The Cultivated West, the Second-class East and the Roma at the Bottom of the Slope:

Racism and self-civilizing identity formation in contemporary Hungary

by

Mariann Dósa

Supervisors:

Professor Allaine Cerwonka

Professor Anna Loutfi

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Abstract:

Roma communities are facing strengthening prejudices and hostility in contemporary European societies and Hungary is no exception. Openly racist extreme right associations become increasingly popular and even the mainstream media is fraught with overt anti-Roma accounts. The aim of my thesis is to unfold tensions deeply-rooted in the Hungarian society that strongly contribute to the proliferation of aggression targeted towards the Roma. In order to contextualize these tensions, I examine anxieties about Hungarian identity raised by an ongoing civilizing process that produces modern, cultivated western subjectivities by marking eastern societies as inferior. My basic assumption is that Hungary is mimicking this 'civilization' to produce a developed, western identity by inscribing backwardness upon the Roma. In practical terms, I explicate this process on two levels. First, I analyze discursive practices that produce aberrant Roma subjectivity. In addition, I examine the ways in which agents of the Hungarian state are involved in such racist differentiation; not only by perpetuating racist discourses, but also through concrete policies and practices that I demonstrate through the gentrification of Budapest.

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Introduction

Since 1989 it has been the ultimate goal of the Hungarian political mainstream to 'rejoin Europe' (as it frequently appeared in the every-day discourse), and in this way this determination has become the core of the country's post-socialist identity formation. In the course of this self-construction, the term 'European' has gained a particular meaning[1]. It no longer merely refers to a geographical location, or a political-economic community; instead, being 'European' has become a synonym of being developed or 'civilized' – a term often used in the public discourse. Hence, Hungary has been engaged in an overt (self-)civilizing process for the past two decades, in which the country endeavors to suspend its liminal position between 'East' and 'West', that is to say modern and backward, catch up with western countries, and in this way create an unambiguous, civilized 'European' identity.

Notwithstanding, this resolute self-civilization is deeply embedded in the EU's imperial, "civilizing colonialism" (Comaroff 1997), in which European identity is defined through degrading distinctions (Wolff 1994, Todorova 1997), such as treating the new members as the 'poor cousin'; as though 'in a cheaper make-up'. Eastern countries are obliged to accept a second-class position in the European community, the numerous differentiating derogations or the often rather demeaning, humiliating language western European countries use in relation to them (for further discussion of this topic and for additional examples see Dancsi 2001, Sher 2001). These notions confound Hungary's above-mentioned, ultimate devotion towards 'Europe' and produce an anxious national identity. Following Milica Bakić-Hayden's (1995) compelling concept of

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[1] I will use the terms Europe, European, the East or the West in quotation marks when I refer to this loaded meaning, not to the mere geographical location.

'nested orientalisms', I argue that these tensions get projected on Hungary's own 'Others', who, in many cases, appear to be the Roma. Hence, new EU countries seem to react to this degrading east-west differentiation by certain self-civilizing moves, which is often manifested in the inferiorization and abjectification of their own subjugated populations by their own colonial cognitive patterns (Böröcz 2001, 2006).

In the past few years the entire central and eastern European region has been witnessing the proliferation of verbal and physical aggression targeted towards the Roma, and Hungary is no exception. However, this hostility seems to create a grim tension with regard to a developing modern Hungarian identity. On the one hand, the legislation of hate speech is one of the hottest topics of current debates in the country, which appears in the pro-regulation camp as the depository of modern, democratic values, that is, true 'Europeanness'. But on the other hand, the media is fraught with explicitly racist, anti-Roma accounts, often made by state representatives or government officials, which, has been recently accompanied by an increasing hostility towards the Roma and the proliferation of actual, physical attacks against them all over the country. This is exactly the tension that interests me the most with regard to the current situation – the way in which Hungary endeavors to become a full, respected member of western, civilized 'European' countries, while being strongly engaged in racist practices, which is supposedly the most unwelcome and disgraceful phenomena in contemporary Europe.

After locating my study within the existing theoretical literature and introducing the key concepts and theories I employ throughout the project, I demonstrate on two levels the ways in which this tension is manifested in Hungary and the mechanisms it induces. In the first substantial chapter I analyze every-day discursive practices through which social anomalies are inscribed upon the Roma community (as a homogeneous, monolithic group) through tropes of a civilizational narrative. Through this analysis I explicate the ways in which current Hungarian discourse

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functions to produce aberrant Roma subjectivity as opposed to what modern, 'European' Hungarian identity is supposed to embody.

Furthermore, I argue that these exclusionary mechanisms are highly gendered, since these discursive acts are often manifested in themes of reproduction, child-rearing and motherhood. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis argue that in discourses about nation and national identity women are recurrently represented "as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities;" or "as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups" (Anthias and Yuval Davies 1989, 7). In the following chapters I explicate the ways in which these themes get located in the center of certain racist, discriminatory discourses.

I not only show the ways in which a white, western Hungarian subjectivity is produced through a contemporary civilizing process directed towards the Roma community, but I also argue that the Hungarian state plays a crucial role in discursive mechanisms of this twofold identity formation. Moreover, the role of the state in such racist practices goes far beyond these discursive acts. In the last substantial section I unfold concrete measures and policies of state authorities that bring about the actual, physical segregation of Roma people. I depict the gentrification of a particular neighborhood in the center of Budapest and explicate the ways in which Roma inhabitants are expelled from the area. I argue that the way in which the reconstruction project of Central-Ferencváros is designed and actually realized (in which state authorities play a central role) implies a radical tenure conversion in the neighborhood, in which the Roma are eliminated from the beautified project area while higher-class, more educated people move into the newly built or renovated dwellings.

These transformations are legitimized by discourses of civilization and 'Europeanness'; however, they have serious consequences for the previous inhabitants, particularly for the Roma. One of the main aims of my project is to call attention to these negative implications that seem to be omitted from the general discourse about the reconstruction of Budapest. Current renovation

projects are generally depicted as success stories that restore the decayed glory of the capital and in this way contribute to the modernization of Hungary. I came across only a very few works discussing the negative implications of these transformations; therefore my aim is to create a debate by highlighting the darker sides of the current processes.

I argue that the above segregating mechanisms enhance the distance between Roma and non-Roma citizens, not only *de facto*, but also in a figurative sense. Namely, the fewer the chance to enter into relation with each other there is, the more the scope there is for the thriving of glib prejudices. However, I find it also very important to point out more concrete implications of such processes, to highlight the ways in which these mechanisms actually affect the every-day lives of the local Roma population. In the last section of my work I discuss the unfavorable implications of the current gentrification of Central-Ferencváros that I unfolded in the course of the interviews that I conducted with local Roma women, who still live in the project area, but are scheduled to be moved out in the near future. My hypothesis in this matter is that Roma women are particularly vulnerable to such transformations since being in a particularly marginal position in the society, they are especially reliant upon their social network, which, according to my assumptions, gets disrupted as a result of the current gentrifying processes.

I find these issues particularly urgent for several reasons. As I suggested before, discursive and concrete physical aggression against the Roma has become such an acute problem in contemporary Hungary that it cannot remain masked any longer. The emergence and spectacular strengthening of extreme right groups and political initiatives that do not even bother with veiling their racism is an alarming manifestation of the gravity of the current situation. In my view, the ever increasing popularity of such groups highlights deeply-rooted tensions of Hungarian society that need to be unfolded and treated accordingly. My study attempts to reveal several layers of these sometimes covered links and mechanisms, and to locate them within the broader European social and political context. I find this latter step particularly important, since the problems I am

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discussing here are not an isolated, nor peculiarly Hungarian phenomena. Hostility towards the Roma, their general stigmatization or the displacement of Roma families from city centers are increasingly burning issues all over Europe (both east and west), which makes these questions even more urgent and reinforces the relevance of such a study.

Remarks on my methodology:

I base my research on two different kinds of data. In the third chapter, where I analyze the discursive mechanisms of producing abject Roma subjectivity and the implied delineation of civilized, western Hungarian identity, I build my arguments on recent articles from the online version of the two most popular Hungarian political dailies, *Népszabadság* and *Magyar Nemzet*. At the beginning of 2009, three cases stirred up a hot debate in Hungarian media about the Roma population of the country, which offers an opportunity to analyze the general perceptions about the Roma in contemporary Hungary. Moreover, the fact that the cases got international publicity allows me to locate these issues in a broader European context.

All three cases highlight different aspects of the general discourse about this ethnic group, which allows for mapping the multiplicity of tensions surrounding the Roma in the country and illuminating the complexity of what is very often addressed as "the Roma issue" in mainstream Hungarian discourse. Moreover, the intensity of the debate seemed to bring deeply-rooted views and prejudices to the surface, offering a good opportunity to unfold numerous hidden perceptions and anxieties of the general public about the Roma in Hungary. In addition, the fact that the three cases followed each other rather quickly allows for sort of a *ceteris paribus* analysis, that is, I can exclude the impacts of other, large-scale, internal or global social and political affairs.

I chose particularly these media because these are the most widely known political journals in the country; *Népszabadság* representing leftist, while *Magyar Nemzet* right-wing views circulating in the society. These are the two strongest political positions in Hungary, the majority of the population can be assigned to one or the other, and therefore the analysis of the ways in which these media discuss certain issues gives an insight into contemporary mainstream Hungarian discourses.

Nevertheless, from a methodological point of view the other major section of my work seems much more interesting. I base this part on interviews, which raises a number of captivating practical and ethical questions that are worth briefly mentioning here. First of all, I decided to conduct interviews to examine the implications of the gentrification of Central-Ferencváros, because I wanted to learn how the dwellers themselves experience the mechanisms I examine – what they think about the transformation of their neighborhood, and in what ways their lives are actually affected by the current processes. Being a 25 year-old, white, middle-class university student I found it quite problematic to discuss the reconstruction and lament about the distressing implications of it for Roma inhabitants from behind my laptop screen, without actually talking to these people and ask how they feel about the current transformation.

My aim was to find Roma people who still live in the project area, in old, dilapidated houses and therefore would supposedly face moving out in the near future. I hoped to get an overview from the interviews about the ways in which the gentrification of their neighborhood affected the social network of these people, how their every-day practices (such as shopping, child-rearing or socializing) are influenced by the changes and how state authorities treat them – what possibilities they have to voice their preferences or their grievances emerging throughout the transformations, or to what extent they can have a word in the ways in which the reconstruction is accomplished. In my view, this is one of the main contributions of my entire project, namely that I can give scope for a particularly marginalized group of the society to speak for themselves, to voice their complaints or satisfactions, whatever they feel about the current processes. In retrospect I can

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see how much their views could tinge and complicate the first impressions I had having analyzed only the bare numbers and other factual information about the project.

However, the outcome of the interviews far exceeded my preliminary anticipations. It turned out that, although the respondents were still living in the project area, most of them had already experienced removal by the council before(mostly more than once), due to the demolition or renovation of their earlier dwelling, since the reconstructions had been going on for more than ten years. Therefore, I could not only get an insight into local dwellers' experiences and opinion about their transformed environment, but I also gained firsthand information about the ways in which the moving of the inhabitants was actually managed.

I asked the chief of the 9th district social services department to suggest dwellers to me from the project area who would fit my research criteria; half of my interviewees were indeed people whose addresses I got from the office. However, I could sense from the very beginning that getting those addresses would take quite a long time. Such state institutions generally tend to work in a rather slow, dawdling manner, which was actually reinforced by my interviewees, most of whom complained a lot about the slow and rather inefficient office work. Therefore I invented another strategy to find more respondents. I started to wander around the neighborhood and fell into conversation with Roma women on the streets and in the playgrounds, which turned out to be a very efficient strategy since I ended up with five recorded interviews in this way. These conversations what I had while waiting for the help of the office, together with the other five mediated by the social service department proved to be an extremely useful material, which I analyze in the fourth chapter.

All in all, I have two major intentions examining these two sorts of data. First, through the article extracts I illuminate certain elements of Hungarian public discourse about the Roma and analyze the ways in which such discursive practices produce anomalous Roma subjectivity and in this way marginalize Roma people. Second, through the analysis of the interviews I explicate the ways in

which certain state practices and policies contribute to this marginalization and analyze how such practices function to produce modern, 'Western' Hungarian identity.

Literature Review:

Before I move on to the actual analysis of my data I need to briefly introduce some of the concepts and theories that are crucial to my project. Most of the core concepts that I build my arguments on, such as the notions of civilization, modernity, orientalism or Eurocentrism, come from the post-colonial literature; however, I use theories outside this conceptual framework as well, that help me to actually apply these ideas to contemporary Hungarian social and political reality.

I build my core argument on Attila Melegh's (2006) theoretical concept of the *East-West slope*, which he defines as "the gradually diminishing civilization toward the 'East'" (Melegh 2006, 2.) Melegh argues that in contemporary European societies cognitive representations of modernity and development are located on an imaginary slope, on the top of which the most civilized countries reside and the further we go down the slope the more backward, uncivilized nations we find. He powerfully demonstrates that this slope is positioned between east and west, meaning that the more western a society is located geographically the more civilized manners are associated with it. However, in order to fully understand the mechanisms of the slope and the ways in which they are manifested in the case of Hungary, I need to introduce some other important concepts and theories that are fundamental to the idea of the slope and therefore play a crucial role in the mechanisms I am analyzing in my work.

One of these key concepts is the notion of *civilization*. Norbert Elias (2000) describes civilization as a process through which an ideal, superior European identity is established. He dedicates his

major work to demonstrate numerous practices and formalities, such as table manners, bodily functions, general behavioral patterns, or manners of speech that served as cultural markers of civilization in Early Modern Europe. He argues that through these markers a certain, idealized European subjectivity was produced, which, in the end, got identified with 'the state of civilization'. That is, western European norms and customs represented the peak of social development and in this way this particular model became the ideal form of social organization. Before I go deeper into Elias' work let me briefly introduce the emergence of this ideal.

Stuart Hall (1996) powerfully demonstrates that the concept of 'the West' as a monolithic entity, the repository of progress and the highest level of social organization, emerged in the Enlightenment era, and became a central *topos* of this epoch. Moreover, this superior position is depicted, by western European countries themselves, as the result of their own achievements, the fruit of their own internal capabilities. That is, Hall concludes, Enlightenment thinking created a view of 'the West' as a self-sufficient civilization that serves as the measure for 'the Rest' which also has a crucial role in this game as a reverse image, as opposed to what the refinement of 'the civilized West' is continually reproduced.

Coming back to Elias, he demonstrates the ways in which this self-representation was built through certain European manners and behaviors. He explicates that these formalities functioned as means of disciplining populations by marking particular social groups as modern and civilized, while branding others as backwards and inferior. My work demonstrates that this civilization process continues on in contemporary Europe, where certain notions, such as racism or ethnic intolerance are discredited as signifiers of underdevelopment; therefore, inscribing these anomalies on eastern European countries serves the disciplining and subordination of these societies. However, these eastern states are also engaged in a similar civilization, in which they push themselves up on the East-West slope by marking certain social groups as primitive and inferior. To demonstrate the ways in which this backwards versus civilized contraposition is

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actually translated into an east-west opposition I turn to Edward Said's (1979) renowned theory of *orientalism.*

Said compellingly demonstrates the ways in which this alleged exceptionality of 'Europe' is produced vis-à-vis the construction of a pre-modern, inferior 'East'. Orientalism, in Said's definition, is "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said 1979, 2). He argues that 'the East' is an object of the western gaze, having been subdued, transformed and in this way constructed by post-Enlightenment Europe as an ahistorical and monolithic entity, that is, in fact, the repository of the structured, systematically organized western knowledge about 'the Orient'. Therefore, orientalism is a closed system of representation in which western geopolitical cognition manifests itself in various forms, such as aesthetics, literature, scholarship or history writing. This view and its continuance are assured by the hegemonic position of the west and its confidence regarding its supposed, political, moral and cultural superiority. As a consequence of this clear-cut subject-object positioning sustained by the existing power relations, 'the East' is constrained in a passive, impotent position from which it cannot speak about itself. In contrast to this, 'the West', due to its hegemonic position, is able to manage its own representation as a paradigm of modernity.

Said's concept of orientalism is particularly relevant to my topic, since it helps us to understand the ways in which geographical locality, the marks of being eastern or western is associated with certain civilizational values and deficiencies. I argue that mechanisms of orientalism continue on in contemporary Europe, and are particularly visible in the case of the European Union. Western European ideas about eastern societies seem to echo what Said identified as orientalist representation. Eastern European states are depicted as either exotic, feminine and immature, or pre-modern and primitive, but certainly as underdeveloped and inferior to western societies. To demonstrate this east-west differentiation in contemporary Europe I draw on Larry Wolff's work

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on the invention of 'Eastern-Europe' as a unified, monolithic entity, which is obviously subordinated to western European societies.

Larry Wolff (1994) examines the ways in which the mechanisms of Orientalism function with regards to eastern European states. Through what he calls "demi-orientalization" (Wolff 1994, 7) Europe "subordinat[es] geography to its own philosophical values" (Wolff 1994, 6) and in this way not only actively constructs 'Eastern-Europe', but also delineates the closed entity of 'Western-Europe'. Along the lines of Said and Hall, he argues that the Enlightenment brought about the re-conceptualization of 'civilization' as the increase of wealth and the refinement of manners, which became identified as 'European civilization', and he furthers this argument by pointing out the specific position of 'Eastern-Europe' as being on the margins of this civilization. Through extracts from travelogues and philosophical or literary texts written by westerners he powerfully demonstrates that the geographic and geopolitical liminality of eastern European countries is played out also in terms of civilization. That is, people from this part of Europe are depicted (by the western imagination) as backward, barbarous, a "lower "elevation" of the scale of humanity" (Wolff 1994, 341), although (being physically and spiritually closer to the "cradle of civilization") not as barbaric as 'the real Orient', that is countries of the 'middle-' or the 'far East'.

Having introduced these key concepts of the post-colonial literature, now I turn back to the East-West slope and demonstrate that the position of Hungary within Europe is paradigmatic of this liminality described by Wolff and the functioning of the civilizational narrative in which this gradation is embedded. In a historical analysis of this East-West dichotomy Melegh compellingly discusses "why Central and Eastern Europe necessarily turns 'ugly' (racist, xenophobic and nationalistic) under a global pattern of Westernization understood in the framework of the civilizational slope" (Melegh 2006, 3). In the following chapters I employ the idea of this slope, and attempt to locate Hungary on this putative gradation from civilization to incivilization (Wolff 1994, 345). I argue that this positioning plays a crucial role in the identity-formation of the

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country, in the delineation of 'true Hungarianness' strongly interconnected with the othering processes of the society. On the one hand, contemporary Hungarian public discourse is heavily saturated with acts of self-inferiorization, that is public speeches and newspaper articles that discuss how undeveloped and not-yet civilized Hungary is compared to western European countries, which are very often depicted as repositories of modernity and enlightenment values. On the other hand, backwardness and pre-modern traits get discursively inscribed upon the Roma population of Hungary. I argue that these practices together, in a dialectic interaction, construct a Hungarian identity that seems far less refined than what is regarded as western, however, this identity appears to be pronouncedly modern and civilized when opposed to the Roma population of the country. Hence, Hungary is located somewhere in the middle of the slope, in-between cultivated western European countries and the uncivilized, barbarous Roma community.

In the following chapters I demonstrate some of the main discursive practices that serve this positioning of Hungary, and in this way, I argue, play a crucial role in defining Hungarian identity. Meanwhile, as in the case of constructing western Europe there was a need for 'the Orient' the differentiation from which facilitated the reinforcement of 'the Self', Hungary also finds, or rather constructs, its 'Others', within and beyond its borders. One can find numerous examples of 'Balkanization' (Todorova 1997), or the disparaging of the newer or aspirant eastern European members of the EU in Hungarian public discourse, but these are not the subject-matter of this work. Rather, I focus on discursive practices of delineating the Roma as the backward, uncivilized group of the society, upon which main social anomalies are thus inscribed.

Along with Attila Melegh, József Böröcz applies postcolonial literature to eastern European countries and discusses the position of Hungary within this framework. He powerfully demonstrates the historical legacy of the east-west dichotomy arguing that westernization and the continuous self-comparison to western European countries have been key practices of

intellectual politics in central Europe since the French Revolution (Böröcz 2006, 117). Indeed, 'the West' has always played a pivotal role in the Hungarian political discourse as a model, as a community with which the country desperately desired to catch up since the reformist era[2]. Naming one of the most influential Hungarian literary waves "The West" is paradigmatic of this phenomenon, but one can easily find examples of this longing for the association with 'the West' also in the every-day political discourse in the country in the ninetieth and the early twentieth century (see Gerő 1995, Gal 1991).

Today, claiming itself a 'Central-Eastern-European' country (which notion itself is paradigmatic of the symbolic importance of every nuance of differentiation on the slope) Hungary clearly differentiates itself from eastern Europe (obviously from the idea of it as depicted by the civilizational narrative I demonstrated above) and expresses an overt devotion to tighten its association with the western part of the continent and finally *re*-unite with it. This reference to the reunion with 'the West' (which was a recurrent pattern of the discourse about Hungary's joining the European Union) itself exemplifies the imagined historical legacy of the country's close association with western Europe, which serves to manifest the country's superiority over other central or eastern European nations. As I already suggested, the European Union plays a very important role in these cognitive and discursive mechanisms.

Tellingly, as Böröcz points out, the EU is located in a chain of synecdoche representation (Böröcz 2005, 121) in recent Hungarian discourse, in which the European Union represents 'Europe', which, by itself, stands for modernity and civilization. Interestingly enough, this synecdoche seems to work even after a wide group of eastern European countries joined the EU. The term 'European' still works as a synonym for good, developed and cultured, and one can still

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[2] Obviously the socialist era was an exception from this, although 'the West' bare a great significance for the opposition as, among others, a model, a harbor, or a possible source of help also in that period, but the discussion of this issue in its complexity goes far beyond the scope of my thesis.

quite often come across references to the EU as the repository of enlightened values and moral superiority in the country's every-day discourse. As both Melegh and Böröcz remark, and I myself observed analyzing Hungarian public discourse, the question of racism and cultural integration plays a very important role in today's representation of the east-west dichotomy, in which racial intolerance, as a most unacceptable social anomaly of the 21st century is inscribed upon eastern European countries by their western fellows. In my view these mechanisms, highly paradigmatic of the idea of the slope, inflame burning tensions with regard to Hungarian identity-construction, since Hungarianness needs to be clearly marked off from any forms of racism on the one hand, to become entitled to the label 'European', but it is heavily engaged in racist moves on the other, to delineate itself from the savagery and backwardness inscribed upon the Roma.

To demonstrate the ways in which the Roma get constructed as the uncivilized, barbaric 'Other' as opposed to what Hungarian identity is supposed to represent, let me introduce Milica Bakić-Hayden's (1995) concept of 'nested orientalism'. He defines the term as "a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised" (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 918) and argues that the mechanisms of Orientalism work in gradation, that is, any imagined community – to borrow Benedict Anderson's captivating term (Anderson 1991) – can imagine its 'Other' in a more 'Eastern' population and inscribe backwardness upon them. Therefore, these orientalist hierarchies can be reproduced on a smaller scale, even *within* a national community. In my view, the discourse around the Roma in Hungary is paradigmatic of these mechanisms in many senses. Although the eastern origin of this ethnic group does not play a role in this rhetoric, yet, the every-day discourse around the Roma is heavily loaded with the elements of the orientalist narrative I described above. I argue that this othering process that strongly builds upon civilizational patterns plays a crucial role in locating Hungary upper on the East-West slope and in this way establishing a 'true Hungarianness' that is modern and civilized compared to 'Other' groups and therefore has good chances to finally catch up with western Europe, repository of absolute modernity.

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I argue that the Hungarian state plays a pivotal role in these civilizational mechanisms, both in a discursive and in a more practical sense. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault (1997) argues that in modernity the human body becomes a foundational attribute of the citizen that needs to be produced and managed to establish and maintain social order. Here he argues that the aim of disciplinary power (the form of power that, according to Foucault, superimposed punitive rule, which was dominant until the 18th century) is to produce 'docile bodies', that is, good citizens that are intelligible to power on the one hand and easy to be managed and rationalized on the other. But what is even more important for my topic, Foucault's argument makes it clear that the delineation of the 'good citizen' implies the production of the 'bad citizen', the outlaw who is neither intelligible nor useful for the rational functioning of the society. To translate this idea into Hungarian social reality, I argue that the Roma are produced as particular sorts of aberrant subjects in contemporary Hungary, vis-à-vis cultured, white Hungarians, who rate as potential repositories of 'Europeanness'. In the following chapters I unfold certain mechanisms and practices of state authorities that allows for such an inscription of worth and aberration onto different bodies; however, to point out the ways in which race plays out in this process I turn to further concepts of Foucault.

In his later works he complements the above idea of the "anatomo-politics of the human body" with the regulatory control of these bodies as a mass, which he calls "the biopolitics of a population" (Foucault 1990, 138). He argues that through the emergence of these two mechanisms, superimposed on one another, "[t]he old power of death that symbolized sovereign power was now [from the seventeenth century] carefully supplanted by the administration of bodies and the calculated management of life" (Foucault 1990, 139-40). Unfolding this concept of the 'power of life' he powerfully demonstrates that the discipline of bodies and the management of populations together established an "era of "biopower"" (Foucault 1990, 140). And since the control of populations is manifested in the increasing interest in demography, reproduction and the health of the people, which he convincingly illustrates, race becomes a

central object of the modern biopolitical state, what was also discussed by Foucault in other works.

In a series of lectures he gave at the College the France in 1975 and 1976, he argues that from the 19th century 'power of life' appeared in a novel form, what he calls 'the biopolitics of human race' (Foucault 2003). He powerfully demonstrates that although power became absolutely obsessed with life, the preservation and improvement of which serves as the ground of state sovereignty; still, not all lives are equally protected in this biopolitical regime. He argues that the power of the sovereign is itself based upon the capacity to differentiate between qualified, proper lives that need to be protected, and inferior, unworthy lives that can be killed (that is, excluded, rejected, or politically expelled) in order to protect and improve the former. Hence, to make the society stronger and healthier, the sovereign needs to surrender certain lives. In this way the social body is reduced to certain, normative bodies, the repositories of 'good life' that form the abstract concept of the 'Us'; and, as Foucault demonstrates persuasively, racism is a most efficient means of "fragmenting the field of the biological" (Foucault 2003, 255) that establishes the dividing line between the 'must live' and the 'must die', that is, between citizens with rights and obligations on the one hand, and the excluded 'Others' whom the sovereign has the right to kill on the other.

"If you are functioning in the biopower mode, how can you justify the need to kill people, to kill populations and to kill civilizations?" – Foucault asks. And he gives the answer: "By using the themes of evolutionism, by appealing to a racism" (Foucault 2003, 257). "So racism is bound up with the workings of a State that is obliged to use race, the elimination of races and the purification of the race, to exercise its sovereign power" (Foucault 2003, 258). I argue that these mechanisms play out in Hungarian state practices with regard to the Roma community, both on a discursive and on a more practical level. Today, not only the general, every-day discourse is loaded with overtly racist manifestations in Hungary, but also high officials, representatives of the state get very often engaged in thinly veiled racism targeted towards the Roma. I argue that these

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racist state practices serve the clear delineation of a social group upon which undesirable characteristics get inscribed, which is a way of improving and "regenerating one's own race" (Foucault 2003, 257), that is, imagining a Hungarianness that is purified of these anomalies.

Clearly, Foucault's terminology of evolutionism, regeneration and purification is strongly related to my earlier discussion of civilization. Pointing out discourses of racial purification he makes it clear that race is actually about 'evolution', which can justify the extermination of certain people from the body politic. Echoing these ideas, Hungarian discourses of civilization and 'Europeanness' play out in racial terms representing the Roma as a backward, tribal community and in this way legitimize racial differentiation and certain exclusionary practices, in which, as I demonstrate in the following chapters, the Hungarian state plays a central role.

Last but not least, Foucault also argues that in modern societies criminality, madness and various other anomalies are conceptualized in racial terms (Foucault 2003, 258), which clearly gets manifested in the ways in which the Roma are represented in Hungary. To demonstrate the discursive and more tangible practices that delineate the Roma as the filthy and unhygienic on the one hand and the threatening criminal on the other, I build on Mary Douglas' renowned study about the cultural conceptualization of purity and danger (Douglas 1966). Douglas depicts society as a form, a patterned structure of relations, and argues that the maintenance of this system depends upon the clear consciousness of its symmetries and hierarchies, and the powers that consciously control and manage them. Consequently, any manifestation of dirt appears as "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966, 36), that represents anomaly and ambiguity for the system. Impurity, she argues, is "the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (Douglas 1966, 36). Hence, purification, that is, the demarcation of these anomalies, implies the (re-)establishment of a system that makes social life intelligible. Culture, as a system of "standardized values of a community that mediates the experience of individuals" (Douglas 1966, 39) imposes basic

categories on a community that establish a normative order, a common scheme that members of the social body conform with. Anomalies, like dirt, disorders, unhygienic places or bodies, count as residues of the categorization internalized by the majority of a community, that need to be treated. Douglas describes several possible ways in which systems of culture with public, standardized values tend to treat such irregularities (Douglas 1966, 39-41), two of which seem particularly important with regard to my analysis of state racism in contemporary Hungary.

The first of these strategies is the reduction of anomalies to mere peculiarities by one particular interpretation, and in this way locating them outside the social body as separate phenomena. In the case of the Roma in Hungary, this strategy seems to work quite efficiently. Mainstream Hungarian discourse generally represents 'the Roma' (as a homogenous, monolithic group) as filthy, messy and unhygienic, in which state institutions also get strongly engaged. Taking Roma children into state care or displacing Roma families from a particular place with reference to their "unhygienic, inhuman" surroundings are paradigmatic of such state strategies. This pathologizing argumentation, which is heavily loaded with elements of the above-mentioned civilizational narrative, seems to be very efficient in inscribing anomalies on the Roma and in this way delineating them as separate phenomena, which allows for the purification of the normative social body, that is, the construction of a modern, civilized Hungarian identity, ready for its well-deserved westernization.

The second way of treating anomalies, that Douglas lists and I find important for my analysis, is associating them with danger. Douglas persuasively demonstrates that putting a subject above dispute as a dangerous and therefore distinct notion, reduces cognitive dissonance and in this way enforces conformity. One of the most common tropes about the Roma in Hungary is their criminality. They, as a group, are regarded as thieves, as the ones who cheat people or abuse them on the street by the majority of the non-Roma population. The concept of 'sustenance-criminality', which is a recurrent phrase of the every-day discourse, often used also by politicians,

is implicitly, and the increasingly widespread idea of 'gypsy-crime' is explicitly connected to the Roma delineating them as a separate group who are therefore depicted as the origins of most of the troubles that endanger Hungarians' lives. This distinction of 'Hungarians' and 'the Roma' is itself a good example of this sharp, purposeful delineation of the latter. The fact that by citizenship the Roma are also Hungarians, and yet they are named in a way that dissociates them from normative (that is, white) Hungarians clearly shows the way in which discursive practices can reinforce the system of basic social categories and the patterns of the collective cultural scheme that Douglas depicts in her work.

In the following two argumentative chapters of my thesis I demonstrate the actual manifestation of these civilizational practices, first, in the every-day public discourse of Hungary, then, in Chapter IV, in concrete state policies in downtown Budapest. In both cases I focus on the pathologizing and the criminalizing elements of the general discourse that, I argue, serve the legitimization of certain exclusionary moves with regard to the Roma and play a crucial role in locating Hungary on the East-West slope.

Chapter I: Civilizing the Roma: Discursive mechanisms of differentiation

In this chapter I demonstrate the ways in which the civilizational process that I described above is actually manifested in the public discourse of Hungary. Through examples taken from two of the most popular Hungarian political dailies I will show how the mechanism of the East-West slope actually plays out in the every-day discourse of the country and the ways in which the Roma get located at the bottom of the slope and in this way get constructed as the uncivilized, pre-modern 'Other' of the society. I argue that in this case the language of modernization performs two key functions. It produces white, civilized Hungarians, who are entitled to the label 'Western'

or 'European'. Furthermore, it serves as a legitimization for certain exclusionary, often violent moves against the Roma, since in many cases labeling this group, in general, as barbaric and uncultured makes such acts seem rational and therefore widely acceptable.

Having illustrated the main lines of the internal discourse I will also briefly refer to the ways in which the European Union treats the issue of the Roma, and I will demonstrate that the way in which this subject is formulated in the mainstream EU discourse is paradigmatic of the civilizational patterns of the slope. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I will show how all these mechanisms get gendered, through the issues of family organization, reproduction and child care, since these questions are of central significance within the Hungarian (but not only the Hungarian[3]) public discourse regarding the Roma, and are mostly framed in a strongly orientalizing manner.

Henry Scicluna (2007), an active human rights lawyer and Roma activist argues that "[h]ate speech is particularly dangerous because all anti-Romani activities – evictions, school segregation, physical aggressions – spring from it (Scicluna 2007, 47)." Although this claim seems to overly simplify the very complex mechanisms of anti-Roma phenomena, Scicluna draws attention to the close relationship between violent public discourse and other, more explicit forms of violence, be it actual physical aggression or the increasing demeaning, discrimination and exclusion of Roma communities. He goes further, arguing that "[v]ilifying statements by high officials, including ministers, politicians and various authorities, echoed by the press have provided legitimacy for hatred and hence for exclusion. As a result, the ordinary citizens, fortified in their prejudices, condone and support discriminatory measures against Roma" (Scicluna 2007, 47).

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[3] These questions are in the very center of the mainstream discourse about the Roma in many European countries, however, as a thesis the scope of my analysis is fairly limited, therefore I do not intend to go beyond the borders of Hungary.

I find Scicluna's observations particularly relevant and topical for contemporary Hungary, where the Foucauldian idea of 'state racism' seems to manifest itself in an ever more explicit way. Anti-Roma remarks have been increasingly prevalent in Hungarian public discourse for many years now; however, the open racism of state officials and representatives is a fairly new and most startling experience in Hungary. I argue that the Hungarian state, through its policies, authorities and representatives, plays a crucial role in dividing the political community into good and bad citizens, and race, as a marker of 'evolution', is a key factor of this differentiation. I demonstrate in this work several manifestations of such state practices from explicitly racist discursive acts (in this chapter) to laws and policies (in the next chapter) that operate in a more tacit manner.

In my view, the fact that the state perpetuates such racist practices is particularly menacing on account of its strong legitimizing power. As Scicluna notes, it can justify the racial discrimination of members of certain social groups. The increasing hostility between the Roma and the non-Roma in Hungary calls attention to these mechanisms. A research institution conducted a poll in 2009 about the attitude of the Hungarian society towards its Roma population, which indicates that not only do the majority of Hungarians find Roma members of the society highly negative, but also this resentment has markedly increased in the past year (Publicus Institute 2009).

Half of the respondents feel that non-Roma people are better off not mixing with Roma. Only 42% of the non-Roma population would accept a Roma person as a neighbor, and 68% would not accept Roma as members of their family. Three-quarters of the respondents reject the idea of affirmative action, and 82% would promote an imposed assimilation of the Roma. But what is even more alarming, half of the people believe that the increasing number of the Roma in Hungary threatens the security of the society. I do not suppose a direct, causal relation between the two phenomena (discourse and hostility), but I would like to draw attention to the key significance of racist discursive acts and I argue that the fact that state representatives perpetuate

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overt racism in their speeches strongly contributes to the relativization of anti-Roma claims, and in this way, to some extent legitimizes prejudices and violence targeted towards the Roma.

Critical discourse theories underline that discourses cannot be interpreted as mere cognitive frames or patterns of a society, rather they are entities that "include all the practices and meanings shaping a particular community of social actors" (Howarth 2000, 5). That is, the notion of discourse covers symbolic systems as well as social norms and orders, which means that the analysis of it allows for uncovering deeply-rooted mechanisms and systemic patterns of a society. Moreover, Foucault, one of the main critical theoreticians of discourse, highlights the mutually constitutive nature of the objects and subjects of discursive formations claiming that discourses are "practices that systematically form the objects of which we speak" (Foucault in Howarth 2000, 7).

In what follows I demonstrate certain discourses about the Roma in Hungary through the public discussion of the three cases that I addressed in the methodology section, and I analyze the ways in which the civilizational narrative of the East-West slope played out in this discussion.

First, in January 2009, Albert Pásztor, chief constable of Miskolc (the third biggest city of Hungary) claimed at a press conference that in December 2008 and January 2009 all the street robberies in the city were committed by Roma; in spite of the fact that ethnicity and national origin are considered particularly sensitive data by the Hungarian law and therefore it is strictly forbidden to be processed in any ways (only if a Member of Parliament particularly orders it or with the declared consent of the person concerned). He also added that although the number of crimes committed did not grow in the period under discussion, the forms of criminal acts have become crueler; mainly children and elderly people were attacked by gangs of three to seven persons, and those who tried to resist were pushed to the ground and kicked. Hence, he not only identified local criminality with a particular ethnic group without having any kind of official

statistical evidence supporting his claims; but also highlighted the barbaric, coarse ways in which the Roma supposedly commit crimes.

These statements are paradigmatic of Mary Douglas' argument, that one way of treating anomalies and ambiguities of the social system (that the Roma undoubtedly stand for in the Hungarian society) is labeling them as dangerous. As soon as they are marked as criminals, particularly cruel ones, a certain kind of aberrant, anomalous subjectivity is produced, from which true, civilized Hungarians can differentiate themselves. However, there seems to a gap between discourses about the Roma and the actual Hungarian material reality.

The Hungarian Helsinki Committee carried out a research in 2007-2008 on Hungarian police stop and search practices and racial profiling. The study revealed that Roma people are three times more likely to be stopped for an ID check as opposed to non-Roma members of the society; however, the indicators of "efficiency" (that is, whether the ID check was followed by any further official police measures) of the stops broken down by ethnicity were absolutely the same (with a maximum difference of 1%) in the case of the Roma and the non-Roma (Hungarian Helsinki Committee 2009). The results of the research suggest that the police are biased with regard to the Roma, given the fact that on the one hand they over police Roma while on the other there is no statistical evidence that there is more reason to conduct ID checks on Roma than on non-Roma Hungarians.

However, the chief constable's statements, that also lacked any kind of statistical support, were followed by the reinforcement of police forces in Miskolc, exemplifying how deeply these prejudices are rooted in the society. I do not want to comment on the accuracy or not of Pásztor's claims. I argue that there is absolutely no evidence supporting the chief constable's clear-cut causality and yet his arbitrary associations were represented as the Hungarian reality in public discourses. The point that I indicate here is exactly the fact that very loose associations are rendered possible by the larger discourse about the Roma in Hungary. The way in which this

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discourse is organized around their barbaric, uncivilized manners or their dirty and unhygienic living circumstances brings about a general resentment with regard the Roma that is a breeding ground for further racist associations.

The results of the poll that I demonstrated above seem to support this argument. In addition to the data I indicated above, half of the respondents of the survey feel that the increasing number of the Roma in Hungary threatens the security of the society. 46% believe that there are particular crimes that are mostly committed by Roma, which, according to them, calls for distinctive measures in criminal law. Furthermore, 52% believe that the Roma are more willing to commit violent crimes than the non-Roma. These numbers clearly show that the criminality of the Roma is a widely accepted, general preconception of Hungarian people that gets even more confirmed when high state (especially police) officials engage in such criminalizing statements; and the further development of the public discourse about the chief constable's claim (which, as I will show, was heavily loaded with civilizational elements) seemed to reinforce such prejudices. Moreover, the fact that police forces were actually reinforced in Miskolc seems to justify these racist associations.

Having demonstrated all this, let me show some examples of the mainstream discussion of the chief constable's claims. First, Pásztor was immediately suspended by the minister of justice and law enforcement, who also ordered an inner, police investigation of the case. Shortly after this the chief of the National Gypsy Self-government claimed that the minister acted highly responsibly, as a *European* and a democrat. Here we can see that the word 'European' works as the synonym of civilized and enlightened. Along similar lines, another Roma politician claimed that if the Hungarian government is not able to handle the situation, then the European Parliament should investigate whether Hungary can enforce legal principles and directives that guarantee the maintenance of social peace. In this way, he depicts the Assembly as the repository of peace and tolerance, which is another very common pattern of the East-West Slope. Institutions like the

European Parliament often work as synecdoche of the European Union, and therefore of Europeanness, which resonates well with the mechanisms that Böröcz depicted. Such claims locate the EU on the very top of the slope, while reinforcing Hungary's lower position as not fully 'European', that is, not modern and civilized enough. In what follows I demonstrate the position of the Roma on the slope and unfold the functioning and the repercussions of this civilizational discourse.

In spite of these first measures, the chief constable was reinstated in his position within a few days, since, according to the results of an investigation, he did not infringe any existing law. One of the main arguments defending Pásztor was that he "did not do anything but stated crude facts". Shockingly enough, an unprecedented coalition of all the local political (and also many of the civil) forces sided with the chief constable interpreting his claims as "ambiguous statements" or "communication mistakes", which gave free play to the relativization of such racist moves. A columnist of Magyar Nemzet wrote about the "retarding effects of the pre-modern elements of Roma culture" (Németh 2009[4]). Then he goes further arguing that "switching these elements off" would mean the modernization of this social group and finally he identifies this modernization with the integration of the Roma into the society, which is another recurring *topos* within this discourse.

A few days later, in the same online newspaper another journalist dedicated a long article to this case fraught with the patterns of the civilizational narrative about the Roma. Let me cite parts of this article at length, since it perfectly exemplifies the ways in which backwardness is inscribed upon the Roma in Hungary. The author claims that

> a community have emerged in Hungary, that absolutely neglects the laws and moral norms that regulate the society, and the most unrestrained and aggressive elements think (to the instigation of current Gypsy "legal protection") that they can do whatever they want, take which is not theirs, and use lynch-law. If a teacher warns a parent to send the children to

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[4] All the extracts from Népszabadság and Magyar Nemzet are my translations.

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school at 8am, since teaching starts at that time and the child can get breakfast then, the parent does not thank the friendly warning, but rather strikes the teacher down (Fázsy 2009).

Further, she comments on the first decision of the minister suspending the chief constable, and recommends that he should have first gathered information about "how civilized and law-abiding European countries (where the lack of inhibitions of an aggressive community cannot overwrite the respect for the law and the majority's aspiration for security) protect majority citizens and their rights" (Fázsy 2009). This claim is a perfect example of the discursive conceptualization of the East-West Slope, on the top of which there are the immaculate, civilized European countries vis-à-vis the barbaric, aggressive Gypsies and, as she suggests, true Hungarians are stuck in between these two with the current impotent, "communist"[5] government. Paradigmatic of this view when she recalls the French situation: "Close to Saint-Denis, next to the highways and rubbish-heaps, a colorful canvas town emerged in the past few years. Eastern-European gypsies, who immigrated hoping for better economic circumstances, dwelled there, where the basic hygienic conditions are missing" (Fázsy 2009). But, she argues, the French government has quickly solved the problem

> providing some Eastern-European Gypsy families (those who send their children to school, whose men (sic) work, and who learn French at least to some extent) with neat container houses with a living-room, kitchen, bathroom and two bedrooms. Social workers and mediators visit the families in the bright clean houses to help them find their way in this new life (Fázsy 2009).

This extract demonstrates another very important element of the civilizational discourse targeted towards the Roma, namely the notion of filth. This narrative resonates well with Mary Douglas' above argument about dirt, as a "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966, 36) that represents anomaly and ambiguity for the system of society, that counts as a residue of the "normal" (meaning that

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[5] It is a very common move of the right in Hungary to claim that the present leftist, socialist government is communist, referring to the fact that the current governing party (MSzP) is the successor of the communist state party (MSzMP) and there are still members of MSzP, who were previously members of MSzMP.

accepted by the majority) social and cultural categorization, which needs to be treated. In mainstream Hungarian discourse Roma people are very often depicted as dirty and messy, who live in disordered, unhygienic circumstances; and in most instances this is strongly associated with their supposed backward, traditional way of living. Their often truly dilapidated living environment is generally depicted as part of the their "genuine lifestyle", and only very rarely gets connected to their miserable financial circumstances, which themselves are strongly connected to the heavy discrimination and intolerance against this group, since it very often encumbers their employment (as I demonstrate in the last chapter) and in this way furthers their economic vulnerability.

And it is not only the explicitly more nationalist right-wing media that gets engaged in this modernizational discourse. One can find several examples proving the backward, barbaric characteristics of the Roma through their criminality and/or unhygienity also in the leading left-wing daily. Moreover, according to my findings, positioning Hungary on the slope, vis-à-vis 'Europe' is one of the recurrent discursive practices of the leftist media as well. In January 2009, Népszabadság published a long article about Avas housing estate of Miskolc, which was heavily loaded with hints about the unaccommodating, intolerable manners and the dirty, unhygienic living circumstances of Roma families that moved in from the surrounding slums. "Often twenty to thirty people moved into flats of one, one and a half room. … There were people, who conveyed the contents of waste bins up to the flat, others stored the collected metal waste in their living room" – claims the columnist, and adds that the mayor of the city had the benches and table-tennis tables removed from the streets, because the "new neighbors sat there drinking, spitting and yelling at nights" (Romhányi 2009).

The criminality of Roma families moving in also comes up in the article several times. Chief constable Pásztor asserts, along the lines of his above claims, that although criminality statistically did not increase, "fear and anxiety moved into the dwellings." The columnist reports on groups

of men "yelling threats" to the old dwellers that if they call the police "they will cut their head." In another article the chief constable concluded that "[l]iving together with our minority fellow citizens simply does not work. That's it. Nothing else" (Pásztor 2009).

While on the other side of the slope there is superior 'Europe', with its unquestionable democratic values and enlightened manners, compared to what Hungary is a "jungle, not a civilized, democratic state based on the idea of human rights" as a citizen comments disappointedly in Népszabadság (Reader's opinion 2009). Along very similar lines, after the investigation was closed, a politician representing Hungary's parliamentary liberal party claimed in an interview that the chief constable "could not possibly remain in his position [having made such racist statements] anywhere in Europe" (Gusztos 2009). Here again, Hungary is discursively located outside of Europe, on a lower grade of the slope, which is paradigmatic of the self-inferiorization that Böröcz and Melegh demonstrates persuasively.

Clearly, this positionality casts doubt on Hungarians' status as modern, civilized people and in this way creates a certain anxiety with regard to Hungarian identity. As I discussed above, postcolonial theoreticians demonstrated the ways in which an exceptional European identity is produced through a civilizing process, in which societies and social groups that do not perform certain manners and behaviors are marked as barbaric and inferior. As I demonstrate in more details later, Hungary is mimicking this othering process by differentiating true, civilized Hungarians from the Roma, who are marked as filthy and pre-modern. This twofold civilization mechanism echoes Bakić-Hayden's argumentation that self-colonization often gets projected onto the 'Others' of society. This inner othering process of Hungarian society aims at suspending anxieties with regard to Hungarian identity created by demeaning discourses of western European societies regarding their eastern fellows.

Drawing on Foucauldian theory (2003) I argue that the elimination of concerns about Hungary's modernity and prosperity is attempted through the production of anomalous Roma subjectivity

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and, as opposed to this, good, civilized 'Hungarian' citizens. Claims like the chief constable's, can efficiently serve such differentiation. Inscribing criminality and cruelty onto the Roma, that is actually made possible by larger Hungarian discourses about their primitiveness, allows for the imagination of developed, 'Western' Hungarians. However, as I demonstrate later, the anxieties seem to be continually reproduced by the ongoing degradation of eastern countries by western discourses as being racist, intolerant and not respecting the "civilized", "western" ideals of multiculturalism.

Now let me briefly introduce the second case I look at to provide further examples of these civilizational processes. In February 2009, just a few weeks after the racist statements of Miskolc's chief constable about the criminality of the Roma gained publicity, a 27-year-old, well-known Romanian handball player was stabbed to death in a nightclub in Veszprém (a western-Hungarian city of around 60000 inhabitants, which has a long tradition of handball). The team is the most successful handball club in the country and it has a good reputation also on the international level; moreover, the man killed was a fan favorite, a shooting star of the team. Consequently, the case was hotly discussed not only in the Hungarian, but also in the wider, European sports media.

A child was born to one of the players and the whole team went to a bar to celebrate in the city, where they got involved in a fight in which three of the players were heavily injured, one of them stabbed to death. The perpetrators happened to be Roma, and this fact quickly got into the center of the discourse about the murder. Although it turned out that they were members of the local mafia, massively involved in the prostitution business, these facts somehow did not gain that much publicity, which is especially shocking considering that the whole public discussion became focused on criminality. But it seemed to be more important to discuss 'gypsy crime' than the underworld of organized crime or prostitution.

In this case the leftist media was much more careful with the language they used. However, numerous hints were given in Népszabadság about the problems caused by the deviant manners

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of the Roma community, the supposed threats they mean to the overall society and the general difficulties the non-Roma face trying to cope with the Roma population. A journalist remarks that

> it is necessary to make the Roma population understand that they are also participants of the Hungarian society, they have to respect the norms accepted by the majority, adopt to the rules of the community and cooperate with the authorities. Besides, there is a need for the increased presence of the police in the danger zones (Harangozó 2009).

In another article, János Ladányi, a well-known Hungarian sociologist makes numerous good points about the situation of the Roma in Hungary and while locating this issue in the international context he actually highlights the mechanism of the East-West slope claiming that

> the conflict can almost always be traced back to the ever deepening chasm between the position of the majority that endeavors to catch up with Europe, with more or less good chances, and the Gypsy minority that is continually sinking to the level of paupers of the third world (Ladányi 2009).

In this way Ladányi articulates the problem I identified, that is, that the extreme pauperization of the Roma in Hungary is in some ways the dark side, or, I would dare to say, the prize of the country's Europeanization. The transition resulted in the launching of the principles of market economy that had serious consequences for the lower strata, and particularly for the Roma community. When the bubble of socialist "full employment" burst, hundreds of people lost their jobs, many of whom were Roma (which is exemplary of the deeply-rooted racist prejudices of the society). Such negative implications[6], was enhanced by the increasingly manifest neoliberal turn of Hungary brought about by the process of joining the European Union. In order to finally rejoin Europe, certain transformations had to be made in terms of government and economics. While the private sector is rapidly growing, the state is gradually shrinking which is manifested in the continuous cutting of welfare expenses. These transformations result in the strengthening

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[6] The rapid growth of the unemployment rate was only one of the negative consequences of the economic transformation, however, the exhaustive analysis of these implications goes far beyond my study. For a further discussion see Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) or Szalai (1995).

marginalization of certain social groups. I argue that the Roma are particularly vulnerable to these mechanisms; however, discourses about their backwardness and their aberrant manners that I depict here masks the deeper, structural grounds of their situation and marks them as obstacles of Hungary's Europeanization. I explicate these mechanisms in more details in the next chapter through demonstrating the processes of gentrification in Budapest, but now I return to the analysis of these discriminatory discourses.

Compared to the leftist press, the right-wing media, again, articulated racist preconceptions more explicitly. Although the term 'gypsy crime' has become part of the general consciousness in Hungary in the past years, this time state officials, well-known, respected intellectuals and the mainstream (that is, not the radical, extreme-right) media was caught explicitly using this overtly racist expression. As a journalist of Magyar Nemzet states in an article about the murder,

> the tempers of the *deeply humiliated Hungarian society* broke forth with such an overwhelming force, that the police itself decided (sensibly) to break away from the current practice and communicated detailed data [clearly referring to the Roma ethnicity of the criminals] about the murderers (Tihanyi 2009, my italics).

In my view, the way in which the author associates the (self-)inferiorization of the Hungarian nation and the othering of the Roma through their criminalization is paradigmatic of the slope-shaped East-West narrative in which the country is embedded. Being "deeply humiliated", Hungarian identity cries for certain reinforcing moves; and sharpening the boundaries between the decent, respectable 'us' and the threatening 'other' seems to be a very efficient strategy to accomplish this goal. Referring to the criminality and unworthiness of the Roma and in this way locating them on a lower grade of the slope facilitates the desired upgrading of Hungarian identity, that resonates well with Foucault's argument that state racism is a way of constituting one's own race as superior and thus "bring[s] about its definitive regeneration" (Foucault 2003, 260).

The above excerpts indicate that although the leftist media articulates concerns about the increasing discrimination and marginalization of the Roma, the logic of the leftist discourse corresponds to the right-wing. Being 'civilized' is the marker of Hungary's upward mobility and therefore it is key in producing a truly 'European' Hungarian identity. As I discuss more in this chapter, this is the same logic that western European countries use 'civilizing' eastern societies. Nevertheless, the mainstream media does not deem Hungary racist, since it would cast doubt on Hungary's development. Instead, the logic of civilization that plays out in these articles legitimates such criminalizing statements, and in this way allows for further discriminatory and exclusionary moves against the Roma. It becomes explicit within the very same article when the author references an earlier case in which it came to light that in the city of Jászladány Roma and non-Roma children were utterly segregated being put into separate school buildings. In the cited article, having said all the above the columnist feels entitled to defend the mayor of Jászladány, who

> became a hunted person when he initiated the foundation school [where exclusively non-Roma children were studying] to ensure the necessary conditions for the pupil who wished to study, since it was no longer possible in the public school because of the Gypsy children's bally-ragging (Tihanyi 2009).

That is, according to the author, the segregation of Roma children is acceptable and respectable as long as it serves fine purposes, such as the peaceful progress of talented Hungarian children undisturbed of troublesome, badly behaved Roma children. There is a reversal of victimization in such arguments. Mayors, police officers and other agents of the state are discursively positioned as brave individuals who stand up against glib political correctness that masks the 'real problems' of the country (that is, backward, useless Roma people). While in other discourses, 'the state' reifies exactly those pc, liberal politicians and institutions that represent modern, 21th century values and principles and therefore are seen as repositories of Hungary's Europeanization. These conflicting views exemplify the anxieties I indicated above regarding Hungarian identity. Creating a modern, civilized Hungary became strongly identified with the westernization of the country,

while this civilization process often entails the degradation and humiliation of Hungarian people. Let me give a few examples of these mechanisms.

A columnist of Magyar Nemzet is rather straightforward about the supposed inferiority of the Roma claiming that

> village people, especially the elderly suffer from ethnic terror (sic). Everything that is movable is stolen from them: hens, crop, fruits, vegetables or fodder. … There is no civilized answer to self-possessed cruelty, bestiality, knifings, beatings to death, leg-cuttings, eye-prickings or the lynchings. … An ethnic group *breeding* at the margins of the society has emerged, whose members do not care a darn for the law, the thousand-year-old norms, or any rules of coexistence. Their aggression is not selective: they go to rob, loot and murder in gangs, which is followed by fear, horror and silence. … *Hungarians* did not burn Roma girls…. The replicate that Hungarians also commit crimes is false. Yes [they do], but there is a huge difference between the scales and the means of perpetration. … Causeless brutality is necessarily horrifying (Seszták 2009, italics mine).

This extract is a perfect example of the ways in which the language of modernization is deployed to sharpen the differentiation between "the Roma" and "Hungarians." In this way superior, civilized Hungarian identity is created through producing deviant, backward Roma subjectivity that delays the country's final Europeanization. Nevertheless, these attempts to produce a cultivated, white Hungarian identity clash with the pre-modernity and inferiority that is inscribed upon eastern countries by western European discourses, which creates anxieties about modern Hungarian subjectivity. In another article the same paper dedicates a long passage to the celebration of western societies that seem to be increasingly remote from Hungary. The author suggests to

> think about whether the sanction of [the minister, who suspended the chief constable] could have been happened in any other country of Europe. The answer is a definite no. Since none of their constitutions, including the Hungarian, forbids to name things. In Western-Europe (sic) and for example in America the term ethnic criminality would hardly make anyone think that they refer to the causality between ethnicity and criminality. It happens only in *this miserable country that is increasingly deviating from Europe*. In America and Western-Europe people are aware of the fact that crime does not have a nationality, but criminals do. And one can recognize specificities in the mode of perpetration that point to the nationality, age, sex or other social characteristics of the perpetrator. Criminal sociology uncovered these correlations long ago. Consequently, in *civilized* countries the ethnic relations of crimes are precisely indicated. In the United States prisoners are ranked and separated along racial lines, into groups of Caucasians, Latinos or Afro-Americans. The current fake-scandal is a proof of the fact that Hungary, thanks to its masters, is not heading towards Europe, but rather deviating from it (Szalai 2009, italics mine).

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"How is it possible to denounce racism by referring to Europe, especially western Europe, the main historic source and promoter of racism as we know it today?" Böröcz asks (2005, 112); and indeed, the colonial past and all the racist sins of western European nations seem to be missing from this discourse locating 'the West' at the top of the slope of civilization. As I indicated earlier, in the contemporary global political discourse racism is constructed as one of the (if not the) most unwelcome, despicable phenomenon, from which a 'truly European' nation would clearly distance itself. Therefore, the above-described western "identity position with impeccable credentials" (Böröcz 2005, 114) is delineated by a loud propaganda of cultural tolerance and anti-racism that are represented as core principles of European countries; which is actually reinforced by the inscription of racism onto the 'not-yet', that is the 'semi-civilized', 'half European' eastern countries, thus locating them on a lower grade of the civilizational slope.

The Decade of Roma Inclusion is a perfect example of these mechanisms. Demonstrating strong consciousness about and high responsibility for fighting against racism, the EU launched a 10 year program in 2005 targeting the improvement of the living conditions of the European Roma population, having recognized the untenable tensions surrounding this issue. In 2007 and 2008 Hungary was holding the presidency of the Roma Decade, while already being massively engaged in an overtly racist public discourse, which is rather telling on the relevance and the efficiency of the program.

In my view, the program itself and the way it was presented in the public discourse can be seen as an exact manifestation of the East-West slope. First of all, among the twelve participating countries there is only one, Spain, from the western part of Europe. However, being a southern, Mediterranean country, neither that single one can be seen as a classic example of the ideal of 'the Western-European state', repository of moral goodness and civilization as demonstrated by postcolonial literature; which is itself a good example of the workings of the "gradation of civilization". (For the differentiation of Mediterranean countries from other ('whiter') parts of

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Europe see Richard Dryer's fascinating analysis about the symbolic construction of whiteness (1997)).

Seemingly, the EU, synecdoche of western Europe and the allegory of civilization, enlightenment values and respect for human rights and dignity projects racism, ethnic intolerance and exclusionary practices onto its eastern European members. It is a most common pattern of western European discourses to represent the difficulties of the Roma, or more generally the lack of tolerance and the problems of multicultural coexistence as particularly central, eastern European disorders. This is a quite efficient means of marking these countries as backward and under-developed and in this way delineating themselves as more modern, superior societies. While, however, many of the western funding fathers of the community have remarkable Roma populations, and it is an open secret that their situation and position is not any better than that of the Roma in eastern states in terms of discrimination and prejudices. Moreover, the celebrated multiculturalism of these countries is also far less immaculate as they attempt to represent it.

Later in this chapter, connected to my last case, I analyze these mechanisms in more details and I demonstrate the ways in which they affect Hungarian identity and how Hungarians receive this inscription. Now let me turn to the final case of my analysis.

At the peak of this discursive drive in Hungary, at the beginning of 2009 a Roma man and his five-year-old son were shot dead in Tatárszentgyörgy (a small village in the northern part of the country) while running out of their house after a Molotov-cocktail was thrown inside. In the past few years violent attacks against the Roma have significantly increased in Hungary, and this double murder is only the latest of the numerous similar assaults against members of this ethnic group. This shocking tragedy is paradigmatic of how acute the situation has become in Hungary with regard to the Roma community in the past years. Although there is still no clear evidence of the racist motivations of the murder, the police reported on findings that suggest that there were the same, racist, motivations behind the recent attacks. Nevertheless, the public is still not

provided with any substantive information regarding these cases or the connection between them.

Tellingly, three legal defense NGOs published a report criticizing the response of the Hungarian authorities to the double murder in Tatárszentgyörgy. The analysis noted the

> official misconduct on the part of police, fire fighters and emergency medical personnel. While some internal disciplinary proceedings were initiated, two months later there has been no information about the results. Moreover, no suspects have been identified or apprehended in the murder (European Roma Rights Center 2009).

Furthermore, the NGOs

> also consider it a cause for alarm that no information has been released concerning the nature and results of any disciplinary proceedings implemented by the authorities against the head of criminal investigations and the fire and arson investigator, or about any other measures taken, despite the fact that nearly two months have passed since disciplinary proceedings were ordered (ERRC, TASz and NEKI 2009, 3).

These remarks underline my earlier observations about subtle manifestations of state racism. Seemingly, all the authorities involved in the local inspection made serious mistakes. For one day the police reported on the case as an accident, caused by a closure in the house, and the family of the victims had to call Viktória Mohácsi, a Roma politician, member of the liberal grouping of the European Parliament, to make the authorities re-examine the case, which is a perfect example of the discursive power of state authorities. Furthermore, the fact that none of these agents have been called to account highlights that subtle, structural factors, such as the legal system or the control of the police or other state authorities are shaped in a way that allows for glossing over such a case and in this way masks possible racist motivations behind the murder, which could discredit Hungarians in the eye of western societies. Let me now demonstrate the ways in which the murder was discussed in public.

The right-wing media remained quite neutral, confining itself to reporting the naked facts about the case, although acknowledging the indefensible brutality of the killing of two innocent individuals. In contrast, the left-wing discourse seemed to be more loaded emotionally. The

articles published by Népszabadság reported more on the bereavement and sorrow of the victims' family, the fear of the whole Roma community aroused by the murder and expressed the indefensibility of such acts. Moreover, they actually made a connection between the ever worsening situation of the Roma in Hungary and the recent proliferation of the attacks against them at various points of the country, which the murder in Tatárszentgyörgy was only the last episode of. Many of these articles emphasized the importance of the *integration* of the Roma community into the body politic and the urgent improvement of the Roma–non-Roma relations as key means of reducing the hostility towards the Roma in Hungary. In my view these discursive acts clearly exemplify the general anxieties regarding Hungarian identity and the dubious position the country is located at on the civilizational slope. Let me demonstrate how.

As I discussed above, racism and cultural intolerance (as most uncivilized and therefore unwelcome phenomena) are key factors of the civilizational gradation of countries, and thus, Hungary needs to clearly distance itself from these notions to be treated as a full member of the high society of cultivated, 'truly European' countries. In my view, all the articles and claims refuting or questioning the racist incentive behind the murder or the relativization of the weight of the act through directing the discourse back to the troublesome nature and criminality of the Roma (which was rather prevalent in the right-wing discussion of the case) are paradigmatic of these self-cultivating ambitions.

Claiming that "the relation between the Gypsies and the majority is a strategic problem of the future not only in Hungary but from the Czech Republic down to the Balkans" (Sólyom 2009) president Sólyom explicitly locates Hungary among the eastern countries in an interview he gave to Népszabadság with regard to the Tatárszentgyörgy murder. In addition, he ponders on the significance of such an act being committed in Hungary and warns to "consider the terror of what happened. … Such thing has never ever happened in Hungary so far. This is such a shameful sin, the weight of which we need to see. And it happened today in Hungary, in our

society, in our country" (Sólyom 2009). Finally, he casts doubts on the racist motives of the murder claiming that

> there is no basis of such hypotheses. It would be horrible and tragic if racism or either intimidation was the incentive. But it is extremely pernicious and irresponsible to make such statements until we do not know anything. The foreign correspondent of a significant journal aimed the charge at me lately that in Hungary people are killed for ethnic reasons (Sólyom 2009).

This extract clearly shows the anxieties about Hungary being branded with racist intolerance in the eye of the international community. Obviously, this stigmatization, which places Hungary on a lower grade on the Slope, is extremely painful for Hungarian national feelings, which strongly played out in the recent public discourse regarding the cases that I demonstrated above. A columnist of Magyar Nemzet blames Viktoria Mohácsi for the fact that the European Roma Rights Center, which is partly directed by her, participated in the preparation of the 2008 country report on Hungary by the Council of Europe that "depicts a rather negative picture about the country" (Velkei and Borsodi 2009). And indeed, the report highlights the proliferation of racist claims in the public discourse and calls attention to the difficulties the Roma face in Hungary in terms of discrimination, unemployment or school segregation. In addition, it draws up several recommendations for the country to consider improving the living standards of the Roma population; which, thus, seems to be a prerequisite for Hungary to become a fully qualified, respectful member of the family of truly 'European' countries. This report was considered as highly unpleasant and embarrassing for Hungarian national pride, which was remarked in several other articles in that period (see for example Koltay 2009).

Hence, although the Hungarian state and the mainstream media is increasingly engaged in open prejudices against the Roma, when the 'European' big brothers, among whom Hungary so desperately longs to belong, stamp the country with racism, that is extremely disgracing for national self-respect, which calls for certain counter-reactions. The relativization of such racist claims, and the excuses columnists and politicians bring forth (mostly claiming the uncivilized,

barbarous characteristics of the Roma community, as I demonstrated above) are undoubtedly rather efficient strategies of handling this situation. This is a perfect example of the mechanisms of the East-West slope, since the image of Hungary depicted by western-European states as a less matured, less civilized democracy, is internalized by a large section of Hungarian people and, as a next loop, this pre-modernity is inscribed upon the most vulnerable group of the country.

I came across a number of articles that were commenting on "the corrupt moves" or even on some banal communicational mistakes of Roma politicians that exemplify this inscription. Magyar Nemzet published a letter in which the author claims that before the transition the majority

> did a lot in terms of education to make the Gypsies catch up, they can blame only themselves for not being able to produce thousands of degree holders of themselves. It was common also at that time that if the child did not want to go to school, they did not go indeed. If it were not like that, they would have become much more prepared after the transition, and re-emerging illiteracy would not be characteristic of them (Horányi 2009).

Further, still talking about the imperfections of the Roma community, he depicts district nurses who "endeavor to clean families with small children out of filth", and doctors, who try to save lives, but they are beaten up in return which echoes the arguments of Mary Douglas about purity and danger.

Another line of the discussion was about the criminality of the family of the victims. In an interview a criminal psychologist expresses his doubts about the claims of local people that the victim (in singular) had not had enemies or that he had not owed anyone, since, he argues, "this is a closed community, who deliver justice among themselves" (Végh 2009). Such claims clearly suggest some kind of pre-modern, tribal sense of jurisdiction, which reinforces current views about the Roma as a traditional, uncivilized community.

Later, another columnist notes that supposedly the real targets were the relatives of the victims, who were known in the village as criminals. Moreover, another journalist found it important – commenting on local people's claims that the victim was a decent, hard-working, sympathetic

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person, who was not a client of the local bar – to report on the fact that the victim was not attending the Gypsy bar (sic), since he was expelled from it after attacking the owner and smashing the windows of the place together with three accomplices (Balavány and György 2009).

Clearly, this discourse is not about the actual murder of an innocent man and his little son any longer, or the supposed racial motives behind it, but rather about the (re-)construction of Hungarian identity and upward mobility, while pushing the Roma down on the slope. As András Gerő (1995) powerfully argues, modern Hungarian nation is fundamentally constructed as homogenous, monocultural, and it has not been able to come up with a functioning concept of multiculturalism through the entire modernization period. However, in 2009 the failure of ensuring equal chances for each ethnic group (be it the Jew or the Roma) seems to appear as a sign of under-development in western discourses. Therefore, there is an urging pressure to handle these problems more efficiently, in order to be rated as a modern country, full member of the 'European community'. Nevertheless, Hungary does not seem to be able to free itself from stamps of racism at the moment, which creates anxieties regarding national identity. This can be perceived from the increasing and ever more popular nationalism of Hungarian politics that is at pains to (re-)create a respected and glorious Hungarianness, and also from the escalating aggression and hostility of the every-day discourse in the country, which is more and more explicitly targeted towards the Roma population.

In the last part of the chapter I demonstrate the ways in which these civilizational discursive mechanisms get gendered being heavily loaded with issues of reproduction, child-rearing, or 'early'[7] marriage and motherhood.

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[7] I use this term to demonstrate the ways in which such arguments function in mainstream discourses, however I put it in quotation marks because I do not want to perpetuate the idea that 'western' family patterns are the normal, default ones, compared to which certain social groups marry or give birth at an 'early' age.

Undoubtedly, one of the most widespread discursive patterns regarding the Roma is their supposed high fertility rate. It is a basic, unquestioned *topos* of Hungarian public discourse that Hungarians are in decline, whereas the Roma population is ever increasing, which means that the proportion of the Roma within the society is continually increasing that is generally interpreted as a highly problematic and precarious phenomenon, due to the strong prejudices against this ethnic group. Although factually the fertility rate of Roma women is indeed higher than that of the non-Roma (Kemény and Janky 2003), the difference is much smaller than general perceptions would suggest. Nevertheless, in my view the main point is not these data themselves, but rather the way in which they are represented in every-day discourses.

First of all, as the comprehensive demographic research of István Kemény and Béla Janky clearly demonstrates, this rate is much less outstanding than the mainstream discourse would suggest. Counting only married women (sic), in 2001 the fertility rate was 1.88 for non-Roma and 2.84/3.05 for Roma women, depending on whether they were actually (according to their tradition or legally married. However, the mortality rate of the Roma is also higher than that of the non-Roma, due to their generally worse economic and health conditions (Neményi 1997, 107). Moreover, the fertility rate of Roma women has been ever decreasing since the transition, as well as the proportion of Roma women within mothers with more than three children. These data suggest that economic factors greatly impact the procreative behavior of the Roma and in this way cast doubt on the explanation that it is culture that produces such reproductive rates. However, these facts rarely become the subject of the every-day discourse.

Rather, those who keep on warning about the "gypsyization" (sic) of the society often argue that Roma women give birth *only* to receive child benefits, which is itself a quite malevolent preconception that strongly contributes to the denigration of Roma people. While others strongly

associate these demographic facts with the supposed pre-modern, backward characteristics of this ethnic group. The 'early' age of marriage and motherhood, which is generally associated with the high number of children, is very often identified as indicators of 'traditional societies', which is clearly manifested in every-day Hungarian discourses about the Roma. Even well-known, respected sociologists like Kemény and Janky get engaged with this civilizational narrative comparing demographic data of the Roma in the 1990s to those of the non-Roma in the 1920s (Kemény and Janky, 2003, Janky 2005). Although they point out some of the discrepancies between these two cohorts, their analysis mainly focuses on their similarities.

Furthermore, in the same study analyzing the data of a demographic research about the Roma population of Hungary conducted in 2003, the authors demonstrate "eastern-" and "western-type" child-rearing behaviors. They argue that the general demographic expectations in Hungary suggested that the country's mothering patterns would come closer to the "western-type", that is, to a higher general age of women giving birth and a lower average number of children. However, these expectations were only partly confirmed by the research, since the data they found was subject to constant fluctuation in the past decades (Kemény and Janky 2003, 13). Besides, they also demonstrate that the child-rearing behavior of Roma women also came closer to the "western model" in many senses[8]. Hence, there is no clear correlation between either "western" and non-Roma mothering patterns, or "eastern" and Roma child-rearing behaviors.

In addition, several sociological researches demonstrate that the demographic specificities of certain ethnic groups cannot be ascribed to the supposed pre-modern, traditional characteristics of the group but rather to various cultural and material factors. In a renowned study about the social and cultural capital of the Afro-American population of the ghetto of West-Baltimore, M.

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[8] For example, the proportion of children born to Roma women between the age of 15 and 19 decreased between 1990 and 2002, while the most likely age of women giving birth was between 20 and 24 throughout this period, and the general birth rate also started to decrease at the end of the 1990s (Janky 2005, 141-2).

Patricia Fernandez Kelly (1995) exposes several explanatory factors behind 'early' motherhood based on interviews she conducted in the course of her fieldwork. It takes shape from the interviews that a child is of great value in the urban ghetto, since (as the respondents claim) children are something to be proud of, they attribute meaning to women's lives, and due to the lack of other significant milestones in their lives (such as graduation), motherhood counts as the main indicator of adulthood and maturity for many of these women. Besides, the interviewees also expressed their skepticism regarding education since the schools they have access to do not provide them with any good chances on the job market, and therefore they do not mind that they get out of formal education due to their pregnancy.

That is, Kelly argues, 'early' motherhood is not the cause but the symptom of the strongly limited life expectancies of Afro-American women, a result of social and economic factors that lead to the lack of opportunities of this group. Consequently, these women do not necessarily follow the norms of the majority, but try to get along in other ways, such as pursuing family patterns different from those of the majority. Maintaining strong, close social networks, that I discuss in the next chapter in more details, plays a crucial role in these every-day survival strategies. This, as Kelly concludes, means that a possible way of improving the living conditions of these women is not necessarily their 'enlightenment' about contraception and 'modern' forms of family planning (a practice with a clear colonizational overtone), which indeed appears also in Hungarian public discourses regarding Roma women; but rather the improvement of their material resources, and in this way enhancing their life opportunities.

Along similar lines Mária Neményi (1997) conducted a research in 1997 about the views of pregnancy, childbirth, and mothering practices among Roma women in Hungary. She has numerous very interesting findings that challenge many of the above general preconceptions of the majority of the society about the procreative behavior of Roma women. On the basis of several interviews she conducted with Roma women, she found that although some respondents

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mentioned the role of chance or the lack of knowledge regarding pregnancy, having a baby indeed seemed to be a matter of conscious decision in most of the cases. Many interviewees claimed that they did not want more than two or three children, mainly because of economic reasons. They regarded having more than three children an eventuality, and just a few respondents associated it with traditions, which reflects similarity to general mothering norms of the society.

Talking about child-rearing, the interviewees did not mention child benefits, but rather they emphasized emotional aspects of having a baby, which resonates well with Kelly's above argumentation. Neményi also underlines the significance of regional differences for procreative behavior demonstrating that Roma women living in Budapest came much closer to the patterns of the majority in terms of mothering practices. Recent statistical data show that the fertility rate of Roma women is greatly affected by their economic circumstances and residential location. While the total number of childbirth was 120.8 per 1000 Roma women between 1999 and 2002, it was 162.5 in the case of Roma women in a multiply disadvantageous social position[9] in the same period. In addition, while the number of childbirths was 127.1 per 1000 Roma women in the eastern part of Hungary, it was 120.7 in Budapest and Pest county and 104.9 in Transdanubia (Janky 2005, 143-4). Moreover, the full fertility rate of Hungarian women in general (that is Roma and non-Roma) also greatly varies according to geographical location (KSH 2005, 11). These statistical evidences reinforce my above argument that social and material factors play a much more important role in the Roma women's decision regarding child-rearing than culture, traditions, chance or the lack of knowledge.

Neményi makes another very important remark regarding this topic that is strongly connected to my argument about the mainstream discourse about the Roma in Hungary, and in particular the

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[9] This is a particular category in the Hungarian sociological discourse.

discourse about reproduction. She argues that the general interpretation of the high number of children in a family varies significantly according to the object of the discourse. She explicates that having many children is generally depicted as an unquestionable good, infiltrated with a certain pathos, if it is sanctioned by an appropriate (that is widely accepted) ideology, or tradition (1999, 118), (and, I would add, if it is performed by an 'appropriate' family). However, when it is the Roma, who happen to have more than three children, then this fact is seen as the sign of greed, moral deviancy, lack of knowledge and/or their pre- modern, uncivilized norms and cultural traditions.

To sum up, in this chapter I demonstrated that the public discourse with regard to the Roma population in Hungary is heavily loaded with patterns of an orientalist, civilizational narrative that echoes key arguments of postcolonial theories. Through a number of examples taken from current Hungarian media, I explicated the ways in which social anomalies such as criminality or dirt, disorder and unhygienity are inscribed upon the Roma and the ways in which these discourses function to produce aberrant Roma subjectivity.

I argue that these discursive mechanisms are embedded within the global functioning of the East-West slope, that is, within the numerous layers of othering and identity construction. Western European societies represent themselves as an elite group of the most civilized, morally superior countries, as repositories of 'Europeanness', which is historically identified with modernity and refinement. As postcolonial literature elucidates, this self-representation is accomplished through the construction of the backward and underdeveloped 'Other' which is captured in the image of 'the East'. Hopefully I illuminated the mechanisms through which this backwardness is inscribed upon Hungary (and other eastern European countries) by western nations via the stamps of racism and cultural intolerance, and in this way locate the country lower down on the East-West slope. Furthermore, I demonstrated the emergence of certain anxieties that this inscription creates regarding Hungarian identity, marking the country as semi-developed, as not-yet truly

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'European'. However, on a lower grade of the slope Hungary is mimicking this civilizing process through marking pre-modernity on the Roma population. Projecting primitive manners onto the Roma allows for imagining a Hungarian identity which is clearly distanced from backwardness and therefore raised higher up on the slope.

Furthermore, I suggested some of the ways in which the state functions to produce these contrasting subjectivities. I brought numerous examples from recent Hungarian discourses of the ways in which state agents play a crucial role in locating the Roma and Hungarians on different grades of the East-West slope and in this way bring about modern, white, 'Western' Hungarian identity vis-à-vis primitive Roma subjectivity. I also hinted that in addition to these discursive mechanisms 'state racism' functions on a more subtle, structural level as well. In the next chapter I dig to these deeper levels and demonstrate one particular means of contemporary Hungarian state that operates with the above civilizational patterns and has serious consequences for Roma people.

Chapter IV: Building modernity in Hungary: Practices of gentrification in the center of Budapest

Cities, especially large metropolises are historically viewed as symbols of modernity and civility not only in academic circles but also in general, every-day discourses (see for example Shorske 1981, Frisby 2008). Budapest has been a perfect example of this image since at least the 19th century (Hanák 1998). Peter Hanák (1998) compellingly demonstrates that the capital of the country played a crucial role in creating an image of modern, upward Hungary in the previous centuries and in this way became repository of development, which, in the first place meant catching up with western European countries. Being very often instanced as 'Paris of the East' is

paradigmatic of Budapest's symbolic role as a 'bridge between east and west', which is a recurring trope with regard to Hungary that exemplifies the country's dubious position on the East-West slope, between modernity and backwardness that I discussed above.

In this final chapter I demonstrate the attempts of the Hungarian state to prove the anticipated 'Europeanness' of the nation, meaning its developed, cultivated manners, through the spectacular reconstruction of Budapest represented in governmental discourse concerning the modernization of the city. I analyze the gentrification of central Budapest, through the example of the reconstruction of Central-Ferencváros (a particular neighborhood in the 9th district). I argue that the design and the accomplishment of the project are paradigmatic of the fact that state policies and authorities play a pivotal role in the actual, physical segregation of the Roma and of the way in which discourses of modernization and civilization function to legitimize such exclusionary practices. Hence, in this last section I delineate the link between particular practices of state racism in Hungary and the endeavor to produce an appropriate, that is, civilized, white Hungarian identity that I discussed in the previous chapter. I explicate the ways in which certain state structures and practices are employed to actually expel 'bad citizens', constructed as such, from the imagined community of cultivated western Hungarians.

I find residential segregation a particularly serious problem in Hungary, because of its numerous negative implications. First of all, János Ladányi (2008) powerfully demonstrated in his recent study on housing segregation in Budapest that the city is becoming increasingly fragmented and segregated in terms of class and ethnicity. This process is accompanied by a relatively new phenomenon, what he calls the *ghettoization* of small, dilapidated villages in the countryside, where there is absolutely no possibility of employment and therefore the poverty rate is particularly high. Having earlier discussed the general perception about the Roma in Hungary, one cannot wonder that the proportion of this ethnic group seems to increase continually in these villages and also in the most dilapidated parts of Budapest and other larger cities of the country.

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I find these phenomena alarming in themselves since they seem to prove the strengthening exclusion of the Roma. This exclusion plays out on the discursive level as I traced in the previous chapter, and it is also perpetuated in Roma people's actual, physical expelling from prospering parts of the country. They are removed to the most hopeless areas, where the unemployment rate is generally very high, which aggravates their material vulnerability. This absolute marginalization hinders Roma people to comply with the norms of the majority since in such circumstances they cannot reach a standard of living that would allow them creating a living environment that majority norms would impose on them. Interestingly, these supposed deviances are attributed to race and not to social class, which highlights how deeply these racist prejudices are rooted in a large section of Hungarian society.

Nevertheless, the further, indirect consequences of these processes make it even more important to unfold the actual workings of these exclusionary mechanisms. Recent research conducted in January 2009 found that the fewer connection a non-Roma person has with the Roma in Hungary, the more biased they are towards the members of the Roma community (Bruck and Vági 2009). Hence, as the research highlights, it is the citizens of Budapest with a higher level of education who are the most likely to be prejudicial towards the Roma, since university or college graduates only very rarely have direct interactions with Roma people. These findings implicate that the increasing physical segregation and the consequent deterioration of interactions between the Roma and the non-Roma will perpetuate prejudices and therefore presumably strengthen current ethnic tensions.

Gentrification[10] itself is a very controversial topic of sociological research since it does undoubtedly have a number of advantages in economic and political terms. However it also has

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[10] The term has several different understandings in the academic literature. In my thesis I use it as the process in which a dilapidated area of a city, which has an advantageous location is taken under reconstruction that entails a

crushing social consequences that are very often ignored. In a brilliant article Loïc Wacquant (2008) draws a comparison between this scholarly neglect of the negative sides of gentrification and the ways in which business enterprises and government authorities celebrate gentrifying projects masking their problematic implications. Correspondingly, he illuminates the ways in which these mechanisms move lower classes out of sight, both as objects of sociological attention and literally as subjects of the urban sphere. Wacquant powerfully argues that the role of the state shifted from providing the lower classes with social support to supplying the upper classes with high quality business services. He notes, "chief among them the cleansing of the built environment and the streets from the physical and human detritus wrought by economic deregulation and welfare retrenchment so as to make the city over into a pleasant site of and for bourgeois consumption" (Wacquant 2008, 199).

This is a useful condensation of a number of very important aspects of gentrification, some of which are of central significance in my analysis. First, Wacquant highlights the symbolic "cleansing of the built environment" which implies the actual eviction of the undesirable, disorderly elements of the population. And second, he points out the ways in which these state-led mechanisms get intertwined with private, neoliberal interests. As I demonstrated above, in contemporary Hungary the Roma is the group most likely to be inscribed with social anomalies such as an association with dirt, unhygienity or criminality. The present discourse about city reconstruction that strongly operates with the tropes of 'developing' or 'modernizing' Budapest, and building a 'European' metropolis often builds on the image of cleanliness and order. Such discourse plays a crucial role in legitimizing the eviction of the Roma population from central neighborhoods of the capital. In this way these areas become repositories of the city's appeal that

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significant tenure conversion, in which the former lower class population is replaced by higher class inhabitants, usually with a higher level of education.

is supposed to upgrade Budapest on the civilizational slope and thus mark Hungary's developed 'Western' identity.

Managers of the Central-Ferencváros project recurrently refer to the "European model" (Bajnai 2006), the "European approach" (Urban Development Plc.) or "the development principles of the EU" they employ "with European help" (Bajnai 2006) accomplishing the reconstruction, with a clearly celebratory tone. Undoubtedly, these discursive moves serve to assert the supposed modern, progressive nature of the project and in this way legitimate the public-private partnership model they use, omitting its negative implications.

But what is more important, in my view, is that the Hungarian state is heavily involved in not only shaping this discourse, but also in more concrete practices that contribute to the actual elimination of certain populations (deemed undesirable) from these inner areas. I do not claim that state officials explicitly work on expelling the Roma from the central districts – that would be highly un-European and therefore not worthy of modern, cultivated Hungarianness. What I try to demonstrate is the fact that the way in which the project was designed by state authorities and the actual accomplishment of the district reconstruction (in which state officials play a crucial role) strongly influence social organization of space in Budapest and therefore has significant consequences on socio-spatial positioning of the Roma within and out of the city.

Drawing on Foucauldian theory, I argue that the Hungarian state plays a crucial role in producing docile (that is, useful and intelligible bodies) as well as unruly worthless ones, who must be rejected in order to build a 'strong, healthy and civilized' community that can be managed efficiently. Moreover, as Foucault demonstrates, these state practices get racialized when this unruliness is inscribed upon a particular ethnic group as happens in the case of Hungary with regard to the Roma community. Through the example of the suburbanization of the United States, Kenneth Jackson (1985) compellingly demonstrates that state legislation often plays an implicit, however crucial role in urban transformation. He shows that the financial legislation and

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the highly biased appraisal and criteria system regarding public mortgage policies (which obviously affects private mortgages as well) significantly influenced social organization of space in American cities.

Accordingly, I argue that general financial circumstances of the 9th district reconstruction project created a situation in which Roma dwellers seem to be slowly expelled from the project zone. The terms of tendering, the general regulation of building and demolishing, and, the way in which the dwellers (both new and old) are treated, not to mention the current housing policies seem to lead to the elimination of the Roma. According to my findings, most of them end up on the outskirts of the city, or in inner districts, which are still in poor, dilapidated condition (that will presumably be scheduled for reconstruction in the near future).

And what is more, this tenure conversion is depicted in the public discourse (which is itself strongly influenced by state authorities) as though it was happening according to the free will of the old inhabitants and in this way seems to legitimate these highly questionable processes. To have a more thorough insight into these mechanisms, let me briefly introduce the project itself and some details about the financial and governmental structure in which it is embedded.

The project was launched in the 1980s by the socialist regime as a 'social rehabilitation' aiming to renew the area and keep the actual population. It was actually the only urban restructuring project that was continued by the new, post-transition government; however, the emphases of the plan changed radically. The current project is designed as a 'city reconstruction' aiming at the "renewal of the environment while preserving its values, the amendment of the quality and the structure of the estates, and the reversal of earlier negative social processes" (Gegesy). Clearly, this conceptual move is itself paradigmatic of the radical shift in the role of the state that Wacquant delineated from the enforcement of social interests towards the provision of amenities for higher classes. Let me briefly demonstrate now the structural background that makes such shift possible in contemporary Hungary.

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The government of Budapest operates on two levels since the transition, namely the district and the metropolitan level; the district governments enjoy an unusually wide autonomy that includes urban planning on the local level. Consequently the metropolitan body does not have authority to draw up and accomplish city reconstruction plans; it can intervene only in terms of restoration of public spaces and infrastructure development. This structure has various negative consequences. On the one hand the reconstruction projects going on in different parts of the city are not synchronized at all, neither aesthetically, nor in terms of their social and economic implications. On the other hand, the lower the level the decisions are made at the easier it is for the authorities to comply with private interests due to the reality of the lack of district transparency in Hungary, which, as we will see later, is a serious problem with regard to the urban and social transformation of Budapest.

In addition to this systemic deficiency, the financial structure of city reconstruction is designed in a way that strongly contributes to the negative social consequences of the Central-Ferencváros project. The most important financial asset of urban restructuring in Hungary is the Metropolitan Rehabilitation Fund established in 1994. Local governments need to invest into the Fund 50 percent of their proceeds from the disposition of public real estate property, and in this way they become entitled to withdraw money from the Fund. However, they can only spend it on public property. To complement this asset the metropolitan council has been subsidizing public and also private (apartment block) reconstruction projects since 1994. Nevertheless, the eligibility criteria of this subsidy are designed in a way that seems to favor the more prosperous districts, where the municipality and the dwellers have more financial capacity to co-finance the restructuring (Somogyi et al. 2007, 90).

This financial structure proved to be particularly favorable for the 9th district. The lack of an overarching, city-wide planning authority in Budapest, the design of the Rehabilitation Fund and the territorial differentiation regarding public subsidy, which does not count with social or

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economic factors, are all crucial factors of the 'exceptional success' (as it is depicted in the public discourse) of Ferencváros in acquiring public grants. (Between 1995 and 2004 the district received four times as much subsidy as it had deposited in the Fund (Somogyi et al. 2007, 81).)

Furthermore, the general Hungarian mortgage system and public subvention on housing explicitly favor young middle-class couples on the one hand, and the purchase of newly built dwellings vis-à-vis old ones on the other (Tomay 2007, 131). Besides, it is also important that the law makes it possible in Hungary to convert residential buildings into business or commercial use, which makes lower class inhabitants even more vulnerable on the real-estate market.

Due to these financial circumstances the project has significantly expanded since the end of the 1990s both geographically and in its scale. And as the development works have accelerated the municipality could no longer finance the project from either its budget or the Rehabilitation Fund. Consequently, an increasing need emerged to involve private capital in the restructuring which has resulted in the ever more submissive conditions towards private investors. In the beginning, the whole project was under the control of SEM IX Plc., a Hungarian-French joint venture, in which 51 percent of the stock was owned by the district council and the rest was equally divided between the National Savings Bank and a French private company. However, due to the increasing lack of financial resources of SEM IX Plc., the number of participating private enterprises has significantly increased since the 2000s. The ever more liberal investment conditions that the district council provided to attract these companies result in a loosening public control over the investors. This shift has been manifested in the low quality of the new buildings (Csanádi et al. 2007, 114) and in the serious, although neglected social consequences of the reconstructions that particularly afflict the local Roma population.

The intertwining of public and private interests is one of the hottest topics of the above mentioned narrow literature on the negative aspects of gentrification. Don Mitchell and Lynn A. Staeheli (2006) demonstrate the vicious circle of urban reconstruction and public-private

intermingling in their article about the redevelopment in San Diego. They argue that publicly facilitated improvement of public spaces and tenure conversion is a very efficient way of boosting private investment and it also increases the value of the surrounding private property. In this way, "private property development *relies* on public property redevelopment" (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, 150, italics in the original).

On the other hand, they argue that redevelopment is "a means of increasing the value of private property, and therefore making it attractive to inward investment and a net benefit to current owners" (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006, 150). That is, state authorities serve private interests in the name of a future 'common good' (that is, the beautification and development of a neighborhood), which brings about the takeover of private property rules that finally results in the exclusion of certain uses and people. And that is exactly what is happening now in the case of the Central-Ferencváros project. Since private enterprises, namely construction companies and service providers inject most of the capital into the reconstruction, their interests seem to have overwritten other (social or public) interests. Tellingly, the mayor of the 9th district claims when describing the "positive social transformations" brought about by the project that

> [t]he district was inhabited by elderly, not so well-to-do citizens, and the area was slumming in a seemingly irreversible way. The changes are most spectacular in this respect. Housing and real estate prices have doubled in five years; notwithstanding, the dwellings being built are all sold. (Gegesy)

Correspondingly, in the URBAN Document of the project SEM IX Plc. summarizes the financial background of the restructuring in the following manner:

> One of the main goals of the local governmental urban development and rehabilitation in the technically-physically and socially run-down district was to provide fair enough conditions for the building industry enterprises so they can build privately-owned, modern, marketable apartments with all modern conveniences, situated in healthy environment. … The money flow from the enterprises of the private sphere became multiple times more than the one from the public sphere by the result of the local government's way of development. The latter ones are such projects of building and real estate development that have been made possible and profitable because of the conditions created by the local government's urban development and urban rehabilitation process (Urban Development Plc., original language).

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These extracts clearly demonstrate the ways in which the private sphere gained a majority share in the Central-Ferencváros reconstruction project and also the further significant implications of this shift; namely that the prize of the newly built or renovated dwellings increased considerably, which resulted in a radical tenure conversion in the project area. Moreover, the two passages also prove the crucial role the state plays in this turn by serving the interests of the private sphere via creating a financial and structural environment highly favorable for private enterprises that I demonstrated above. Besides, the URBAN document reveals the ways in which the discourse of modernity, development and health seem to legitimize this move, which echoes the mechanisms I demonstrated in the previous chapter.

Interestingly, as András Gerő (1995) powerfully demonstrated, worship of private property has a strong historical legacy in Hungary. Gerő argues that private ownership has been closely associated with freedom in Hungarian general consciousness since at least the reformist era and in this way became one of the fundamental symbols of social development (Gerő 1995, 10-1). In my view these cognitive associations were further strengthened after the transition when private property and enterprise, which were completely suppressed in the socialist era, became the sacred cow of 'modern, free Hungarian democracy'. Since then civil liberties and private venture are among the most strongly protected values in the country, the restriction of which is represented as a sign of pre-modernity and the denial of Hungary's precious 'Europeanness'. Therefore, what is happening now in the 9th district perfectly fits the overall view of modernity and development I depicted above, namely that in many cases the discourse of the East-West slope and Hungary's positionality on the slope functions as a legitimation for certain state practices.

In this particular case this phenomenon plays out on two levels. First, in "the cooperation between the public and the private sphere directed by the local government with a 'European' approach" (Urban Development Plc.) that provides private enterprises with almost absolutely free hand accomplishing the reconstruction of Central-Ferencváros. Secondly, Europeanization

manifested in constantly instancing the development of the neighborhood and the building of a modern 'European metropolis' that legitimates certain, socially unfavorable practices of the state.

In this way the reconstruction of central Budapest (which is widely instanced in the public discourse as the "rehabilitation" of the city) plays a central role in reinventing Hungary as a 'European' space. The long-range aim of the transformation is to build a modern, western city that is worthy of representing contemporary, civilized Hungary. A recent project, titled "Budapest – Downtown of Europe", which was launched by local governments of central districts[11] of the capital, is paradigmatic of my main argument about the city's reconstruction. The project aims at the "cultural and economic development, expansion and rehabilitation of downtown Budapest" (Budapest – Downtown of Europe). One of its stated goals is to create a "creative innovative milieu" and thus

> the objective is to improve the profitability of the area by increasing tourism in Budapest, and exploiting the potentiality of the area as a part of the city centre and its abundance in cultural heritage sites. New complex cultural tourist attractions will be created by providing a network-like connection between target tourist areas and by increasing the number of complex tourist services and accommodation facilities.
>
> […]
>
> The objective is to create a substantial number of new job opportunities through encouraging creative industrial branches in the area. The co-operating Local Governments will work on the creation of a suitable and inspiring environment. Buildings renovated with partial functional changes will be able to ensure the "creative milieu" (Budapest – Downtown of Europe).

This is a perfect example of the ways in which city reconstruction fits the larger political and economic transformation of Hungary. In order to accomplish such projects, that make Budapest 'European', a certain neoliberal approach needs to be appropriated. This shift leads to the affluence of the private sector, the serving of global interests and the shrinking of the state, which implies the significant diminution of welfare expenses. The "social and institutional programs" of

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[11] Although the 9th district does not actually participate in this project, it is adjacent to the project area, and the project well articulates my main argument about the overall transformation of Budapest.

the project are paradigmatic of this cutting. These sub-programs are the "Program for Institutionalizing Rehabilitation Development and Sustainability"; "Program for Creating a Standardized 'Brand', Communication and Marketing Strategy"; and finally "Creating and Operating a Standardized Retail Trade and Service Program" (Budapest – Downtown of Europe). As Wacquant indicated, lower class people, who are particularly vulnerable to contemporary city reconstruction and the shrinking of welfare measures that could alleviate their harms, are absolutely missing from such "social" projects. The transformation of Central-Ferencváros, with the proliferation of high class hotels and cafés, the racialized tenure conversion it brings about and the clear intermingling of public and private interests, is paradigmatic of such 'Europeanizing' processes.

To make the workings of these mechanisms clearer let me show how the measures of the reconstruction actually affect the lives of the people living in the project area and the way in which the Roma particularly fall prey to these policies. To get a deeper insight into the actual functioning of these mechanisms I conducted interviews with local Roma dwellers who still live in old buildings that would supposedly face rebuilding in the near future, and tried to learn how they actually experience the current transformation of their living environment; what their opinion is about the processes in which they got involved, and how their lives are managed by state policies and authorities effectuating the reconstruction plan. I talked particularly to Roma women because in many cases they are the most vulnerable to the negative effects of gentrification. As I will demonstrate below, the present reconstruction practices threaten to destroy the social network of the old, lower class inhabitants of the project area, since their possibilities are fairly limited in terms of where and in which ways they move when their dwelling is taken under reconstruction.

I argue that female members of disadvantaged social groups rely upon these networks more than anybody else due to their multiply detrimental position lacking possibilities of education and

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employment in most instances, exacerbated with the duties of child-rearing. Moreover, in the Roma community, social and especially familial ties seem to be particularly strong and important as a cultural peculiarity, which sustains my argument about the dramatic impacts of the current urban transformation for this particular social group. In the course of the interviews I tried to map these effects as the actual, potential victims experience them and learn their general view about the ongoing processes. In what follows I demonstrate my findings from the interviews and analyze them in the light of the general reception of the Roma in Hungary that I depicted in the previous chapters.

One of the most remarkable outcomes of my research was that I learnt the ways in which the Roma become absolutely exposed to the housing policies and the measures of city reconstruction in the current legal, administrative and financial structure. All of my interviewees were living in publicly owned dwellings (most of them always lived in such circumstances) and the majority of them had to move several times in the past years due to the ongoing reconstruction of the area. They mostly did not have any voice in the ways in which these removals were performed – where they were moved, when or in what circumstances; and this top-down ordering seems to be continued in the course of the current reconstruction, in an even more explicit manner.

The interviews illuminated that the respondents were not well informed about the reconstruction project in general. Rumors had been informally circulating in the neighborhood for many years that the old, dilapidated houses would get brought down or renovated in the course of time, but no one exactly knew if or when their dwelling would come next. Many of the respondents told me about strangers appearing in the courtyard occasionally checking the buildings, but still no one shares any details with them about the future reconstruction. However, when the decision is made the dwellers get a letter, which informs them about the resolution after which they have quite a short time (usually some months) to actually leave the place. Many of them told me that in case they had any problems or questions with regard to their housing they had to go to the

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council office again and again (a few times a week) otherwise no substantial step forward was taken in their case. In my view this seemingly trifling issue is paradigmatic of the way in which state authorities treat the local population – with ignorance and negligence, making clear the actual power asymmetries that preclude the inhabitants to voice their actual needs and preferences or take an active part in any other ways in the processes crucially influencing their lives. However, this attitude is not only neglect, but also a consequence a larger neoliberal orientation that I discussed earlier, which gives preference to private interests vis-à-vis the requests of local dwellers.

But even more telling is the way in which the actual moving procedure is accomplished. Together with the letter informing the inhabitants that they have to move, they get three addresses from which they have to 'choose' one where they will move when the reconstruction or demolition of their actual dwelling begins. I say 'choose' because in my view the old inhabitants do not have a real choice. Among the apartments they are offered there are only a very few located in the 9th district. Most of the newly built or renovated dwellings in the district are managed by private companies and therefore these apartments cannot be offered for the inhabitants facing removal (however, they would not be able to purchase the new dwellings, or pay the strongly increased rents by any means). Hence, they get offers either in disreputable, still dilapidated parts of the district (this is exactly what happened to most of my interviewees in the past few years) or in other parts of the city, mainly in the outskirts of Budapest, where mostly lower-class people live, such as Csepel or Kőbánya, or in rundown neighborhoods of central districts, mainly the 7th or the 8th. The respondents also mentioned that many of the offered dwellings were located in soviet-type blocks of flats where the utilities are so expensive that accepting those apartments is not even an option for them. In general, many of the interviewees indeed reported on the numerous *constraints* (that is the actual word they used) that they faced when they moved from one place to the other. And if they were not satisfied with the dwellings offered (as some of the

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interviewees reported) they were told by the council officers to take the money instead of a new apartment and "do whatever they want."

Indeed, accepting the pecuniary compensation is also an option for the old dwellers, although a much less favorable one, since the amount of the compensation is generally smaller than the average value of the dwellings offered in exchange[12]. Furthermore, while the compensation did not increase between 2004 and 2005 (that is the period data was available about in terms of compensation), the value of the apartments given in exchange rose from an average 210000 to 230000 forint/m^2 (Aczél 2007, 159). And yet, the number of those deciding to accept the money instead of the apartments in exchange grew ever higher in the past few years[13], which is a good example of the constraints these people experience with regard to these decisions.

In general, it became clear from the stories of the interviewees that social or personal aspects do not count for a lot in the course of the reconstruction. The local government was very strict about not giving larger apartments for families removed, since legally the council is only obliged to provide the dwellers with apartments of the same size and condition as their previous one. Many of the interviewees requested larger apartments, because they had given birth to children since they had got their actual dwelling or asked for two smaller flats instead of the one they had to leave in order to separate from the adult children who had already started their own families in the meantime; but these requests were mostly dismissed by the council.

A middle-aged respondent told me that she had already got divorced from her husband, but – due to their financial shortage – they were still living in the same apartment. The woman is

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[12] In 2005 the pecuniary compensation was 180000 forint/m^2, whereas the value of the apartments offered in exchange was estimated at an average 230000 forint/m^2 (Aczél 2007, 159).

[13] In 2003 the proportion of the people who accepted the money rather than the dwelling in exchange was only 7 percent, which grew to 10 percent in 2004, and to 26 percent in 2005 (Aczél 2007, 159).

psychically very unstable, she attempted suicide once, and her condition was strongly worsened by the fact that she was living with her ex-husband. Her psychiatrist actually provided her with a written certificate claiming that her condition would significantly improve if she could physically separate from the man, but seemingly the authorities did not take it into consideration when they removed the couple with their young son into a two-room apartment. She told me that the relationship between them is ever more hostile, which often leads to such violent fights that once the neighbors have called the police because of the clamor.

I find this case paradigmatic of the contradictions I met in the course of my research, which seem to support some of my overall arguments about the situation of the Roma in Hungary. I am aware of the budgetary bounds that constraint the district council and the fact that they cannot satisfy each and every demand of the local dwellers. However, it seems highly controversial for me that Roma people are condemned in the mainstream discourse for their supposed uncivilized, unhygienic living circumstances or for being loud and unaccommodating, which become the main lines of legitimation for certain discriminatory and exclusionary practices against this group. Whereas these circumstances and behaviors are often, as the above example show, strongly associated with structural factors determined by state authorities that impose, indeed unfavorable, certain circumstances on Roma dwellers.

Indeed, several interviewees claimed that they cannot clean their apartment properly because of its decrepit conditions, such as moldy and cracked walls or the major dip of the building; and these were dwellings where they were removed from their previous apartment (in some cases ostensibly only temporarily, however the residence eventually turned out to be permanent). These flats often had communal toilets and bathrooms and lacked any other amenities. Some of the respondents told me that they wanted to renovate their dwelling, in spite of their tight financial circumstances, to create a more pleasant living environment, but they abandoned these plans

when their removal came into sight (although a few interviewees made some renovations anyhow).

These instances clearly show the respondents' longing for tidiness and hygiene that casts doubt on the current views about their supposed unruliness that I discussed earlier. Furthermore this dissonance resonates well with the respondents' general view about the entire reconstruction. Each and every interviewee was absolutely delighted with the beautification of the neighborhood. They praised the nice new buildings, the new green plots and playgrounds and the tidy streets, from which they are being gradually expelled. They are going to be placed in dwellings at a much worse location, mostly far away from the chic, prospering inner districts, emblems of Budapest's 'Europeanness' to which, however, they seem to be attached quite closely.

Indeed, my above assumption that these women are particularly reliant upon their social network seemed to be proved in the course of the interviews. Lots of respondents reported on strong familial ties, mainly between women from different generations. Mothers, daughters, sisters, daughters-in-law support one another in every possible way, such as looking after the children, sharing the cooking or helping each other with the official paperwork. Although these essential ties would not get completely destroyed by moving the families to different places (since the interviewees claimed that they would visit each other often anyhow) this breaking up would definitely be disadvantageous for them as it would raise the difficulties they face in terms of every-day thriving.

Another negative consequence of the neighbors' dispersal that some respondents mentioned is the lack of acceptance. They mentioned that they know everybody in the surrounding streets as a clear advantage and a main reason for their attachment to the neighborhood. They told me that after all the years they spent in the same neighborhood they learned to *accept* each other, which seemed to be very important for quite a few interviewees – what is fairly understandable having explicated all the above about the general treatment of the Roma in Hungary. Thus, for some of

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them it seems indeed frightening to move into another district where they might not be welcome, as it happened to some of the people they new before.

One of the interviewees told me the story of a large family, which was removed to Csepel from the neighborhood and faced serious difficulties in terms of integration and acceptance. The Roma family, counting 17 members, was moved into a 52 m^2 apartment that created burning tensions with the current inhabitants of the block. They were complaining about the noise and the mess the family made, and the decrease of the value of their real estate due to the family's moving in, which is itself a rather distressing example of the resolute prejudices towards the Roma in the Hungarian society. Obviously, this is very inconvenient for the family, whose members expressed their strong humiliation of the current situation and the "inhuman circumstances" they were forced into. They claim that the 9th district council promised another apartment to one of the sons who had submitted an application for a flat eight years earlier, but the authorities did not keep their word. (Unfulfilled promises was another recurrent topic of the interviews. Several respondents reported on the local government's assurances about inside bathrooms, toilettes and heaters in the new apartments they were supposed to move, or about the forthcoming renovations of their actual dwellings, which were never actually realized.)

The case of the family is a perfect example of both the role of the authorities in shaping general views about the Roma that often functions as a legitimation of further, discriminatory state practices, and also of the negative consequences of the gentrification of Central-Ferencváros for the old Roma dwellers. Furthermore, the relationship between the old and the new inhabitants is also paradigmatic of these unfavorable implications. All the interviewees without exception confirmed that they have absolutely no contact with the new neighbors, who (according to them) seem to be quite well-to-do, as the respondents noted, "different" from the old dwellers. In the course of the interviews it became clear that this difference also refers to some kind of indifference, a sort of aloofness (for instance when they move to the other side of the playground

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when a Roma family arrives) that some of the old dwellers reported as a sign of the thinly veiled racism of the new neighbors. This is rather telling about the pernicious effects of the current restructuring, and reinforces my above argument about the long-range risks of residential segregation, namely that it seems to further the general prejudices of the majority against the Roma and in this way strengthens the current tensions between Roma and non-Roma members of the society.

However, the ex-manager of SEM IX Plc. celebrates these transformations claiming that "[t]he life patterns [the new dwellers] bring with themselves become a standard for the whole area, and this model is adopted also by the old inhabitants. The process can be briefly described as the "embourgeoisment" of the area" (Aczél 2007, 170). Correspondingly, the URBAN Document underlines that "[t]his way the urban rehabilitation keeps citizens healthy and inspires them to live a healthier way of life." In this way the management of the project (including state authorities) not only facilitates the tenure conversion, but also legitimates this process, which is clearly disadvantageous for the old, underclass, primarily Roma inhabitants. And again, as we can see, this legitimation operates with tropes of civilization and hygiene, which resonates well with my findings of the previous chapter with regard to the discursive practices excluding the Roma from the body of modern Hungarian society.

In conclusion, in this chapter I explicated the ways in which the Hungarian state employs certain exclusionary practices and policies in the course of producing modern, 'Western' Hungary. I argue that the ongoing process of gentrification in the center of Budapest, the way in which the structural and financial background of the Central-Ferencváros reconstruction is designed and the actual management of the project is accomplished by state authorities results in the gradual physical elimination of the Roma from the inner, prospering parts of the city. Furthermore, I demonstrated the further, highly disadvantageous consequences of these mechanisms for the general social status and reception of the Roma in Hungary (such as their increasing material

difficulties or the deteriorating associations between the Roma and the non-Roma that reinforces the existing prejudices against this ethnic group) which make these processes particularly alarming. In addition, I also highlighted the ways in which the mechanisms of gentrification and the subsequent tenure conversion affect the every-day lives of local Roma inhabitants who are facing eviction from the project area.

As a conclusion of the interviews I conducted in the neighborhood I argue that the current processes strongly risk the destruction of the current dwellers' social network, which is generally very important for these people since, due to the lack of other essential resources and opportunities, the Roma community, especially Roma women, are highly reliant upon these close, primarily familial ties. Besides, the lack of association with the new (primarily non-Roma) neighbors and the fear of being disdained and expelled by them are further potential (and actually highly probable) implications of the ongoing tenure conversion that casts doubt on the 'exceptional success' of the Central-Ferencváros project that is depicted in the public discourse. I demonstrated that this narrative operates with civilizational tropes, instancing the current disordered and unhygienic circumstances in the neighborhood. These tropes correspond with general perceptions about the Roma; however, they are in fact in dissonance with the actual views and desires of Roma inhabitants, who strongly long for cleanliness in their home and the neighborhood.

Finally, I find it particularly important to highlight that this is not a particularly Hungarian issue. Roma communities living in city centers are facing the same exclusionary processes of gentrification all over Europe, which makes this topic especially relevant and calls for an urgent, critical rethinking of current structures and mechanisms of city reconstruction. Although the 8th district of Budapest launched an apparently efficient 'social rehabilitation' project recently, this project does not affect the deeply-rooted, structural problems of city reconstruction that I

depicted in this chapter. Actually the project seems to legitimate Budapest's restructuring in general, with all its negative, problematic aspects.

Conclusion:

In all the above I analyzed various aspects of the anxieties surrounding the Roma in Hungary within a postcolonial theoretical framework. I located the analysis of the current Hungarian situation in a broader, European context and examined the ways in which Hungary's position among other European countries is discursively established and the ways in which this positionality shapes the imagination of contemporary Hungarian identity. I argue that the country is involved in a civilizing process in which a dubious, semi-modern subjectivity is being developed into a modern, 'truly European' Hungarianness. This process is directed towards the Roma who are marked with backwardness and in this way produced as aberrant subjects.

In conclusion, analyzing the current public discourse in Hungary about the Roma I found that recurrent narratives about their dirty and unhygienic living circumstances or their brutish criminality inscribed a supposed backwardness to them. Through this constant reiteration, the otherness of Roma people in Hungary becomes an unquestioned truth among a large section of the Hungarian population. Therefore, the every-day recitation of tropes such as 'filthy gypsies' or 'gypsy crime' produces uncivilized, barbaric Roma subjectivity in opposition a cultivated, 'European' Hungarian identity. Such discursive practices of belonging help mediate centuries old anxieties surrounding the positionality of Hungarianness between 'East' and 'West', modern and primitive.

Furthermore, I also explicated that state authorities and representatives are strongly engaged in such discursive practices definitively reaffirming such associations, and in this way legitimating

certain exclusionary moves against the Roma. Moreover, beyond these discursive acts, the Hungarian state employs a number of more tangible practices that contribute to the discrimination of Roma people, such as the establishment of laws and policies that facilitate the gentrification of certain parts of Budapest and in this way legitimate the exclusion of the Roma from central, prospering neighborhoods. Again, discourses of civilization function to justify such socially problematic acts.

In the last section of my thesis I pointed out the negative consequences of such physical segregation. First, as a result of the current gentrification of Budapest (which affects numerous neighborhoods in the inner city not only the one I discussed above) the Roma are excluded to other, dilapidated parts of the capital. In the end it deprives them of the possibility to counter the existing narratives about their dirty and messy living circumstances; however, as it became clear from my interviews, they strongly desire cleaner, orderly environments. Nevertheless, many Roma families end up leaving Budapest, moving to country villages in the hope of finding more success there. Unfortunately this process seems to lead to the proliferation of poor village ghettos without any work opportunities, which furthers the material difficulties of the Roma and therefore robs them of any possibility to actually achieve the success they wish for. I also pointed out that physical segregation furthers existing prejudices against Roma people, since it reduces the association between the Roma and the non-Roma which hinders the latter from forming a less biased, firsthand view about Roma people.

And last but not least, these discriminatory mechanisms that I analyzed throughout the previous chapters proved to be strongly gendered in different ways. First of all, current discourses of civilization recurrently play out in concerns over reproduction rates or mothering practices. The Roma population is generally identified with pre-modern patterns of child-rearing, such as an 'early' age of marriage and motherhood or the supposed high number of children in a family. These notions are represented in mainstream Hungarian discourses as threatening to the non-

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Roma, whose number is ever dwindling (just as of every proper western European people). In addition, the implications of the urban transformation that I demonstrated in this essay also have certain gendered aspects. The interviews that I conducted in Central-Ferencváros confirmed that Roma women's multiply disadvantageous, marginalized position within Hungarian society means that they are particularly reliant upon their social (primarily familial) network, which is threatened to be disrupted by the current tenure conversion brought about by the gentrification of the neighborhood. Furthermore, it is definitely they who bear the burden of maintaining the cleanliness of their living environment, which seems to be a pressure that they cannot alleviate due to the above-mentioned dilapidated circumstances imposed upon them. Indeed, I could sense the shame some of the interviewees felt in relation to this subject.

In conclusion, the answer to Etienne Balibar's (1991) question whether there is a neo-racism in contemporary societies, seems to be a definite yes in the case of Hungary. Balibar powerfully argues that due to the disrepute into which any reference to 'race' have fallen in 'civilized European nations' in the twentieth century, a new form of racism emerged in Europe in the past decades. This new phenomenon, what he calls 'racism without races' operates with the same old exclusionary mechanisms and rationalizations establishing a hierarchy between different groups of people; however, it addresses culture and the "incompatibility of life-forms and traditions" (Balibar 1991, 21) rather than racial belonging as the basis of such gradations.

This "anthropological culturalism" (Balibar 1991, 22) seems to function rather 'effectively' in contemporary Hungary (a country which could never come up with an operational model of multiculturalism in its history having established a fundamentally mononational identity (Gerő 1995)) dividing Hungarians into good, civilized citizens on the one hand and primitive, barbaric people on the other. Balibar argues that "the 'different' cultures are those which constitute obstacles, or which are established as obstacles […] to the acquisition of culture" (Balibar 1991, 25) in a certain political community. Correspondingly, as I hopefully made it clear in the above,

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contemporary Hungarian discourses and certain state practices produce a primitive, aberrant Roma subjectivity which is inscribed with backwardness and uncultured behavior. This racist inscription is wrapped in a cultural, civilizational guise, which allows for establishing a superior, western Hungarian identity entitled to rejoin the high society of civilized, truly 'European' countries.

However, as I demonstrated throughout this essay, the rising anti-Roma racism of the Hungarian society recurrently breaks through the surface jeopardizing this twofold civilizing process, since western European exceptionality continues to be reinforced by demeaning eastern countries. Western European states distance themselves from undesirable markers of inferiority and backwardness, such as racism and ethnic intolerance, by inscribing such phenomena upon eastern nations; which sets Hungary back in its old anxieties: whether it is a modern, civilized nation rated as 'Western' or a primitive, prejudiced, 'Eastern' one. Or does it remain somewhere in between?

In my view, these anxieties, perpetuated by current discourses and practices are rather destructive to the Hungarian body politic. Permanently gazing on western societies in jealousy and mimicking them at all costs hinders the country to find distinct, potentially more suitable ways of coping with the challenges of global neoliberalism. The endless attempts to become 'truly European' brought about a stern competition between eastern European countries, which, in many instances seems to encumber establishing strong, fruitful cooperation between them. However, in my view, strengthening cooperation would possibility help these societies to find alternative answers to these challenges, ones that suit post-socialist societies better than simply copying western patterns. I find it quite urgent to come up with such alternatives since the unquestioned implementation of current, western neoliberal practices has particularly serious consequences for certain social groups in these societies. And indeed, as I demonstrated in my thesis, Roma communities are especially vulnerable to these negative implications living on the

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margins in many European countries, as a consequence of deeply-rooted racist prejudices and practices of these societies.

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