to banning hate speech are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) from the United Nations and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) formed by European Council. The UN treaties have specific committees supervising the implementation of the treaties and the organ supervising the ECHR is the European Court of Human Rights.

Article 20.2 of the ICCPR states that “(A)ny advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.” However, many formulations of the article, like “advocacy,” “incitement,” “discrimination” and “hostility” raise more questions than answers for the lawyers fighting for benign speech: what are the criteria and essential elements of an offence in discrimination, for instance? In that sense, article 4 of ICERD is not much more explanatory. From the forms of discrimination, only “all propaganda (...) based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin” is explicitly stated.

The ECHR, article 10 on “Freedom of expression” covers freedoms and responsibilities alike: “(T)he exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties.” This view follows a relativistic apprehension of freedoms – also emphasized by the European Court of Human Rights (*Sunday Times v. UK* A30 (1979); cf. Darbishire 2002, 61) – that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. Accordingly, cross-burning and probably also “Gypsy soap fantasies” are not considered as such fundamental acts of free expression that they should not be restricted.

On the national level, the Constitution of Romania declares “Equality among citizens” (art. 4), “Universality” (art. 15) and “Equality of rights” (art. 16), in addition to which it recognizes the international “(T)reaties ratified by Parliament” as “part of national law.” However, the national courts lean only seldom on the Constitution, which is thought of as a “soft” source of law and therefore the solutions to legal problems are usually sought in a statute book first. The Art. 317 of the Romanian Penal Code applies sanctions for incitement to discriminate:

The incitement to hatred on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, opinion, political affiliation, conviction, wealth, social origin, age, disability, chronic non-infectious disease or HIV infection/AIDS is sanctioned by imprisonment from 6 months to 3 years or by a fine.

From a judicial point of view many of the comments can be called hate speech with ease, for instance, wishing someone “to be stoned and burned alive” can be considered a strong expression of hate. However, when it comes to the Internet forums, there is always the question of credibility – how can we know whether Dolfi’s intention indeed was to incite hatred? He or she probably just wanted to demean *real* Anti-Tsiganists by writing a gross comment? The problem of hate speech legislation is that it is based on vague assumptions about the intentions of the perpetrator. Nonetheless, hate speech in a public forum cannot be justified by claiming it to be only sarcasm or a dark sense of humour as it is likely that the recipient would in any case misunderstand the message. This many-to-many feature of Internet and the difficulties in censorship have clearly led to difficult judicial problems, which is a large part of the reason for the on-going struggle between tightening hate speech laws, censorship and the quest for free speech. This dispute is discussed more closely in the light of Judith Butler’s *Excitable Speech* (1997) in the next chapter.

4.6 THE DISPUTE OVER THE HATE SPEECH REGULATION

As the critical discourse analysis theory presented in the previous section suggests, a good approach to examine hate speech beyond the legal framework is to consider such speech in terms of action that brings about change in the physical world. In actual fact, this is also the starting point for banning defamatory speech, or why else would something that leaves its target intact be restricted? The fundamental question about the hate speech is whether it is considered as an injurious action itself or something that may have injurious consequences. Judith Butler's *Excitable Speech* (1997) is a valuable contribution to the dispute over free speech or the banning of hateful remarks.

Butler states that the power of hate speech lies in its existence also on the physical level: "language can act in ways that parallel the infliction of physical pain and injury" (Butler 1997, 4). Thus, when viewed as an action, mere words are enough to cause suffering that is comparable to bodily pain, or as a distress, it *is* physical pain. In this sense, fantasizing someone's torturous death and phrasing it as an Internet forum comment is already considered an injurious action, heedless of the consequences the comment may or may not have. This works as a censoring argument for the anti-hate speech legislation. Like with banning the cross burning, the legislator perceives the hate speech as something unnecessary for the welfare of society, something that can be removed without major loss.

The founding of the United Nations and the introduction of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 was a noble attempt to restore the world after the devastating World War II. As already mentioned in the preceding chapter, the UN treaties ICERP and ECHR are models for national hate speech legislation. Even if the implementation of the laws has censoring effects, there is a difference between whether the law is considered to protect from, or to prevent injuries. Preventive mechanisms consider the hate speech dangerous not because it may hurt somebody per se, but because it may incite somebody to put the words into action. Hurtful words

imply the desire to and represent the fantasy of inflicting physical injury, which is considered the danger of uncontrolled speech – as Allport’s simple but useful scale suggests, the difference between the first and the last stages are on the physical implementation of the ideas of hatred. “Antilocution” already represents an idea of what could happen, and the upper stages are predominantly the implementation of the idea.

What makes, for instance, “Dolfi’s” message a particularly gross one is its clear reference to the Jewish Holocaust where the industry of death was taken to the extreme: according to a widespread rumour, the Nazis manufactured soap out of human fat, which symbolizes the total denial of human dignity harnessed to striving for the maximum possible efficiency (Waxman 2006, 168). Thus, in the background to the intention of banning genocidal hate speech or Holocaust denial, lies the assumption that “it could happen again” and the speech is already halfway to the realization. In the Rwandan case, this is obvious – people actually did commit the horrible deeds that they were exhorted to do by the RTLM.

However, it would be an oversimplification to suggest that the act of speech would produce the intended results, which is for the most part the legal viewpoint, “the presumption the hate speech always works” (Butler 1997, 19). Hence, throughout the book, Butler emphasizes the “gap between the originating context or intention by which an utterance is animated and the effects it produces” (ibid., 14). Butler suggests that the logic of hate speech regulation fails to acknowledge the “gaps” between the utterance and its consequences. Therefore, restricting free speech would be unnecessary as it is impossible to know the outcome of an utterance – in a certain context *any* utterance can be considered hateful.

Furthermore, curbing hate speech can lead to undesired consequences. If a certain form of speech is banned, like swear words or invectives, it is a strong statement that there is something dangerous in the utterance, which further elevates the status of the hate speech as a powerful weapon. Also, as it is very difficult to define and set the

limits for which utterances are considered hateful and which are not, hateful messages can always be framed in politically correct euphemisms that cannot be intervened against by the forces of law. For example, banning the ultra right's use of the swastika in Germany simply made the neo-Nazi groups grab the Nazi naval flag *Reichskriegsflagge*, which was later also banned. Therefore the restrictions can end in a cat-and-mouse game where the haters are always one step ahead of the lawmakers.

4.7 CONCLUSIONS

As this section has shown, the Post-World War II legal attempts to curb injurious speech have descended into a dispute whether banning would be the right choice, or should the hateful messages be distributed freely. There are still big national differences in legislation that sets the standards for what is considered injurious even if the international law has attempted to harmonize the limits of acceptable speech. However, as the formulations of the main legal tools already show, language is ambiguous by nature and defining comparable and exact guidelines is difficult. Furthermore, the concern is that the growing number of legal norms can end in politicisation where the ambiguously defined standards are used to silence only the messages of the undesired groups.

Nonetheless, as the following two sections will show, the online hatred runs wild on the Romanian Internet forums and so far the implementations of the international injunctions have remained weak. The next section deals with the fundamental question of the correct name to use for the Roma community, a highly politicised issue.

5 ȚIGANI OR ROMI?

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The increase of the crimes committed by the *țigani* in Italy and beyond, and associating those misdeeds with the Romanian people presents us as a nation of rapists and thieves. This effects negatively not only on our country image, but also on the benign Romanians who go abroad to earn honestly. This has led to a paradoxical situation in which Romania no longer stands for the country of Nadia Comăneci, Constantin Brâncuși and George Enescu for the press and public opinion abroad. It is no more the country with traditions and amazing beauty, but the country of barbarians who steal and rape that people will remember. All this is because of an unfortunate confusion of terms: *rom/români* [Roma/Romanians], terms that in other languages like in Italian – *rom-rumeno* – are very similar. The differences disappear in the collective mind, so that these words become synonyms, and people do not know if the one who stole or raped was Romanian or a *țigan*. Therefore, *Jurnalul Național* suggests in a consultation document reintroducing the word *țigan* instead of *rom*, both domestically and internationally to avoid confusion. In internal context, the usage of the word *rom* is enacted by a memorandum issued in 2000 as a result of internal pressure on Romanian authorities to reverse the memorandum from 1995, which had established the use of the word *țigan*. (Antoniou 2009).

One of the most heated and persistent discussions on Romanian Internet forums is about the correct Romanian name for the Roma: should they be designated *țigani* (Gypsy) or *romi* (Roma)? In the spring of 2009 *Jurnalul Național* launched a campaign for changing the official appellation from *rom* to *țigan*. The editors provided a sign up sheet on the *Jurnalul Național* web page that people could print and sign as a petition to change *rom* to *țigan* by force of law.

As already discussed in Chapter 2.2, *țigan* originates from Greek while *rom* is from the Romani language, meaning 'human.' *Țigan* is widely used even among the Roma, but it has also pejorative connotations: one meaning that the Romanian dictionary *Dex* gives for *țigan* is "an epithet given for a person with misconduct," in addition to which it appears in many proverbs, like: "*Țiganul e țigan și-n ziua de Paște*" (The *țigan* is a *țigan* even on the Easter Day) and "*S-a înecat ca țiganul la mal*" (Drown like a *țigan* on a shore) (Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan" 1998: 1126).

Rom is the politically correct form, which is used in official settings like legal texts, in addition to which it is also the form recommended by the Council of Europe in 1993. The paper claims that the two forms *rom* and *român* cause a lot of confusion both nationally and internationally because of their similar written form, and that Romanians living or travelling abroad get into difficulties because of the confusion and due to the growing number of Romanian Roma abroad: also the “good” Romanians are perceived as *țigani*. Furthermore, many Romanians are concerned about their country’s image, which they think is negatively affected by the similarity of Roma and Romania – and this is why there is a need to make a distinction between the two people. (Antoniou 2009).

I love the Romanians!

from Livia Dumitru | 11/03/2009 21:56:26

I totally agree with the paper’s proposal to replace the term *rom* with the *ȚIGAN!* From the bottom of my heart, I wish to participate in a referendum about this subject. I congratulate you for this initiative, you are the best!! With all due respect, Livia Dumitru. (Livia Dumitru 2009).

Emblematic of the significance of the correct title of the Roma was the enormous number of replies to an article in Jurnalul Național referring to the proposition. Most of the commentators, like “Livia Dumitru,” welcomed warmly, “from the bottom of my heart,” the campaign while there were also many dissenting comments, some of them written by people who claimed to be Roma. During the monitoring period the article presenting the program received the highest number of posts, altogether 418 comments⁵ when on average articles of news concerning the Roma collected from zero to tens of replies. Moreover, the proposition was discussed in numerous articles, which adds to the total number of comments.

This section covers the discussions about the dispute over the name of the Roma community and the image of Romania as a country on the Internet forums of the three papers. Although not all the comments cited here can be classified as hate speech,

⁵ These comments were not included in the data due to their big number; the name dispute is analysed on the basis of other related articles.

many of them do make generalisations and drastically juxtapose the “good” Romanians and the “evil” Roma. The focus is on the *Jurnalul Național* campaign but the name issue will be discussed in a wider nationalistic framework together with the name of the country and the people; in the Romanian case, the Dacian (an ancient tribe) and Roman heritage is especially significant.

5.2 “IN OUR VEINS THROBS ANCESTRY OF ROMAN”

*Awaken thee, Romanian, shake off thy deadly slumber
The scourge of inauspicious barbarian tyrannies
And now or never to a bright horizon clamber
That shall to shame put all your noxious enemies.*

*It's now or never to the world we readily proclaim
In our veins throbs ancestry of Roman
And in our hearts for ever we glorify a name
Resounding of battle, the name of gallant Traian.*

(...)

Romanian national anthem *Deșteaptă-te, române!*
(Mureșanu 1848; cf. National Anthems World 2010).

Throughout the history of Romania, from the unification of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859, the building material for national identity has been found in two main sources, the Roman heritage or the genealogy from the Dacian tribe that lived in there before the Romans conquered the area in the first century B.C. The Latinist theory emphasizes the Roman origins and the Romanian language that the Romanians undisputedly inherited from the Romans (Verdery 1991, 31). In addition to the name of the country, this idea appears in the second verse of the Romanian national anthem with reference to Roman blood and ancestry. The Roman heritage is also visible in the statues of Romulus and Remus that can be found in almost all the bigger towns in Romania. Nowadays the Roman heritage is provided as an argument for the aspiration to get the Romanians accepted as a respectable European nation while the “true” Romanian nature emerging from the Dacian antecedents is most often used as an

argument to combat communism, globalism and other foreign forces by the ultra nationalistic groups, like *Noua Dreaptă* ('the New Right').

The idea of Dacian heritage has been especially influential among the national romantic artists, like the poet Mihai Eminescu and the world-famous sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, who were inspired by the ruggedly beautiful wilderness of the Romanian landscape and the distinctive peasant lifestyle. The alleged continuity of the Dacian tribe and its habitation in Transylvania serves as a claim over the territory, which even today poisons the relations between Romania and Hungary, the latter claiming it to be Hungarian territory due to the big Hungarian minority and the fact that it used to belong to Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1920 (Verdery 1996, 37). Thus, if the Dacians settled the area first, it is considered a reasonable argument for territorial claims today.

The current, somewhat forceful and anti-tsigani far-right movement can be thought of as a successor to the Romanian fascist movement lead by Ion Antonescu, an influential trend in the politics of the first part of the 20th century, which also drew strength from the Romanian omnipotence. For instance, on the Internet pages of an ultra nationalistic group *Noua Dreaptă* (www.nouadreapta.org) the Dacian-inflected national romanticism is clearly visible – there are many articles and links to websites praising the national heroes like the fascist politician Horia Sima and the national romantic poet, “thinker and militant nationalist” Mihai Eminescu (Mihai-Eminescu.net 2007). Sticking to national romanticism and the imaginary “soul” of the nation reveals the fantastic nature of the nationalism: materialization of the pure nation-state takes place only on the level of fantasy and mythical world view, a view that the national romantic art has never claimed. In the following comment, “zorrzo” suggests that Romania should be called Dacia, respecting the heritage of the ancient tribe:

YES, it is TRULY... A CONSPIRACY
from zorrzo | 15/03/2009 21:56:11

every true Romanian notices that this *movement* of the designation from *RROMI* to *TIGANI* is a part of a plan that has much more *battles*... one of them being the transformation of the image of

our country to a *country of *tigani*". Naturally the *tigani* have only been manipulating, it suits them, they have always known to *adjust rapidly* to what is convenient for them. Beware the *BUBULI* (in Corutz' words) [*bubuli* are conspirators against Romania in the author Pavel Coruț's novels] and let's mobilize ourselves against this diabolic plan to destroy the identity of our people. We are the descendants of the Dacians. DACIA should be the name of our country. I'm convinced that the truth will be revealed and good (like always) will win the bad. Like this the God helps us. (zorrzo 2009).

In his or her comment, "zorrzo" refers to the tendency to call the Roma '*rom*' as a "movement," as if it was an organized plan by someone to denigrate the "true Romanians." However, they notice the conspiracy to change the "image of the country to a country of *tigani*." The *tigani* are perceived as active and manipulative "conspirators against Romania" who deliberately want to "destroy the identity" of the country, as if there is somewhere such a "diabolic plan" for that. The composition of the comment is a classic war between good and evil, even a Biblical one, with many battles, one of which is the current battle for the name of the country. Moreover, "zorrzo" reflects "descendants of the Dacians" as the good who "will win the bad (like always)," also of course having God on their side – in the final battle the "*BUBULI*" will get their revenge.

The problems between different ethnic groups start to arise when the national romantic fantasy is taken as an ideal model for reality, when the idea of a good versus evil battle is put into action. The wider the gap between the pure nation-state fantasy and the reality, the stronger the anxiety caused by that distance, which is manifested by violence and hate speech, "a battle" against those found guilty of polluting the purity. In Romania, the scapegoats for ruining the national identity are the Roma, the "DIABOLIC ETHNIC GROUP" who according to "ando," and "VECINA DE TIGANI" (neighbour of *tigani*) after having caused all kinds of damage, now "steal our [Romanian] national identity." Referring to "zorrzo's" comment, it is noteworthy that the Roma are called "diabolic creatures," who in "zorrzo's" comment had a "diabolic plan:"

TIGANI (diabolic creatures)— THAT IS THEIR NAME

from ando | 10/03/2009 16:07:40

When you say TIGAN, you think about all the repulsive things in the world, hundreds/thousands of Romanian children stolen, crippled and made to beg in the European cities while their parents cry out their agony without finding peace. THIS DIABOLIC ETHNIC GROUP wants now to steal our national identity. POWERS THAT BE, TAKE MEASURES SO THAT WE CAN GIVE OUR OFFSPRING A COUNTRY CLEAN OF TIGANI. Let the Westerners, who have kissed their butts, integrate them and keep them, because the *tigan* likes to live by begging, but they are rich, they can nourish them. We have given them minerals, so the *tigani* are part of the deal. (ando 2009).

TIGAN is an individual born from TIGANI parents

from VECINA DE TIGANI | 7/03/2009 09:16:22

Congratulations Jurnalul National for the temerity of initiating a campaign for bringing back the real name of the *tigan* ethnic group. We know the *tigan* phenomenon, like all the totally negative influence on the society: infamous vocabulary, falsified music with negative messages (useless *manele* [typical Gypsy music]) criminal and ferocious behavior, filthiness – little work and lots of money, thefts. The *tigani* are genetically programmed not to integrate into the human civil society. Look, they have even managed to steal even the identity of the Romanians. Our forefathers would turn in their graves if they knew that we are being mistaken for these *rromi-tigani*. (VECINA DE TIGANI 2009.)

In “ando’s” comment, the good versus evil is present again. The *tigani* (“diabolic creatures”) – not even humans – have first stolen the children of the Romanians and made them crippled beggars, that can be seen in West European cities while the parents are left crying, unable to find peace. Moreover, “ando” suggests that the Westerners, after having got rich from Romanian minerals, “could nourish” and “integrate them.” If “VECINA DE TIGANI” is to be believed, this would not succeed as the *tigani* are “genetically programmed not to integrate,” their criminal nature is genetically codified and thus incurable.

Coming back to the name of the country: as historian Lucian Boia writes, the name ‘Romania’ was first used, “in 1816 by Dimitrie Philippide, a Greek historian settled in Wallachia” but it was only in 1859 after the unification of Moldavia and Wallachia that the name was officially used for the state, although still lacking Transylvania until the aftermath of the First World War (Boia 2001, 34–35). Furthermore, from the mid 19th century, there have been many different ways of spelling Romania used, even up to the 1960’s when it was decided the country’s name was to be written officially as *România*.

The Great *Rumânia* :)
de rumânu' | 19/04/2009 21:25:24

How about calling ourselves with the old name "rumâni" to stand out from the *rromi*?

Anyway the foreigners call us:

rumanos, roumain, rumaenisch, roemenen, etc... Also for the Italians we are rumeno – for them romano means a citizen of Rome. (rumânu', 2009).

In reference to this, “rumânu” suggests that the Romanians could start to use the old written form of the country, *Rumânia*, in order “to stand out from the *rromi*.” *Rumânia* was used interchangeable with the current official form *România* till World War II, *România* having been a prevalent form in Transylvania. The change from the historical orthographic variations *România*, *Rumânia* and *Romînia* to one form *România* has long been a question of dispute in Romania: until 1964 the name of the country was written officially as *Romînia* but as the Communist Government wanted to emphasize the lineage from the mighty Romans, the spelling was changed in order to make the name of the country appear more related to the Romans, as the last remnant of the ancient empire. This piece of information is provided to highlight that the controversy over the correct name of the country and its habitants is an old one, which is further complicated by the current dispute of the Romani name of the Roma people, *romi*. (Interview with Felicia Cenușă, 27 March 2010). Hence, one letter would make a difference for “rumânu” and this time it would not even be the Roma who have to bow to the majority’s wishes.

In his often-cited book about the origins of nationalism *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson claims that in all communities bigger than a village the solidarity between members is based on imagination as the face-to-face contacts are not possible due to the size and complexity of the community (Anderson 1986, 15). It was especially true in nation states, that the common denominators had to be deliberately invented, which was (and still is) done, to a great extent, by creating a common history and cosmology for the members of the community (ibid., 36). For instance, many nations have national epics, like Kalevala in Finland and Edda in Iceland where the birth of the nation and its glorious development are described.

As already mentioned, the common history of the Romanians is taken heavily from the Roman succession and “the Great Men” like the Moldavian 15th century Prince Stephen the Great (*Ștefan cel Mare*) who defended Moldavia successfully against the Turks and Hungarians, and Alexandru Ioan Cuza, who was the first ruler of and the predecessor of the modern Romania, the unified principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. However, the Treaty of Trianon (see page 12) and the annexation of Transylvania brought a large number of Hungarians and more Roma to Romania who were and still are excluded from the historical paradigm of the Romanian people. In Romania, this means that, according to the 2002 census, over two million Hungarian, Roma, Ukrainian and other people may find it difficult to identify with the history of the majority – or, they are not even allowed to take part in it, like many of the comments suggest.

Although racism and discrimination are often affiliated with nationalism, Benedict Anderson writes that: “(T)he dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation” (1986, 136). To explain his idea, Anderson refers to 19th century Colonialism, where “racism (...) was always associated with European domination” (ibid., 137). Due to their economic, military and cultural dominance – thus following the Bourdieuan notion of class, which also takes into account cultural capital, like education (Crompton 2008, 100) – the Europeans established layers of a white bourgeoisie, on the top of the social hierarchy in the colonized countries. The Colonial power relations of white upper classes and coloured low classes (low economic and cultural capital) were transferred to racial theories that considered the Colonized people to be less developed because of their racial qualities – this notion mandated the White people to dominate the devalued people, to “bring light to the darkness.” According to Anderson, it was the Colonial class composition that produced discrimination, not the racial characteristics.

setting. The Roma family show an example of a poor low-class proletariat life-style while the Romanian family is clearly better-off.

Noua Dreaptă's picture is related to the significant issue of the country's image of Romania, that is, the Romanians widely believe to have been damaged because of the similarity of the terms Roma and Romanian. Within recent years Romanians have enjoyed exemption from visas as Romania became a European Union Member State in 2007. Since then this concern has become ever more important as more Romanian Roma have moved to other EU countries, some causing problems and confusion by begging on streets and engaging in criminal activity. The next chapter will discuss this phenomenon in more detail – what threats do the Romanians see in being confused abroad with the Roma?

5.3 “THEY WILL STEAL THE EIFFEL TOWER”⁶

Starting from the 1st of January 2002, visa requirements were lifted for Romanians entering European Union countries, foreseeing the eventual European Union membership that took place in 2007. From that day on, the exhausting hours long train searches at the Romanian border aimed at catching defectors going to the West were over and all the Romanians needed was a passport, and some money to prove that they could manage in Europe. Little by little the freedom of movement started to be visible in the European cities as Romanian and other Eastern European Roma captured the central spots for begging, which was previously almost a non-existing phenomenon in many places, like in the Nordic countries. The media began routinely printing articles and coverage about the new phenomenon, calling the Roma beggars, Romanians correctly according to their citizenship. This infuriated the ethnic Romanians who were, they thought, confused with the Roma, therefore people abroad did not get to know Romania as “the country of Nadia Comănechi [Romanian Olympic-

⁶ Eminemtul 2009.

winning gymnast], Constantin Brâncuși [Romanian sculptor] and George Enescu [Romanian composer] (...) but the country of barbarians who steal and rape” (Antoniou 2009).

The problems caused by the Romanian Roma abroad were widely discussed in the newspapers in question and they received many comments. The articles covered Roma criminality and a growing local hostility against the Roma in Western European countries like Ireland, Great Britain, France and Italy. The main fear of the commentators was of being associated with the Roma when travelling or living abroad and in being treated in the same way as the *țigani*. In the following comment “mia” reflects on how it feels being confused with the *țigani*: “they make a fool of you, you are ashamed of telling that you are a Romanian.” It is worth noting that shame was often mentioned in the comments – Romanians were concerned that the whole nation was stigmatized due to the criminal deeds, (“in France “they ‘visit pockets”” and in England “they steal your bags and beat you”), of a few Roma. In “Rusu’s” comment, the party deserving blame on the name issue is “the Romanian State,” not the Roma, as opposed to many other comments:

A capital mistake

from Rusu, Thursday, 1 January 2009 - 02:20

How could the Romanian State make such a mistake... to call a *tigan* “rom”... when the great writers refer to “*țigani*” ...and not to “*romi*” ...”*romanes*” (which means actually a lot more *țigani*)...the foreigners confuse the word and think that the question is about Romanians from Romania (Rusu 2009).

“the *țigani* of europe”

from mia, Sunday, 8 February 2009 - 18:02

Gia is right, all the *țigani* around Europe steal, in rance they “visit pockets” beg.....in England they pop up like mushrooms after rain, in my quarter you’re afraid of going out for shopping, out of fear of *țigani* stealing your bags or beating you up for the rest, they beg in the metros and if you don’t give them money they spit on you or curse you, a usual custom of the *țigani*, what can you do about it, they make a fool of you, you are ashamed of telling that you are Romanian because everybody asks if you’re a *tigan*? everybody tells you that they are racist and they are bad and they belittle you, but they are our *țigani*, it doesn’t matter where they have come from, they were born in romania and they have romanian passport. (mia 2009).

During the monitoring period, *Evenimentul zilei* was informed about a letter to the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and other Italian governmental representatives composed by civil society activists from Timișoara (town in Western Romania), asking the Italians to stop using the names ‘Roma’ and ‘Romanian’ as synonyms in the media (Petrovici 2009). Two replies follow by “Q” and “diana” who comment on the initiative against and for:

We’ll see

from Q, Tuesday, 17 March 2009 - 01:25

and the *tigani* are not Romanian citizen? A group of ‘intellectuals’ commit racial discrimination and even send it written? I know what means racial discrimination but apparently these do not – well, they are intellectuals from Timisoara (...). (Q 2009).

are you Romanian???????

from diana, Wednesday, 18 March 2009 - 18:11

Instead of supporting and joining these kinds of initiatives...it is much better to sling mud at them! You should be ashamed...are you even Romanians? It is even worse if you don’t know what it is about and then you think it is the other way round...I talk daily with a family in Italia and things are getting worse every day...they cannot use Romanian language on the streets out of fear of being lynched...people don’t make any difference between those who have worked honestly for years (12 years...tax-payers for the Italian state) and *tigani* (95 % of the perpetrators are of Roma ethnicity) Inform yourself before posting your stupid and spiteful posts! The honourable *Timisoreni* [citizens of Timișoara] once more show that their mentality has even changed...We Bucharestians are good in name only, in fact we are only fighting! (diana 2009).

As “diana’s” comment suggests, life has become difficult for the Romanian migrants in Italy. Accordingly, the Roma are to be blamed by and large for the situation that is “getting worse every day” – not the Italians who attack the Romanians. This notion follows the pattern that even the violent discriminative actions against a given group are justified for a reason like a rape committed by one of the members of the group, even if innocent people have to suffer from false accusations. “diana’s” reply is also a typical counterargument against accusations of racism: if the accuser only had first-hand experiences of the dealings with the Roma, he or she would understand the aversion, even find it justified. These kinds of comments were often backed with unfortunate stories that happened to the person or someone he or she knows. The following comment by “Vlad” is a reference to a piece of news covering the Commissioner for Human Rights at the Council of Europe, Thomas Hammarberg’s

dissatisfaction with Italian migration policy and especially the marginalization of the Roma population. If he only had “some *țigani* neighbours, “his attitude would change radically”:

Of course!

from Vlad, Thursday, 16 April 2009 - 18:48

Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, the Commissioner for Human Rights should have some *țigani* neighbours and his attitude would change radically. I remember a few Italians who came to Romania to help immediately after the revolution. All the time they criticized us for the tensed relations that we had with the roma/*țigan* community... how you prefer. Now, after some years that also the Italians have to live next to them, it seems that they have become silent in criticizing us and it seems that they start to understand why we don't get along with our “brothers”, the *țigani*! (Vlad 2009).

This comment may be seen as seeking justification for anti-tsiganist sentiments and nullifying the accusations of racism as something stated by high-ranking foreign officers who do not know the real situation – even the Italians “start to understand why we don't get along with our ‘brothers.’” This also means escaping from responsibility: if the Italians also have problems with the *țigani*, the problem must lie somewhere else other than in the Romanians.

After a brief description and some comments of the different aspects related to the name of Romania and her people, the next chapter looks more closely to the comments where the Roma are denied the usage of *rom*.

5.4 “ȚIGANI ARE ȚIGANI, AND ENOUGH OF THIS!”

Opinion

from Adrian Popescu | 12/03/2009 01:46:37

Țigani are *țigani*, and enough of this! Or rather, they are Romanian citizens and as a consequence of this, they are obliged to follow the laws of the country, not those of their own. If they can be integrated into the Romanian society, fine, and if not, we'll withhold their citizenship and take them to... the Americans! (Adrian Popescu 2009).

Țiganu* is a *țigan

from stan ion | 11/03/2009 21:36:53

they are *țigani* and I'll identify them as such, even if their people decides to be *romi* (stan ion 2009).

they were *tigani*...

from victor | 13/03/2009 08:23:15

...they are *tigani* still and *tigani* they will remain. (victor 2009).

The name of the group – ethnic, social, political or religious – is a key factor that gathers the affiliated members together: “by being called a name, one is (...) given a certain possibility for social existence” (Butler 1997, 2). However, the name is like a double-edged sword in that it makes its bearer vulnerable – the name can be also used against its bearer “who is fixed by the name one is called” (ibid.). Belonging to some group allows the members to call themselves with that name, a right which those left outside, lack. For example, a Christian cannot credibly call him or herself a Muslim, without turning to the Islamic faith (in which case he or she would not be a Christian anymore). Furthermore, the sense of belonging together is also founded on a common history and shared notions of boundaries. Those who are left outside, are the ones who are not entitled to carry a given name, they are not allowed to enjoy the advantages brought by a certain name.

18 June 2009, 18:00

Sorin

The *tigani* are not European citizens. Many times they have demonstrated that they have nothing in common with the mentality, traditions and culture with any European people. The *tigani* are exclusively engaged in robbery, begging and parasitism. The *tigani* are neither Romanian, they are simply *tigani*. The fact that some of them were born in Romania does not qualify them as Romanians. I also protest strongly against the usage of words “rom” or “rrom” for designating the *tigani*. These words do nothing but spread and promote the confusion *rom-rrom-roman*. It is an insult that I fight against every time I have an occasion. Romanians and the *tigani* have nothing in common. (Sorin 2009).

According to “Sorin,” the *tigani* are not entitled to carry the designation of Romanian; the confusion is insulting. They do not “qualify” as such, merely having been born in Romania is not enough for being called a Romanian, the Roma are “simply *tigani*,” who are “engaged in parasitism” and are certainly “not European citizens.”

As has already been seen, the name issue is complex in the Romanian name dispute: the Roma are not only denied the usage of the designation *român* (Romanian), as stated by “Sorin” in the abovementioned comment (although they necessarily do not

want to be called as such) but they should neither be called as *rom*. According to many commentators, the similarity of the names does not correspond with the real social distance and gives a false impression of relatedness of the two people. This notion gives desirable values for the name of the ethnic Romanian people that the *țigani* do not fulfil. As “stan ion” states, even if the Roma did call themselves *romi*, they would still remain *țigani*, failing to measure up the standards for being Romanian or someone carrying even a related name. As the other aforementioned comments and the following comment by “radu” suggest, there is no room for discussion about the name usage – if someone is *țigan*, he or she will remain one:

The *țigan* remains a *țigan*

from radu | 14/04/2009 11:23:02

Is it that they want to hide the fact that *țigani* are social misfits? Ever since they came here from the far-off places of Asia, they have been called *țigani*, if they don't like the name, it is their problem! You will never meet a *țigan* who wouldn't complain that “he or she is not given or done something.” If they are not grabbing a gun, they are grabbing the property of their neighbours, and the list of these examples continues... One thing is clear: ROM or TIGAN, the *țigan* remains a *țigan*. (radu 2009).

***Țigan* bcs *Rom* is an invention**

from Anca | 7/03/2009 09:57:55

the name *țigan* is the traditional one, the historical one, the one from the historical sources of the first documents of the *țigani*. They who say it is pejorative have bad intentions. In that sense, “German” can be pejorative if you say “**** German.”

What do you think about the blond *țiganca* [Gypsie woman] from the soap opera *Inima de țiganca* [Heart of the Gypsie]? The truth is that *țigani* don't call themselves *romi*, bcs the word is a recent invention and *țigani* don't have any connection with the names Roma/Romanian and the other derivatives, it is the extremely strident *țiganesti* NGOs that are financed with our money that mess up with these special new words so that *țigani* would be confused with the Romanians, this is the truth.

These NGOs don't understand that they are doing a disservice for the good *țigani* because they raise hatred of the Romanians through this specially created confusion

If they don't want to be called *țigani*, they can be called as well Gitani, Sinti or other alternatives that do not cause confusion.

For the future atmosphere in amity and peace between the Romanians and *țigani*, they should renounce to be manipulated by these NGOs, they should renounce the name *Rom*. (Anca 2009).

Romanians or Moldovans (the mother tongue of most of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova is Romanian, also called as Moldovan) usually refer to the Roma as *țigani*, whether the context was negative, neutral or positive. Hence, for many it appears

artificial to call the Roma anything else as, according to “Anca:” “the name *țigăni* is the traditional one.” The *rom* designation may be seen as a transparent attempt to cloak the problems in a politically correct form, as suggested by “radu.” Thereby, considering the large number of replies regarding the designation of the Roma, it seems that it is easier to fight over the name than to puzzle over the ultimate cause of the problems relating to the Roma, as if a problem ceases to exist if it is called something else. This can be seen as one example of the prevailing culture of political correctness, which attempts to minimize the insulting effects of discussion on certain vulnerable groups that are considered to be often discriminated against or prone to be discriminated against. This often criticized phenomenon, turned the Black People into African Americans, Indians into Native Americans and the blind into visually challenged people.

Moreover, political correctness may be seen as an argument for the key notion of discourse analysis (see Chapter 3.8) that words bring about changes in the world – by calling a problem another name people try to modify the world and expect the problem to dissolve. Also politically correct appellations are thought to spread a respectful attitude towards the people in question, whereas hate speech is thought to function the other way round: the more people are exposed to hateful messages, the more they are bound to hate. This functions also as an argument for banning hate speech and using politically correct forms. Thus, allowing people to write their violent fantasies on the Internet, shows that it is normal, harmless and generally accepted. As a consequence, according to the particular view of freedom of speech or banning hateful speech, this can either lead to saturation or action.

Nevertheless, “pintea” questions the politically correct approach and claims that the change of the designation does not solve the problem but “drastic measures should be taken towards them” following the Americans’ model with the Indians and the Black people. “ray” does not consider there to be a big difference between the Romanians and the Roma and “Iesean” claims that the situation would be similar if the Romanians started to call themselves Frankish people (a West Germanic tribe) who gave their

name to the French people. “nic,” following “Iesean” claims that it is the Romanians who have adapted to *țigan* life style, having become “already *țigani*!”

what does it help?

from pintea | 21/03/2009 08:14:56

I don't see how it would change the severe situation where we find ourselves, to change the title from *rrom* to the *țigan*. It's true that they are also of the opinion that they should be called *țigani* but it doesn't solve the serious problem that we have with them, it should be taken drastic measures towards them, like those that the Americans took towards the Indians and the Blacks, they have to be integrated to the society with one way or another but they also have to want it themselves and they have to give also their fullest contribution, the rich ones among them are not interested in helping their fellow-men and those who have influence over them don't tell the truth frankly but they tell them what they want to hear. (pinte

a 2009).

RROMANIA BRAVO !!

from ray | 12/03/2009 20:10:04

I agree with and support the campaign that you have launched but let me add an 'R' in romania 'RROMANIA'

I left rromania 20 years ago and 80 per cent of the *rromani* commit more crimes than *rromi* starting from the president till the last poor you are all *RROMANI* !!!

SO THAT I DON'T GET WHY WOULD YOU CHANGE THEIR DESIGNATION.

RROMI,TIGANI,ROMANI

SAME **** !!

C EST LA MEME CHOSE !! (ray 2009).

Let them be Roma if I can be French or American or

from Iesean | 9/03/2009 17:40:09

Why do we try to change the name of the *Tigan* ethnic group from *Romi* to *Tigani*. Let us rather change the name of the Romanian ethnic group from Romanians to Franks. Why would it make the French angry? It would be discriminatory to get angry. After that we emigrate to Great Britain and in the employment we'll say: "I'm a Frank." Like this the problem gets solved. Now, turning to more serious things, we Romanians could call ourselves Dacians or Getae, or some combination of the two names without problem. But even if Romania would change her name to Dacia and the Romanian people to Dacians, the *tigani* would call themselves Dacians, because, my dears, this question of the name *Rom* is most intentional and dates back to the Byzantine Empire (which was officially called the Roman Empire, being the direct successor of the Roman state - - in parentheses let's say that the Greeks of today are also called Romans as their name is found in Greco-Roman, the successor of the Byzantine Empire). At the end of the Byzantine Empire, the *Tigani*, who in their language were called Dom or Lom, and what is their NAME STILL in the Central Asia or India, started to call themselves "Rom" in order to be affiliated straight with the Byzantines ("*Romani*"). And this leeching has continued till our days. (Iesean 2009).

the *tigani*!!!

from nic, Thursday, 16 April 2009 - 15:22

what is all this that I hear and read about the integration of the *tigani*!!!!????? we'll see about that!!!! Maybe it is vice versa!!!! we and the whole Europe have to integrate, that is!!! We are almost integrated 1. We listen to *manele* [typical Gypsy music], we are mad about it!!!! 2. We swear and speak ugly everywhere and in every way, just like the *tigani*!!!! 3. We steal like them and probably

even more. therefore We Romanians are already *tigani*. I propose Romania to be called TIGANIA!!!!
they and their integration!!! and they and their country destroyed by people worth of two rats (the
national currency) (nic 2009).

“Anca” (see page 78) demands responsibility also from the Roma: they should stop calling themselves Roma if they want to live “in amity and peace” with the Romanians. Accordingly, if hatred exists against the Roma, it is their own fault, if they use a name that the Romanians do accept. This is a common notion in Romania if the Romanians are accused of being discriminatory against the Roma – if only they would act in a different way, people would accept them. When it comes to serious hate speech with violent fantasies, like “Dolfi’s” soap comment in the beginning of Section 4, the victims of violence are thought to deserve all the horrors that are inflicted on them. Hence, the Roma are widely thought to be themselves responsible for their poor situation and the discrimination they face. “Alecu” gives the following advice (“use water and soap”) for the Roma, should they want to avoid “a fate worse than that of the Jews:”

for the good of the *tigani*

de alecu | 10/03/2009 00:27:37

O *tigan!* integrate into the society, go to the school, work, do not steal anymore, do not rob anymore, do not consume excessively social benefits from the state budget, do not beg anymore, do not be evil-intentioned anymore, use water and soap, and the most important, do not reproduce yourself excessively because otherwise in ten years there will appear fascist parties in Europe, and in 15 years they will win the elections and you will get a fate worse than that of the Jews. (alecu 2009).

Without looking deeply into the psychology of aversion, “Anca’s” comment may be an attempt to deny that he or she would normally have any illogical distrust or contempt towards the Roma. That is to say that racism and discrimination are certainly negative characteristics that people do not easily admit to having, it is more acceptable to be critical of something than to be against something or someone. Only a few people in Romania would say they dislike the Roma because they look different or they belong to a different ethnic group than the ethnic Romanians, but they are disliked because they are claimed to be lazy and criminal, harmful to society. Furthermore, many people state that they have Roma friends, acquaintances and colleagues, which also acts as a counterargument to the accusations of racism and discrimination. Like

“Anca” and “C.C” write, many acknowledge that there are also good *țigani*. But “who are the *RROMI*?”:

Rromi?

from C.C, Friday, 13 February 2009 - 10.11

There are bad and good *țigani*, many of them are hard working, talented, attractive even but they don't hide their name *TIGAN* (they deserve to be even proud of it !) Instead, who are the *RROMI* ??? (C.C 2009).

It is also worth mentioning that in almost all the messages the name issue was treated only from the ethnic Romanians' perspective; how calling the Roma *rom* is disadvantageous for the Romanians and therefore the Romanians should stop calling them *rom* but also the Roma should abstain from using the confusing appellation – the country and her name are considered to belong to the Romanians and thus they also have the right to regulate the usage of her name.

There were only a few comments where the commentator referred to the fact that *rom* is the name of the people in Romani language and no comments stating that the Roma should have the right to use a name of their choice. However, there were some comments that were allegedly written by members of the Roma community who defended the Roma and questioned the campaign. Below are the comments of alleged Roma commentators “ioio” and “Tiganca mandra” and the debate of “nini” and “Barabas-Savu Stelica:”

disappointment

from ioio | 24/03/2009 18:58:08

I, a *rroma* student together with hundreds of *rromi* colleagues and others, we feel profoundly insulted by this campaign conducted by “the real intellectuals.” I also have a question: how many *rromi* colleagues, reporters are there in the editorial office of this newspaper? Certainly there are very many of them but it seems that they don't have any dignity. (ioio 2009).

Thank you editors

from Tiganca mandra [‘Proud Gypsy woman’] | 5/03/2009 16:03:17

As a *tiganca* [Gypsy woman] I would like to thank the Jurnalul for all it has done to me. Not only because in the course of time it has promoted the value of our Gypsy music, like Maria Tanase [Romanian singer] and Clejani [a community famous for its Roma musicians], but also because it tries with all its might to place us in the universal and Romanian history. It shows us how we are in fact: slaves, subsistence-level-people, in every way inferior to the Romanians, who stand out because of

their hard work, high-mindedness and especially GOOD WILL. I would like to suggest the Editors to insist the authorities to grant us also the RIGHT to carry a nametag of a *TIGAN*, because sometimes the *tigani* are very difficult to distinct anthropologically from the Romanians (at least when they shut off the water from the Romanians in a block). I thank you and will never forget what you do to us. (Tiganca mandra 2009).

nothings

from nini | 21/03/2009 16:36:35

it's a shame but we can anyway say that great majority of them are not HUMANS. They haven't worked, they don't work and they'll never work because according to their lies and sayings: "as long as there are Romanians, they won't die out of hunger". Saying this, think twice when you're giving them doles, many times they are better-off than we are despite the laziness and begging that runs in their blood, and I tell you, it's certainly not ROMANIAN [or ROMAN] blood!!! (nini 2009).

right to the answer

from Barabas-Savu Stelica | 21/03/2009 22:45:33

NINI – probably you live in another world, but you wouldn't need to generalize that all the *rromi* don't work and are not educated, there are *rromi* that work HARD and are EDUCATED, and I am one of them. In comparison I know many Romanians that are corrupted and uneducated (...). (Barabas-Savu Stelica 2009).

Both in the anti- and pro-Roma comments it is notable that the ethnic Romanians and the Roma were evaluated in relation to one another. According to the commentators, the Roma appear criminal, dirty and uneducated when contrasted to the civilized Romanians, but as "Barabas-Savu Stelica" claims, there are also "corrupted and uneducated" Romanians, which narrows the gap. This is proposed to refute the anti-tsiganist arguments: how could one people condemn another, if its own members do not behave in an exemplary way? "ray" comments (see page 80) the question that as the Romanians and the Roma are all the "same ****," he does not "get why they should change the designation."

5.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at a central issue for the commentators on Romanian Internet forums, the name of the country and her people and the right of the Roma to use a coincidentally similar name for their people. As the numerous messages have shown, the commentators feel betrayed and frustrated due to the resemblance – being

confused with a Roma is considered a great disadvantage and at least the situation for the “honest and hardworking Romanians” could get better if the designation was changed officially from *rom* to *țigan*.

However, there were also a large number of more extreme solutions to the “Gypsy problem” that ranged from references to torturous killing to forced deportation to India, the country where the Roma left from a thousand years ago. The next Section will discuss the ways in which the “Gypsy problem” was treated at a physical level.

6 “THE FINAL SOLUTION”

6.1 INTRODUCTION

As the cited comments have shown so far, the Roma were widely discussed as a problem on the three newspapers’ Internet forums. In addition to complaining about the criminality and other negative features that are associated with the Roma, many commentators were eager to suggest solutions to the problem, “final solutions.” Whereas the previous section treated the attempts to cope with the confusion by changing the official designation from *rom* to *țigan*, this section discusses more drastic measures that were planned for the Roma, handling the issue as one with implications for the physical reality, either by exterminating the Roma or transferring them to another location.

However brutal the comments may sound, it is worth remembering that the messages are copied from Internet forums where the hateful writing knows no limits. It is impossible to tell whether the comments represent someone’s real opinions or who is actually behind the messages, and what intentions they really have. However, these messages are not less “true” than information based on, say, interviews, but the difference is in relation to the reality. Coming back to Manuel Castells’s notions on computer-mediated communication, in all communication “symbols are somewhat displaced in relation to their assigned semantic meaning” (Castells 2009, 404). True or false opinions, in any case *someone* has taken the effort to write the following comments:

28 June 2009, 21:22

Mortea tiganilor! [‘Death to the *Tigani*’]

Death to the *Tigani*. Period. (Mortea tiganilor 2009).

from me

from algebratoru', Tuesday, 6 January 2009 - 22:50

for the *tigani* the only solution NAPALM (algebratoru' 2009).

from bla, Thursday, 12 February 2009 - 21:14

I would castrate them all, a long-term solution (bla 2009).

Rather than further wondering who actually wrote the comments, the emphasis is laid on the forms of violence suggested, following Christopher C. Taylor's notion on Rwandan genocide: "(M)uch of the violence (...) followed a cultural patterning, a structured and structuring logic" (Taylor 2002, 139). Instead of, for instance impalement – ritualized form of violence in Rwanda (ibid., 166) – for the Roma other methods were suggested like gassing, this follows the prevalent Holocaust discourse especially in the countries ravaged by World War II.

Although widely used, violence as a concept is problematic: after having listed the possible usages of the concept from "*everyday* violence" to "structural violence," Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois conclude that violence "can be everything and nothing" – it cannot be exhaustively defined (2004, 2). Statute books may have extensive categorization for infringements on bodily integrity at the interpersonal level but they fail to address the more complex relations of cause and effect, for example, health injuries caused by pollution seen as violence, even if the outcome of a murder and long-term exposure to a toxic environment are the same. Nonetheless, as political theorist Hannah Arendt summarizes, most theories of violence associate violence with power, either as its culmination or its negation as the last resort (Arendt 2004, 237–243). Regarding this viewpoint, the comments cited here may represent people's fantasy of omnipotence as the ability to solve the "Gypsy problem" or lack of power and inability to cope with the situation in any other way than fantasizing the extermination of the Roma.

Hence, many commentators considered the Roma situation as so difficult that they saw the only solution is to get rid of the Roma for good. As all the other means; attempts at educating and employment had been exhausted, there remains "the final solution" as the last resort. For some, this meant deporting the Roma to their "native land" India or some other distant and isolated location while the others suggested

extermination of the whole population. This can also be called genocide, which according to Raphaël Lemkin, a Polish jurist and the father of the concept, means “the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group” (Lemkin 2002, 27). The following messages by “Mihaita” and “gica” are rather typical examples of the annihilation fantasies directed against the Roma:

BACK TO PUNJAB

from Mihaita, Sunday, 8 February 2009 - 11:07

the national top of Romania, Cozma [famous Romanian handball player] was stabbed to death by a *tigan*...this nation should be isolated...the world would be much happier without this ethnic group. (Mihaita 2009).

why not also sterilization or gassing

from gica, Thursday, 1 January 2009 - 17:38

the title tells everything. (gica 2009).

Like “gica’s” comment, many messages referred to genocidal purges reminiscent of the Holocaust with implications to forced sterilization, gas chambers and “Gypsy soap.” As the Roma indeed were subjected to the Nazi ideology of racial purity during World War II with notorious results, a question is in order, why some people desire the “Never Again” to happen again. Nancy Scheper-Hughes explains genocidal aspirations by trying to deal with a “chronic ‘state of emergency’” where the existence of the undesirable continuously prevents the fulfilment of clean and orderly utopia (Scheper-Hughes 2002, 369) – the further the utopia looms, the harder and more violent measures are suggested to attain it. As there were also many comments, like that of “Mihaita’s” reference to the Indian origins of the Roma, the ideas of deporting the whole Roma people are treated in a separate chapter. Furthermore, although this study does not aim at comparing the newspapers or their commentators, it is worth mentioning that there were no killing fantasies on *Jurnalul Național* forums, which is likely due to the stricter censorship policy of the newspaper.

6.2 "THE FINAL SOLUTION"

Most of the comments referring to deporting or actually killing the Roma were replies to articles that covered negative news of the Roma, like criminality and ethnic clashes abroad. For instance, *Adevărul* informed on the 14th of June about an incident where a young man had been stabbed to death by a Roma, which raised exceptionally strong aversion against the whole community. As *Adevărul* or *Evenimentul zilei* did not have a working censorship policy, the comments on their Internet forums suggested direct violence and murder of the Roma:

14 June 2009, 10:07

judecatorul dred [judge dredd]

this *tigan* [the stabber] deserves to die by a lethal injection, still one proof that the capital punishment would be welcome in Romania. (judecatorul dred 2009).

14 June 2009, 15:06

adolf

to soap!

to soap with all these ugly and dirty *tigani*! (adolf 2009).

The best rrom!!

from nesium, Thursday, 16 April 2009 - 15:23

Is the best soap!

abbreviated as BUG!

I know it sounds mean but that's the truth!

speaking about a sub-race that doesn't want to renounce primitivism.

(nessum 2009).

As a punishment for the perpetrator, "judecatorul dred" would reintroduce the capital punishment to Romania and use "a lethal injection," a method used for execution in the United States. Referring to the popular comics, Romanian society seems to appear as a sinister dystopia without the rule of law, where ruthless law-enforcers like Judge Dredd are needed to bring order by executing the bad and the criminal. If the *Antena 3* survey is to believe, this is indeed a common wish in Romania: accordingly, 91 % of the Romanians would vote for death sentence if there was a referendum about the subject (Antena 3 2010). This rather stunning result may indicate a wide-ranging

feeling of insecurity that is tackled by toughening up the penalties, inviting Judge Dredd to take care of the villains.

As a more extreme way, “adolf” would make soap out of the “ugly and dirty *țigani*,” reminiscent of the comment by “Dolfi” mentioned in the beginning of Section 4. It is somewhat striking that even several commentators (although not necessarily more than one person) suggested making soap out of the Roma, even if this method of denigrating the deceased and abusing his or her body has most likely never existed, at least on a major scale. During the World War II, there had been a shortage of soap in Nazi-Germany and people from the ghettos were rumouring that “(T)he green soap that had been so plentiful and had smelled so unpleasantly (...) had been processed from the bodies of cremated Jews!” An influential Holocaust Memorial Center Yad Vashem even made an official announcement that the question of “Jew soap” was indeed a rumour. (Waxman 2006, 168). However, the belief has lived on tenaciously, and can be still read in the anti-tsiganist comments; it is likely that the commentators on Romanian Internet forums suggest this method of extermination due to the widespread rumour from the World War II ghettos.

As the messages reveal, the hate discourse against the Roma leans strongly on the idea that the Roma are “dirty” and “filthy,” as opposed to the Romanians who are seen as “pure” and “clean,” a notion that the comparison picture of the two families by *Noua Dreaptă* (see page 71) aptly concretizes. Referring to President Bănescu’s inconsiderate comment (see Introduction), also he referred to the Roma journalist as ‘*împuțită*,’ ‘stinking’ and ‘dirty.’ In the situation where the President was pressed by the Roma journalist Andrea Pană, his comment appeared hasty and the first attribute that he came up with was *împuțită*. Although the President’s comment or the messages on the Internet boards cannot be considered representative of the “general opinion” in Romania, the idea that the Roma are “dirty,” is widespread, even if the concept is very ambiguous when it comes to real people: What is meant by this dirtiness?

In *Purity and Danger* (2005 [1966]) British anthropologist Mary Douglas evolves her famous analysis on dirt and dirtiness: “(D)irt is the by-product of systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves inappropriate elements” (Douglas 2005, 44). Even if Douglas does not refer to categories of racial purity or interpersonal hierarchies, her notions can be superimposed on the Internet forum categorization of the Roma as “dirty” and “stinking,” “inappropriate elements” in the system that must be eliminated. In this sense, the dirtiness is an anomaly from the utopian state of affairs. Although “alecu” suggests that the Roma should use “water and soap” (see page 81), the Roma “dirtiness” can be considered more generally as an aberration of the system, a group of people that are not considered to belong to Romania. Hence, Romania as the last remnant of Roman Empire, “the country with amazing beauty” represents an orderly system that is unbalanced by the undesired. The Romania of Nadja Comăneci or George Enescu exists only on level of fantasy and the Roma are seen as something that ruins the picture.

the tigani, a cancer of the humankind?

from ADDI | 21/03/2009 11:12:23

before anybody does anything for them, it's obligatory that they themselves enter other people's world. How do you civilize them if they take the attempts as insults? I haven't heard about *tigani* organizations that would have helping activities for the *tigani* (and money, Good God Almighty), teach them to read and write etc. (ADDI 2009).

“ADDI's” reference to the Roma as the “cancer of the humankind?” follows the notion that the Roma are something alien to Romania, this time symbolized within the frame of the body. After all, cancer is often a deadly disease where the cells display excessive growth eating away the system though originating from within the body. Depending on the severity of the disease, the growth is removed by surgical operation, strong cytocides, radiation therapy or a combination of the three. On the level of society, this medical metaphor of the “Gypsy problem” indicates that the Roma are a huge drain on society's resources, devouring them from within by overloading social welfare and engaging in criminal activity, without producing any positive value. Also, treating a group of people as cancer implies that “the humankind” is ill and in order for it to become healthy again, the cause of the illness needs to be eradicated.

American historian of science Robert Proctor discusses in *The Nazi War on Cancer* (2000) that the biological metaphor of cancer was already widely used for the Jews as a discourse justifying the Holocaust. Proctor mentions that the Nazi speech related to murdering of Jews, Roma, homosexuals and others was emphatically eloquent and referred to the horrific deeds as “disinfection” (*Desinfektion*), “putting to sleep” (*Einschläferung*), “cleansing” (*Reinigung*) or “selection” (*Selektion*), among other code words (Proctor 2002, 45–46). On the Nazi health care sector cancer became an object of vigorous campaigning that had its analogy on the wider framework of the society where the subjects of “health and hygiene campaigning” were the Jews. “Tumors as Jews, Jews as tumors” was the discourse showing how society was biologized, the cancer and the Jews representing everything that was out of order in the human body or Nazi Germany (ibid., 8). Although not necessarily derived straight from the Nazi vocabulary, the way the Roma were referred to as “parasites” or “cancer” does resemble the Nazi anti-Jew campaigning, suggesting that the counter-measures can be called cleansing or healing, actions that are generally perceived positively.

15 June 2009, 07:53

Scabia [scabies]

Food to the fishes...

...because I don't wash myself with black soap! ! ! (Scabia 2009).

the romi can take the world out of the crisis

from Antonescu , Tuesday, 6 January 2009 - 15:24

why to integrate them into their [the French] society if you couldn't do it ! I have a better alternative... let's gather them and take them to the zoos of the world and throw them to the tigers and lions... although I wouldn't be surprised if they couldn't be fed like that as they are so dirty and unwashed ...ughh..... (Antonescu 2009).

Coming back to the soap discussion, “Scabia” is aware of the inconsistency of “adolf's” proposal to make soap out of the Roma: how could an impure group of people be transformed into something that is used for hygiene and cleaning purposes? Hence, instead of making “black soap,” “Scabia” would feed the Roma to the fishes. Commenting an article regarding the Romanian Roma in France, “Antonescu” suggests a similar alternative to the problem, feeding the Roma to tigers and lions although he or she is not sure whether the animals would eat the “dirty and unwashed” Roma.

These messages hit rock bottom being beyond the pale – writing that someone is not good enough even to make soap of or to be fed to animals is one of the most gross insults one can imagine, which on the other hand demonstrates how the Roma situation and its solutions incite people’s imagination. These examples also show that the violence suggested for the Roma was not always derived from some widely existing or known way of execution. However, for many commentators writing obscenities on the Internet may be the most convenient way of channelling one’s resentment and frustration. Acting anonymously it is easy to put into words thoughts and fantasies that in other contexts could be too savage to be uttered – it is hard to believe that anybody would propose similar methods of tackling the “Gypsy problem” to an interviewer.

**solution to crimes, rapes, thefts and robberies
from bogdanescu, Friday, 13 February 2009 - 10:29**

No execution, no fines nor prison. All these variants cost and are against the law, even if they are wished by part of the population. Solution is simple: work. Those who are guilty should be put to work from 4 in the morning till 24 with 3 eating breaks of 15 minutes. Work disciplines extraordinarily, brings money to the society and, maybe, reintegrates the condemned. (bogdanescu 2009).

In most extermination comments, simply executing the Roma is not considered sufficient: they are often transformed into a product (like soap) or labour. For instance, in the above message, “bogdanescu” objects the physically violent ways to exterminate the Roma, as they are costly and “against the law” and suggests hard work, which would probably even function as a “reintegrative” method. In addition to concentration camps, penal servitude connotes to Russian *gulags* (‘labour camps’) and the camps where the Romanian Roma were deported during the *Porrajmos* (see Chapter 2.4). The outcome of extremely hard work would probably be the same as with the other methods of execution but the exhaustion may sound less cruel.

**Final Solution
from Andrei Roman, Saturday, 14 February 2009 - 05:12**

FINAL SOLUTION remains for the *tigan* problem. Only a unified European effort on conditions of success of the extreme right can put an end to this problem. On the national level all the forces of the extreme right or a military regime imposing a condition of war could eradicate the problem. Special

extreme measures should be imposed: urgent construction of isolated labour camps in Campia Baraganului [Câmpia Bărăganului is a plain in Southern Romania] for the future arrested *tigani*, isolation of the *Tigan* quarters in the Capital and big towns by the army and civil guards. Gathering all the *tigani* (including the rural zones) and transporting them to labour camps. Forced labour in highway construction supervised by military regime combined with mass sterilization of the *tigani* can guarantee within a generation's time their physical disappearance. (Andrei Roman 2009).

“Andrei Roman’s” “FINAL SOLUTION” is a somewhat more detailed version of “bogdanescu’s” plan. First of all, the title of the message implies to the World War II Nazi policy of tackling the “Jewish problem;” according to Hitler, the policy aimed systematically at “the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe” (Browning 2007, 11). Furthermore, the commentator suggests explicitly that it is the extreme right forces or the military that should be responsible for carrying out the plans: establishing the camps and performing “mass sterilizations” until the “physical disappearance” of the Roma.

The reference to the extreme right wing conjures up the paramilitary ultra-nationalistic anti-tsiganist and anti-gay brigades like *Magyar Gárda* (‘Hungarian Guard’) in Hungary and *Noua Dreaptă* in Romania that have during the last decade become influential political factors. Although without legal authorization, these uniformed national militia brigades fight against “Hungarian spiritual and physical emasculation” (*magyarság szellemi és fizikai gyengítése*) (Magyar Gárda 2007) and for “creating a new man” (*crearea unui om nou*) (Noua Dreaptă 2010), reproducing the national romantic ideas of a fantasy nation with strict provisions for the quality of its members. Ironically enough, the more rigid are the standards for an ideal and “clean” citizen (healthy, heterosexual, member of the majority ethnic, linguistic and religious group), the more there are people who are considered excessive and “dirty,” “inappropriate elements.” Postulating that Romania (or Hungary or any country) will never become void of the undesired groups (whatever they are, whenever), these ultra-nationalistic brigades and Internet forum shouters are in a constant war that they cannot win.

As the comments in this chapter show, many comments referred to the Holocaust where according to estimates from 250 000 to 500 000 Roma were systematically killed (Achim 2004: 181). The horrors of World War II triggered widespread contemplation on the evil within humanity, resulting in numerous studies and literary novels, like Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946) or Imre Kertész's Nobel-laureate *Fateless* (1975). Due to the numerous literary works and the on-going discourse on the Holocaust, the forms of violence employed by the Nazis have become an emblem of mass violence, out of all the world's mass exterminations the Holocaust stands out due to its industrial and highly planned nature. However, for many the Holocaust represents the standard model for mass extermination and if there is a need to get rid of the undesirable, the model for this already exists in the common memory and rich literature on the subject. However, eradicating the Roma physically is not the only way to get rid of them. For many commentators, a sufficient solution would be segregating the Roma from the general population or taking them to some far-away place, "Back to Punjab."

6.3 "BACK TO PUNJAB"

As already covered in Section 2, the Roma have verifiable roots in India, from where they started to move westwards presumably some thousand years ago, arriving to today's Romania in the 14th Century. Since then, the Roma have been subjected to hardships like slavery, attempts to absorb them within the majority, ethnic purges and widespread discrimination. As these attempts have not worked as desired, some commentators suggested removing the whole population from Romania either to an isolated enclave or to India, "their country of origin." The following comments by "Baciu Ion," "Anton Escu" and "Lucian" represent the most obscene of these type of comments:

14 June 2009, 19:18

Baciu Ion

D1E T16AN3 !!!

D1E T16AN3 !!! D1E T16AN3 !!! D1E T16AN3 !!!

TO INDIA WITH YOU FU.CK YOU YOU FILT.HY AND PATHETIC, THE MOST FILTHY THERE IS ON THE WORLD, THE MOST SHAMELESS AND CRAPPY, I KNOW WHAT I'M SAYING, I HAVE TRAVELLED A LOT, EVEN THE NIGGERS IN AFRICA ARE NOT AS SHAMELESS AS YOU (Baciu Ion 2009).

Vlahians and moldovans...

from Anton Escu, Wednesday, 29 April 2009 - 01:39

Well dirty [*'imputit'*] *tigan*, march back to your filthy India and leave the civilized world breath without your stink. Wherever you go, you cause only problems. You are worse than animals. It's a pity that they who work have to spend money for your dirty brats to get kindergartens where they teach to steal/rape, because otherwise you wouldn't manage. A Lupi Gus *tigane!* [*'alupigus'* is *'sugi pula!*,' a vulgar order to perform fellatio the other way round; *tigane* is a plural feminine form for *tigan*] (Anton Escu 2009).

They should live in their own world

from Lucian, Tuesday, 6 January 2009 - 16:14

Rromi should be taken to Sahara to live in a madhouse if they are not ready to integrate (Lucian 2009).

The comment by “Baciu Ion” is an example of the so-called shouting on the on-line forums. Writing in all capitals is used for emphasizing the expression of the message, although according to netiquette⁷, this is not considered “acceptable online behaviour.” The content of the comment is in line with shouting: “Baciu Ion” insults the Roma, wishes death to them and uses swear words, possibly trying to avoid censorship by replacing some letters with numbers. He or she would also take the Roma to India, and all this is done with an authority of a person who has “travelled a lot.” “Anton Escu” does not pull his or her punches either: the road to the “filthy India” is paved with gross references to criminality, “stinking” and “dirtiness” of the Roma. “Lucian” for one would take the Roma to Sahara and let them live in a “madhouse.”

The *Tiganistan*

from eldorado, Friday, 13 February 2009 - 11:46

@ European Brothers, for 700 years we have had a common problem, the *TIGANI*, irrespective of how we call them. Even if during entire centuries we haven't been able to get rid of them, (inquisition, religious wars, pogroms, fascism...haven't changed the world) the modern Europe should

⁷ “*Netiquette* (net + etiquette) can be defined as the informal guidelines developed by the users of the Internet for acceptable online behavior” (Kayany 2004, 274).

take the problem seriously. They are European citizens, fine, let's create them a territory of 70 000 km² ceding to them the territory, where they would only be among themselves, we would help them to make a proper administration, modern schools with no *tigan* education, they would create a proper elite with European views, they wouldn't cover for one another like some charlatans etc. For some 30 years passport would be obligatory, until the generation of rogues would have cleaned themselves. Europe has funds for sustaining a such project, with help they would create industry, economic activity, proper diversity etc. Maybe this would do. The *tigani* who don't claim to belong to the ethnic group, would lose their minority rights in different countries and should assimilate. Maybe it would work? (eldorado 2009).

"eldorado's" plan is somewhat more detailed and shows some reasoning of the question. He or she would give the Roma some land where they could evolve their own state, *Ṭiganistan* with economic structure and industry and get help for this from the Europeans. In "some 30 years (...) the generation of rogues" would perish and the *ṭigani* would be "clean." Although this message shows some signs of good will in combating the "Gypsy problem," the Roma are still addressed as a problem that have to be got rid of as the co-existence is not possible. In one condition the *ṭigani* could stay, if they renounce their ethnicity and accept to assimilate with the majority, losing their minority rights.

Although the fantasies of taking the Roma to India or founding an own state for them sound highly utopian, the world history knows many examples where groups of people were transferred to another location: in Soviet Union millions of people were resettled to prevent national upsurges and to create a single Soviet people, in the division of India and Pakistan upon independence from the British Empire "nearly 10 million people migrated to either side of the Indo-Pakistan border and nearly 2 million lost their lives" (Krishan 2002, iv) and in the modern Israel almost the whole of the Jewish population are migrants or their offspring.

In addition to the existing models of mass deportations, the wishes to deport the Roma to India may reflect the anti-tsiganist discourse of the far-right movements, in particular that of the National Party (*Národní strana*) in Czech Republic. The chairwoman of the Party Petra Edelmannová wrote in 2008 a political pamphlet *The Final Solution to the Gypsy Issue in the Czech Lands* where she suggested forced

“repatriation” of the Roma to India, and again in 2009 the Party aired a television commercial suggesting a “final solution” for the Roma (Hall 2009). Although condemned on the international level, in many countries in the former Soviet Bloc, far-right parties ride on anti-tsiganist sentiments: for instance in 2010 parliamentary elections anti-tsiganist and radically nationalistic *Jobbik* – The Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*) got almost 17 % of the votes in the Hungarian Parliament. In Romania, the Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare*) was successful in 2000 and 2004 elections but failed to get any seats in 2008. Also, it is conspicuous that in many of these countries the political pattern follows the same model: in addition to a somewhat vigorous far-right party, there are affiliated national militias like *Magyar Gárda* in Hungary and *Noua Dreaptă* in Romania who do the dirty job in fighting against the undesired and their work is not done until the category of the Roma are either exterminated, absorbed into the majority or “repatriated” to India.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

Without examining thoroughly the doctrine of the aforementioned far-right movements and parties, they all rely heavily on the idea of monoculturalism in which the nation-states form homogeneous islets that are surrounded by other homogeneous units. One nation or ethnic group (in Romanian, the word ‘*nație*’ stands for both meanings) inhabits these islets where only one language is spoken and one god worshipped. According to this nationalistic ideology, any deviation from this rule is registered as an error of the system, “dirtiness” in Mary Douglas’s words.

In Romania, it is the Roma people that are considered, at least on the Internet forums in question, the biggest threat to the realization of the “one country, one nation” fantasy. Although it would be an overt simplification of explaining the strong anti-tsiganist sentiments solely by nationalistic aspirations, according to the commentators, the Romania of their fantasies is not possible without getting rid of the

Roma. On the Internet, there are clamorous on-going suggestions for different methods of getting rid of the Roma. Many of them are sick and imaginative plans for torturing and executing the Roma bodies in the most derogatory way possible. Others suggest that they can keep their lives but somewhere else, possibly in India, where the Roma have their origins.

7 CONCLUSIONS

As the analysis of the comments collected from the three Romanian newspapers' (*Jurnalul Național*, *Evenimentul zilei* and *Adevărul*) Internet forums has shown, there exist strong anti-tsiganist sentiments, especially in comments that were left in response to articles covering negative pieces of news, like crimes committed by the Roma. Many of the comments can be considered as hate speech, a concept developed in international law and United States common law tradition that tries to define the limits for acceptable and inappropriate speech, hate speech being any form of communication that defames its subject due to his or her belonging to some ethnic, religious, linguistic or sexual orientation group (nonexhaustive list) and is thus seen as discriminatory and pernicious.

As discussed in Section 4, this is however highly difficult as the semantic meaning of communication cannot be straightforwardly derived from a symbol as the meaning of the message is always contextualized and "always in some ways out of control" (Butler 1997, 15). Thus, normative limits for acceptable speech run a great risk in being exposed to arbitrariness and politicized aspirations, which for instance in the Soviet Romania led to paranoid persecution of the "enemies of state." Furthermore, curbing speech of some sort is a clear message that the particular utterance is a powerful weapon, which for some may work as an appeal of the forbidden fruit.

However, the Internet forum comments of today's Romania show no trace of the secret police *Securitate* control and censorship and at least the Roma can be addressed with as injurious speech as possible – imagination of the commentators is the only limit. As the Roma display generally lower position in many socio-economic fields like education and housing but their criminality is allegedly higher than that of the general population, many commentators were eager to find solutions to the Roma situation that they perceived supremely problematic. As the censorship policies of

especially *Evenimentul zilei* and *Adevărul* were apparently non-existing, many of the anti-tsiganist comments contained extremely vulgar speech and torturous and scurrilous suggestions for what could be done to the Roma. Some of the comments, especially those with fantasies of turning the Roma into soap or pet food indicated that the commentators enjoyed gloating over the violent alternatives to get rid of the Roma. The arguments for banning hate speech see these kinds of utterances dangerous as they might lead to actual violence, as reportedly happened during the Rwandan genocide.

Two strategies for tackling the “Gypsy problem” emerged from the comments, both suggesting that the category of the Romanians needs to be clearly separated from that of the Roma. Section 5 dealt in more detail with the first group of proposals, where the commentators wanted to change the official Romanian designation of the Roma from *romi* to *țigani*, which would make clear that the Roma belong to a different ethnic group than the Romanians, irrespective of the haphazard resemblance of the words ‘*rom*’ and ‘*român*’ (Romanian). The discussion on the name dispute is further culminated due to the high significance of the name of the country for the Romanians who widely want to affiliate themselves with the Ancient Romans and from whom the Romance language is a legacy. Seen in this light, many commentators considered the *rom* designation of the Roma especially insulting and problematic, many failing to understand that ‘*rom*’ originates from the Romani language and it is not adopted by the Roma as a deliberate nuisance for the Romanians.

The latter strategy discussed in Section 6, “final solutions,” fulfils the criterion of hate speech more evidently: messages of this group wished the category of the Roma to be totally exterminated or at least forcibly deported to some distant place, for instance to India, from where the Roma left wandering towards the West presumably in the turn of the first millennium. Many of the suggested solutions to the “Gypsy problem” were suggestive of the World War II horrors that were inflicted on the Jews, Roma, homosexuals and political dissidents in the notorious concentration camps. Although it is impossible to tell what were the underlying purposes of the commentators to

fantasize over the extinction of the Roma, many references and pseudonym choices implied that the commentators favoured the Nazi measures to clean the Aryan race.

The Roma have lived in the Romanian lands for some 700 years now but it is worth reminding that categorizing them as something alien evolved mainly with the upsurge of the Romanian nationalism, starting from the 19th Century. The recent massive changes in the political and economic structure of the country have caused widespread insecurity and frustration among the Romanians as for many; the limited means are not enough for attaining the promised ends. This is undoubtedly a big reason for the rise of the extreme right forces that promise to rebuild the “system” by strengthening the values that are considered the foundation of a sound society, like Christian family value and pride over the nation in Romania. However, these attempts are highly exclusive as there are always “aliens” who cannot affiliate themselves with the national heroes or find it impossible to establish a “natural” nuclear family. Like Roma, they are prone to be perceived negatively failing to meet up the standards of a “good citizen.”

The clear juxtaposition between the Roma as “diabolic,” “dirty,” “uneducated” and “criminal” contrasted with the “good,” “clean,” “educated” and “honest” Romanians and the references to the pogroms that were present in many comments offers an attractive possibility to reflect the categorization in Mary Douglas’s analysis on dirt as an aberration of an orderly human-devised system. With “(W)here there is dirt, there is system,” (Douglas 2002, 44) Douglas means that by creating categories of “dirty” and “pure” people in fact produce impurity and dirtiness; the stricter the requirements are for what is considered clean, the more there are intruders from the impure world that threaten to shake the balance and destroy the system. On the Internet forums in question, it is the Roma who are considered “dirty” and “inappropriate elements” who rule out the fruition of the Romania of amazing beauty, Nadia Comănechi and Mihai Eminescu.

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