



Romani women's identities real and imagined

Media discourse analysis of "I'm a European Roma Woman" campaign

By Jelena Jovanović

Submitted to Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree
in Women's and Gender Studies

Main supervisor: Dr. Erzsébet Barát

Support supervisor: Dr. Lucy Michael

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Abstract

In my thesis, I study self-representations of Romani women on the internet in order to show by which forces the self-representations are shaped in a particular context. My main source is an online campaign "I'm a European Roma woman" launched by Romedia Foundation, a non-governmental organization based in Budapest, Hungary. I conduct a critical discourse and visual analysis of the website content (texts, video-interviews and photographs). I argue that the specific understanding of 'identity' as fixed and one-dimensional and that of 'Romani woman's identity' exceptionally based on 'being Romani' result in a problematic character of identity politics promoted by the organizers of the campaign.

Even though they challenge stereotypes to some extent and greatly contribute to the visibility of Romani women activists, the discourses of the organizers show a lack of a critical approach to the framing of the goals of the online campaign. I firstly argue that this results in the understanding of the women's politics as only seemingly gendered. Secondly, the specific understanding of "Roma identity" as implied from the website's agenda reproduces the us/them dichotomy. Finally, Romani women's bodies that appear in the campaign images represent an imagination of what "a European Romani woman" looks like. On the other hand, many of the interviewed women's narratives challenge the mainstream discourses promoted on the website homepage, namely those of the "Romani movement", and help the promotion of diversity among Romani women, thus urging the need for the reconstruction of the concept of Romani woman's identity.

Keywords: Women, Romani, Gypsy, identity, identity politics, self-representation, body, gender, ethnicity

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1. Introduction

A campaign called "I'm a Roma Woman" was launched in 2009 and has been conducted ever since, organized within Romedia Foundation¹ [Budapest, Hungary]. The website "I'm a European Roma woman"² appeared as part of the campaign two years later, in 2011. The campaign was launched by five Romani women coming from different European countries – Hungary, Romania (two women), Bulgaria and Spain. Its main activity related to the online media consists of making video-interviews which are then posted on the website of the campaign. So far, there are ninety eight videos. Most of them are video-interviews with Romani women coming from different countries of the European continent, who are invited to talk about their experiences in relation to their feelings and thoughts on 'being Romani' and 'being a woman'. The women organizers have interviewed one American Romani woman as well. Interestingly, they have also given a voice to two Romani men who speak about Romani women's problems and deliver their messages to Romani women. There are as well two campaign videos produced by the organizers of the campaign, one short documentary framed as the campaign to ask for donations for the Romani victims of hate-crime and one video representing a roundtable discussion. The website consists of seven sections: *Mission*, which is at the same time the home page of the campaign, *Campaign*, *Videos*, *Join*, *News*, *Network* and *Contact*. In this thesis, I focus on the *Mission*, where the women organizers talk about the goals of the campaign, and on *Videos* section.

My main intention is to analyze the discourses of the women organizers and those of the individual women who are recorded and to see if they are constructed from within similar or different perspectives on 'being a Romani woman in Europe'. I shall also carry out a visual

¹<http://www.romediafoundation.org> [Last accessed 7th of April, 2014]

²<http://www.romawoman.org> [Last accessed 21st of May, 2014]

analysis of several photographic images which have been on the website from its creation in order to argue for the importance of the concept of the body related to its usage in Romani women's politics.

The motivation for the thesis is coming from my personal feelings of uneasiness which came as a reaction to my first visit to the website. Those feelings led to the formulation of different questions: If I am a Romani woman from Serbia, am I European as well? What does "European" mean here? Why does the national dimension of Romani women's identity remains invisible on the homepage of the website? Why do they speak mostly to successful women? Why do they approach for the videos mostly Romani women activists? Why are other Romani women not present on the website? The list went on and on, with the main thought pervading each question – the organizers' choices are informed by a particular political agenda. This is what made me realize that there is a need to urgently study this selectivity if we are to understand upon which ideas the identity politics of the organizers is based. This thesis is also an attempt to gain and offer a better understanding of ethnicized, gendered, classed, sexualized and aged social identities of Romani women. This means that being concerned with intragroup power relations in the context of social movements, I look at the intersections of categories of difference, such as gender, ethnicity, age, class and sexuality in order to understand the processes of identity formations carried out through the website. I believe that talking about imagined and real identities of Romani women will imply sharing different perspectives affected by Romani women's diverse positioning in the society.

I do not intend to simply focus on what ideas, strategies and goals are enacted in the campaign and how they are implemented and achieved through the texts, videos and images but want to look at the broader context that shapes power relations, which affects both the women

involved in this website and my analysis of their work. Part of this broader context involves the researcher's position. While rejecting the notion of scientific objectivity, as Sprague and Zimmerman argue, I understand that "where the researcher interprets or reinterprets the views or behavior of women, then it is the researcher and not the woman who is privileged" (Sprague & Zimmerman, 1989, p. 74), and – I would add – troubled. What in my opinion could be problematic is how to negotiate my own position on the women's perspectives in the research material. I am aware that, as a Romani woman, my position as a researcher will be affected by my personal experiences. I may identify "Romani women's issues" differently or I may answer the questions such as if we should take political initiative and how or with whom we should or should not cooperate in another way compared to the Romani women in relation to the website. However, I believe that "talking and listening from (Romani) women's stand point" in this case will imply both "sharing positions and perspectives" and "following out the implications of women's [] various locations in socially organized activities" (DeVault, 1999, p. 60).

The scope of this study affects its limitations. Firstly, the methods used are critical discourse and visual analysis. This is because I aim to study a website as the system through which the Romani women organizers of the online campaign deliver their messages to the audience. This means that I do not analyze the campaign as a whole, but the discourses which are exposed on the website as well as their effects. However, only by looking at the webpage content, I would not be able to answer many of the questions that are relevant for the campaign. For example, I argue that the organizers made videos of educated and "successful" Romani women almost exclusively. Conducting interviews with women who implement the campaign may have helped me to see the reasons for their choices of the women for the videos and it may have made me learn from their experiences and opinions. The interviews would have possibly enabled me to

test some of my own readings. Furthermore, while examining the videos, I could see that they are edited, which means that some parts are excluded from the public view. It might be important to see what parts are cut and for what reasons. I could have explored this issue, for example, by talking to women who have been recorded or by approaching the five women who launched the website, which would have also enabled me to see how the ideas about what should be presented to the public are negotiated. On the other hand, my position as a researcher could have influenced the way people see me and act in my presence. Finally, I came to the understanding that establishing relationships with the women whose work I intend to analyze could have created more bias and could have affected the critical approach I apply in this analysis.

Almost all studies conducted internationally on Romani people focus on their position in society as a disadvantaged group. This approach is reflected, for example, in Michael Stewart's work, who is a social anthropologist and one of the most referenced scholars in the field of Romani studies or in work of Ian Hancock, a linguist and the main contributor to both academic and political advocacy of the "Romani movement" (Stewart, 2001; Hancock, 1988). Academics rarely write specifically about Romani women. Sometimes, they study gender displays within so-called traditional communities, but only as part of a larger project (see Stewart, 1997, pp. 204-32). Most of the time, even studies that look at the positions of Romani women in the communities lack an intersectional approach which means that gender, if at all, is understood to be a separated category and not in play with other categories of difference, such as class, ethnicity, age, sexuality or religion.

Few works focus particularly on "Romani women's issues". This approach is mostly limited to topics such as reproductive behavior of Romani women (see Durst, 2001) or their access to reproductive health (see Magyari-Vincze, 2007). Although there are several

anthropological works which explore Romani women's senses of self through making interviews with them, those researchers mostly explore topics such as stereotypes, marriage or childrearing (see, for example, Serban-Temisan, 2011). Additionally, these works often limit understandings of Romani women to the women who are poor, who belong to the "traditional" Romani community and therefore to a "different" culture. An exception is a recent work by Anna Fejős who studies highly educated Romani women's positions related to their choice of partner and choice of job (Fejős, 2013). Even though several authors have written about Romani political participation (see Acton, 2000; Bárány, 2001; Guy, 2001; Vermeersch, 2006; Klímová-Alexander, 2005), they do not include women in their studies. In Angéla Kóczé's opinion, this comes "as a result of the traditional emphasis on the forms of struggle in which men have taken a leading part" (Kóczé, 2011, p. 53).

Exceptionally, Kóczé, a Hungarian Romani feminist academic and activist, wrote her PhD thesis on Hungarian Romani women and their political activism both at local and transnational level. Her long experience as an activist and her extensive field work reflected in her thesis finally not only acknowledge Romani women's participation in the "Romani movement" but also help readers to understand the intersections of gender, ethnicity and class as an important theoretical framework in which Romani women's lives, therefore their political participation as well, has to be conceptualized. It is important here to point out that this does not mean that Romani women are affected exceptionally by interplays of gender, class and ethnicity. There are other categories of difference, such as sexuality and age, which affect their lives too. However, Kóczé's PhD research covers a wide range of issues related to Romani women's interactions and various positions they occupy through their engagement in Romani politics. Additionally, Kóczé fills another gap in the literature. She puts an emphasis on those Romani women who do not live

anymore in so-called traditional communities, but are both geographically and socially mobile. She defines them as "border crossers" (Kóczé, 2011, p. 99).

In this thesis, I strive to contribute to the literature on Romani people in general and Romani women in particular. Firstly, I look at Romani women not as those who belong to a disadvantaged group, but as those who practice their political agency through a very concrete action, namely the campaign of the Romedia Foundation. Even though there are works looking at the media, literary, academic, public policy and other discourses on Romani women (see, for instance, Hancock, 2010; Jovanović, 2013, Daróczy, 2013), to my knowledge, nobody has analyzed discourses created and displayed by Romani women themselves. Studies on representations of Romani women are very much interested in how Romani women are seen by non-Romani people while self-representations of Romanies and Romani women remain unexamined. In addition, there is no academic work that studies a concrete action done by Romani women as political actors in the context of the "Romani movement". Moreover, even though Kóczé mentions that the identities of Romani women are being created by their political actions (Kóczé, 2011, p. 40), in her study she does not show what strategies they use to achieve this aim and how those strategies work within a concrete project. Due to the fact that there are no authors that criticize the creation of "Romani identity" while explaining the ways they themselves employ the concept of identity, the processes of identity creation remain unchallenged, too often taken as inherently good. Finally, insofar as identity formation is a matter of embodiment, it is a problem that the academic research on Romani women's bodies focuses only on forced sterilization, prostitution and early marriages (see for instance Kóczé, 2011; Cahn, 2011; Nirenberg, 2011). Romani women's bodies are not understood to have a potential to be used by Romani women themselves for doing politics on their own terms.

The next chapter ("Romani women and political activism") is concerned with giving a context to the website "I'm a European Roma Woman". Firstly, I explain the main characteristics of the "Romani movement" in order to go on and show that there are many Romani women activists who establish relationships among each other both at the national and transnational level aiming to solve "Romani women's issues". This is to point out several main issues related to Romani women's activism. Secondly, I talk about the discourses on Romani women in order to argue that the self-representations of the Romani women are informed by the representations. Finally, I explain here usage of the terms *Roma*, *Romani* and *Gypsy* as employed in the thesis. In Chapter 3 ("Key issues of identity and identity politics") I firstly present framings of "Romani people" and "Romani identity" as conceptualized within the field of Romani Studies and explain my own positioning in relation to the anti-essentialist and deconstructionist academic approach. In this chapter I conduct a discourse analysis of the website. I firstly focus on the aspects of the identity politics of the Romani women's campaign website as formulated in the organizers' agenda and then I look at if these understandings match the interviewed Romani women's narratives. In Chapter 4 ("Romani women's bodies matter") I explore the importance of the photographic images on the campaign website. While conducting a visual analysis, I explain why Romani women's bodies matter both for the campaign organizers and for the audience. In other words, I examine how 'identity', identity politics and visibility of women's bodies are related to each other. Finally, I discuss my readings of the analyzed discourses in order to argue for the reconstruction of the concept of identity in relation to the Romani women's identity politics and suggest further research in the field.

2. Romani women and political activism

In order to understand the context of Romani women's activism I firstly give a short explanation of what the "Romani movement" is about. I here intend to emphasize the point that the male leadership of the "Romani movement" seems to suppress women's issues if they do not fit into their agenda that is concerned with some generalized anti-Gypsy discourses. In addition, questioning the existence of the Romani women's movement, as well as autonomy and freedom of Romani women activists talks to the problematic situation in relation to identifications of what constitutes Romani women's identities and thus to the establishment of the basis for their identity politics.

Although the focus of my thesis are the self-representations of Romani women, it is important to look at the representations of Romani women because on the campaign website "I'm a European Roma Woman" the self-representations are inescapably informed by the mainstream representations which the women mark as stereotypical and want to challenge. Here I draw upon Stuart Hall who argues that "'[r]acism and the media' touches directly upon the problem of ideology, since the media's main sphere of operation is the production and transformation of ideologies" and asserts that "language and ideology are not the same", but "ideological discourses [are being] elaborated" through language (Hall, 2003, p. 18). If one wants to see what kinds of discursive ideologies are created around Romani women, she has to look at the language surrounding them. However, it seems that very few researchers examined how Romani women are depicted in the media, and that no scholars have written about their representations on the internet, let alone their self-representations.

Finally, as part of the contextualization of the thesis topic, I briefly explain the meanings of the terms 'Roma', 'Romani' and 'Gypsy' since they are relevant for pointing out the difficulty of

braking the homogenous representations and self-representations of Romani women. The explanation of usage of these terms in this paper comes as well as an intention to be faithful to the right of self-identification and to my affiliation towards a gender sensitive language.

2.1. The "Romani movement", Romani women and transnational politics

Those few who have written about the "Romani movement" and who have studied it both at the national and transnational level agree that the fall of communism in 1989 and the process of nation-state building emphasized the existence of Romani people as a minority in Europe, especially those in Eastern and Central Europe (for example see Vermeersch, 2006; Kóczé, 2011). Interestingly, in the process of transition to "democracy", the position of Romani people seems to get worse in comparison to the communist period. However, it is very problematic to talk about the situation of Romani people and the "Romani movement" in general, even about those living in post-communist countries, on the one hand, due to the fact that the actual national contexts are not the same and, on the other, because there is no agreement on what should constitute the so-called Roma issue (Vermeersch, 2006, p. 12).

Peter Vermeersch defines an ethnic movement as a political action which crucially involves specifications of two components – interests and identity (Vermeersch, 2006, p. 12). Even though he asserts that Romani activists and the organizers of the "movement" struggle to answer these questions and to give their opinion in relation to understandings of both "Romani identity" and the "Romani issue" (Ibid.), he does not question the existence of the Romani movement itself. Furthermore, some of the activists in Vermeersch's study state that there is no movement if the political action did not reach "the ground", which we will also see later in the analysis of the videos (Section 3.3). Moreover, Vermeersch himself argues that the biggest failure

of Romani activists lies in the fact that they do not manage to mobilize Romanies into a political mass movement (Vermeesch, 2006, p. 2). However, even if there is no agreement on the existence of a movement, some characteristics of the "movement", such as when and where it started and what its constituencies are, are of crucial importance for this study in order for the reader to understand the context of the internet campaign.

According to Ilona Klímová-Alexander, serious political mobilization of Romani activists at the transnational level, though mostly engaging people from Western countries began in the sixties and seventies when the Comité International Tzigane was founded in Paris in 1965 (Klímová-Alexander, 2005, p. 14). At the same time, some local organizations in the United Kingdom, Spain, France and Czechoslovakia were established and the first World Romani Congress was held near London in 1971. However, some authors take the 1930s as the beginning of global aspirations when a Polish family requested to the League of Nations a homeland for Romanies (Ibid, p. 15). The first World Romani Congress in 1971 could be also seen as the beginning of Romani nationalistic politics. The participants abandoned the idea of having a state, yet nationalistic politics continued to dominate: at the Congress participants established the Romani flag and Romani anthem as symbols of the "Romani nation". From 1971 onward, understanding of Romani people as a stateless nation dominates the discourse of Romani politics.

It is the new ideology of human rights, equality, democracy and minority rights protection discourses coming from the West from the eighties and nineties on that dominates the Eastern European countries in transition to "democracy". This new ideology is exactly what enables Romani people to demand their rights and mobilize around a "common cause". The "Romani movement" is complex. It is a set of formal and informal organizations working at local, national, international and transnational level. It includes both the governmental and non-governmental sector, both Romani and non-Romani actors. In Central and Eastern European countries, informal

forms of Romani political mobilization at the national level took place during the communist period (Vermeesch, 2006, p. 105) but flourished only after the fall of communism. Today, in this region, there are countless Romani non-governmental organizations, Romani political parties, Romani politicians active in mainstream political parties at the local and national level (for example, read more about the actors in Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia in Vermeesch, 2006, pp. 102-49). Moreover, there are engagements of Romani people in the field of public policy research and advocacy. For example, one of the actions taken as important is the creation of the National Action Plans for Roma, which was enabled in the context of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 (the Decade).³ Romani activists are supported by intergovernmental organizations such as the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN). In addition to those institutions, the most notable political bodies to fund the projects related to Romani people are the Open Society Foundations (OSF) and the World Bank (WB) (Vermeesch, 2006, p. 184).

The online campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" is funded by the Decade, by the Roma Initiatives Office of OSF (RIO)⁴, Global Fund for Women⁵, Catapult⁶ and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)⁷. It is not my concern to explore the influences of the funders on the campaign, but it is not a secret that funding bodies indeed negotiate with the organizations and limit their autonomy (see Kóczé, 2011, pp. 46-8). Additionally, two of the five foundations that financially support the internet campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" are solely directed towards Romani issues (the Roma Initiatives and the Decade), yet they are male-led. This is not a criticism directed towards the campaign due to the fact that I believe they did not have much

³ <http://www.romadecade.org> [Last accessed 1st of May, 2014]

⁴ <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/programs/roma-initiatives> [Last accessed 1st of May, 2014]

⁵ <http://www.globalfundforwomen.org> [Last accessed 1st of May, 2014]

⁶ <http://www.catapult.org> [Last accessed 1st of May, 2014]

⁷ <http://www.ned.org> [Last accessed 1st of May, 2014]

choice in this regard. On the other hand, interests of the international organizations in the problems of Romani women "resonates with the dominant Western attitude to historically subaltern groups and indigenous peoples with the effect of an occlusion of Romani women's identity and activity" (Kóczé, 2011, p. 53).

Kóczé proves that there is a "lack of intersectional thinking" among "male-dominated leadership of the movement" by giving an example of a Romani male activist who said that "Romani women have to choose between their ethnicity and their gender" at a meeting of the Open Society Institute (Kóczé, 2011, p. 53). She explains these kinds of attitudes as appearing "in the light of academic approaches to recognition struggles [which] usually discuss feminist and antiracist movements as autonomous or, at best, parallel dynamics" (Ibid.). There are a few more women who more or less openly talk about the hegemony of the male leadership. For example, Sebihana Skenderovska, a Romani woman activist from Macedonia explained her experience of being part of European Roma and Travelers Forum Board:

My experience with the first board was very difficult because I was raised in the family where I could talk when I did not like things. Then, there I met people with more difficult attitudes toward women and, at the same time, toward the young. Some of the members did not want to hear the opinion of Romani women or youth. [...] and to tell you honestly, because of some very traditional people, I always wore clothes that would suit them (quoted in Nirenberg, 2011, pp. 56-7).

From this quote one can see that women are not the only group suppressed by some male Romani political activists. They also exclude youth from political participation. However, both the national and international political environment gave space for women and youth to fight for Romani rights as well.

Romani women's rights discourse and Romani women's activism developed during the 1990s within both non-Romani and Romani non-governmental organizations (Kóczé, 2011, p.

93).⁸ For example, Romani Women's Network in Serbia started to develop during late 1990s when Romani women activists, both coming from non-Romani civil organizations or associations and Romani NGO-s, realized the need to come together. Following the ideas of Romani women from Romania and Macedonia, where such networks were established even before 1998, they decided to connect among each other, to strengthen their capacities, develop their ideas and put them into practice in order to improve the situation of Romani women in Serbia. They courageously started to fight against racism during nineties, at the time when nationalism flourished and culminated in the ethnic conflicts in Serbia. According to Vera Kurtić, in 1997, women from different youth, Romani and women's organizations recognized that the civil sector misses the consciousness of Romani women suffering multiple discrimination (Kurtić, 2011, p. 2). Already by the next year, in 1998, Women's Association "Ženski Prostor" (Women's Space) was established in Niš with the aim to empower women from the marginalized groups and create the possibilities for their self-organization. The association focuses especially on improving the lives of Romani women from its beginnings. Approximately at the same time many women's organizations were founded all over the country specifically framed as Romani women's organizations (Kurtić, 2011, pp. 2-3).

Supported by intergovernmental organizations such as the EU, the CoE and the UN and international human right advocacy network, Romani women become visible not only at the national but also at the international level. For example, towards the end of 2006 and at the beginning of 2007, the European Roma Rights Centre from Budapest, Romani Women's Centre "Bibija"-Belgrade, Women's Space-Niš and Association "Eureka"-Sombor created a report on

⁸ Defining the organizations as "Romani" or "non-Romani" is sometimes related to the people who lead or are engaged in the organizations, but I use these adjectives to index the organizations' target groups.

the situation of Romani women in terms of "human rights violations" in Serbia.⁹ In May 2007, the report was presented before the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in United Nations (CEDAW), New York. Based on the report, CEDAW brings the recommendations to the Serbian government (Kurtić, 2011, p. 16).

Romani women activists became active at the transnational level even earlier. For instance, a Romanian Romani woman activist, Nicoleta Bitu reported on Romani women and gender inequalities to the CoE in 1999 (Kóczé, 2011, p. 48). Writing about the Romani women entering into the transnational political scene, Kóczé says that Romani women's issues at the transnational level for the first time started to be conceptualized and documented at a congress organized by the CoE in 1994 when the "Manifesto of Roma/Gypsy Women" was published (Ibid, p. 52). This event was followed by many other events organized in relation to Romani women's issues, such as Hearing of Roma/Gypsy Women in 1995, organized by the CoE or International Conference of Romani Women in 1998, organized by the Open Society Institute (OSI) (Ibid.). With the support of the OSI and the CoE, two Romani women's networks were established respectively – Romani Women's Initiative in 1999 and International Romani Women's Network in 2003 (Ibid.).

Even though those events have helped Romani women to put Romani women's issues into the political agenda, there are many obstacles to prevent the same issues to be solved. As Kóczé argues, one of the problems is that Romani women activists involved in these kinds of networks are "a small elite group" and that they are rarely enabled to translate universal human rights discourse coming from Western donors to the Romani communities (Kóczé, 2011, p. 49). The other part of the "dialogical character" of Romani women's activism, as Kóczé puts it, is the

⁹The report available from <http://www.errc.org/article/errc-submission-to-un-cedaw-on-serbia-march-2007/3725> [Last accessed 29th of May, 2014]

already mentioned "male-constituted leadership" of the Romani movement which sometimes does not allow women to discuss certain issues, namely those which do not fit into "a violation of general Roma rights" (Ibid, pp. 55-6).

As one can see, there are many Romani women's networks that have been established in the last two decades, both at the national and transnational level. Given the example of the Serbian Romani Women's Network, the Romani women activists are able to transfer the national context into the international context, namely that of UN Women in the case shown. As far as the analysis of the website of the campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" is concerned, as that of a transnational campaign, I look at the possibility of its translation into the national contexts of the Romani women who are interviewed. Is a "European Roma woman", as a concept created by the website organizers, transferable to the identities of Macedonian, Serbian, Bulgarian, Portuguese, Spanish, Slovak, Czech, Hungarian and other Romani women appearing on the website? I also look at if the political discourse created relates more to the Romani rights or to the women's rights discourses or both?

2.2. Public discourses and representations of Romani women

In order to understand the ways in which Romani women are disempowered, it is important to look at the media representations. Taking into account the lack of literature on the topic, to use the work of the authors who have written about the specific problems related to the media representation of minority women is unavoidable. When talking about "underrepresentation" and "misrepresentation" of women in the media, Margaret Gallagher states that "if women are under-represented or misrepresented in media content, this is doubly so for those women who are not members of the dominant national culture" (Gallagher, 2001, p. 106).

Romani women activists and academics writing about Romani women sometimes use 'double discrimination' to emphasize how Romani women do not face discrimination only because they are Romani, but because they are women as well (for example, see Savić, 2007). Even though this is an important insight into the positioning of Romani women, I believe that the discrimination has to be explored with the help of an intersectional approach due to the fact that many women have to challenge heteronormativity, ageism and other forms of discrimination which makes their positioning within the patriarchal and ethnicized societies more complex.

Patricia Hill Collins points out the importance of the intersectional approach in examining the negative portrayals of African-American women stating that " [...] black feminist intellectuals investigating sexual politics imply that the situation is much more complicated than that advanced by some prominent white feminists [...] in which 'men oppress women' because they are men (Collins, 1997, p. 399). Writing about white feminist "production of the 'Third World Women' as a singular, monolithic subject", Chandra Mohanty emphasizes that without looking at the historical, cultural, political context, without seeing how an individual functions on the local level, within the complex network of social interactions, it is impossible to understand the ways in which women are oppressed (Mohanty, 1988, pp. 17-42). Mohanty's emphasis on the context helps me to prevent understanding of Romani women affected only by 'race' and 'gender', at best intersecting with 'class' as well, and to pay attention to the complexity of power relations operating differently in individual experiences. In addition and most importantly, by looking at the context, I intend to avoid generalization which concerns the assumption that all Romani women are oppressed by their ethnicized and gendered "other".

There are more authors who have studied the representations of Romani people in the media, than those who wrote about how Romani women are depicted. In his book *The Pariah syndrome*, Ian Hancock gives examples of anti-Gypsy discourses. Negative portrayals of Romani

people in the media reflect anti-Gypsism already in an 1855 American press text which says that Gypsies are a sinful, "miserable race" (Hancock, 1988, p. 116). In the present-day Croatian written media context, as Igor Kanižaj argues, even if texts are meant to be positive, Croatian "sensualistic" press titles evoke stereotypes and discrimination against Romani people (Kanižaj, 2006, p. 68). Stereotypical portrayals of Romani people are overrepresented nowadays in the cyberspace, but, to my knowledge, only one author has written about them. Lari Samuli Peltonen concludes that on Romanian Internet forums there are "strong anti-tsiganist sentiments, especially in comments that were left in response to articles covering negative pieces of news, like crimes committed by the Roma" (Peltonen, 2010, p. 99).

Hancock also writes about the complex relations that were happening in the period from the 13th until 19th century when Romani people were slaves in Romania and Moldova. There were legislations prescribing that "a [male] slave who rapes a woman shall be condemned to be burnt alive", but that "[the free man] who, yielding to love, meets a girl in the road and embraces her, shall not be punished at all". Furthermore, although the relations of free men and female slaves are neither in accordance to "God will" nor the "natural law", as Hancock says, it did not prevent relationships to happen. Indeed, this is exactly the reason why in 1776, Constantin, Prince of Moldavia, wrote against those "evil and wicked deed[s]":

[Since...] in some parts Gypsies have married Moldavian women, and also Moldavian men have taken in marriage Gypsy girls, which is entirely against the Christian faith, for not only have these people bound themselves to spend all their life with the Gypsies, but especially that their children remain forever in unchanged slavery... such a deed being hateful to God, and contrary to human nature... any priest who has had the audacity to perform such marriages, which is a great and everlasting wicked act... will be removed from his post [and] severely punished (quoted in Hancock, 1988, p. 45).

In addition to these interesting observations of the prescribed sexual behaviors in the context of the slavery period, Hancock also draws attention to the specific portrayals of women in the same

context. In his article *The 'Gypsy' stereotype and the sexualization of Romani women*, he exceptionally mentions public attitudes towards Romani women as "whores", "exotic", "untouchable" and "forbidden". The author, however, focus on the status of Romani women in the past by repeating here his observations related to the slavery period and pointing out that "[w]hile she could be [...] used, a Romani woman could not become the legal wife of a white man" (Hancock, 2010, p. 7).

All these observations in the existing scholarship presented here are either reflecting the past or they are not focused on Romani women. Hancock's works are a refreshing exception although they are focused on the past. To my knowledge, there is only one work to talk about the contemporary representations of Romani women. Writing about the Romanian press discourse around early marriages in Romani communities, Nicoleta Bitu and Crina Morteau come to the conclusion that the portrayals of Romani women are stereotypical, "mostly limited to early marriages and pregnancies (as if they were a display of sexuality)" (Bitu & Morteau, 2010, p. 80).

Motivated by the lack of research, my interests in discourses on Romani women have recently resulted in an analysis of an internet forum in Croatia, where non-Romani online users are discussing Romani women, mostly as objects of their sexual desire (Jovanović, 2012). My argument is that the internet, where online users remain anonymous and thus express their opinion more freely, opens the possibilities for explicit and vocal expressions of sexism, racism and misogyny. In the particular case the forum gave space to representations of Romani women as "ethnic other", as those who are available for male consumption, and as passive objects of men's sexual desire (Ibid, p. 5). The internet gave an opportunity to some non-Romani men to express their desire towards Romani women and the dilemma whether it is "normal" for these

men to have sex with them. The comment which initiated the discussion on the Forum is the following:

So, my fetish are dark-skinned exotic girls. In the Balkans, there are not many black women and mullato women, so just Gypsy women are left to me.
 My biggest sexual wish is to destroy some Gypsy woman by sex.
 Does anybody have a fetish as I do?
 Is it normal?
 In general, what do you think about Gypsy women as sex bombs?¹⁰

Following this comment, 93 users (mostly men) became involved in the discussion and responded to the post. They all depicted Romani women as different, most often as dirty, morally backward, prostitutes, but also as traditional, exotic, with mystical powers, and so on. As they are said to deviate from the norm, in this case the norm of a proper Croatian citizen (and the norm is not very different in Serbian cyberspace), Croatian desire for Gypsy women is also to be determined as something not quite "normal". The comments refer to Romani women as "others" and thus not as valuable as "us" (Ibid, p. 12). They also refer to them as a social group that has to be "reculturalized" (Ibid, p. 5). There are several posts on the forum discussing, for example, early/arranged/forced marriages. In most of the comments, early marriage is represented as a "Gypsy custom" (Ibid, p. 9).

"Exoticized and sexualized" Romani women, as Ian Hancock has shown, are not something new. Romani women have faced that image ever since the time of their arrival to Europe, according to Ian Hancock in 12th century, when they were labeled as "different" from the majority populations (Hancock, 2010). Non-Romani people's imaginations of Romani people are well-documented in literature, especially in Hancock's essays and books. As I have assumed and as Hancock has shown, non-Romani people make their images of Romanies based on fantasy

¹⁰ Data collected from the Forum <http://www.forum.hr/showthread.php?t=422192> [Last accessed 29th of April, 2014] and translated by the author.

(Jovanović, 2012, p. 8). He explained that if Romani people did not fit into the imaginations of non-Romani populations, they remained invisible:

In the United States and Canada, the average citizen is likely to think that there are no Gypsies in those countries at all. They never see the campfires and wagons they associate with Gypsies, or the violin-toting individuals sporting earrings, embroidered vests and tambourines (Hancock, 1998, p. 120).

However, in Hancock's concerns about the present situation of Romanies, he focuses on anti-Gypsy political, academic and media discourses as a continuum in which a hostile environment is produced and reproduced and never challenged by Romanies, due to the lack of their political power. In addition, both Hancock's and my research on Romani representations expose the processes of reproducing the us/them dichotomy thus implicating non-Romani people as oppressors and Romanies as victims of maltreatment. The positions of Romani people in today's society however are more complex and diverse. This has been shown many times, especially in the past three decades, when the political power of Romani people visibly increased. Many Romani activists use this power to challenge and even to try to prohibit the negative representations and to punish those who display them.¹¹

One example of this kind of activism happened in 2012 when a Romani student found a book in a Hungarian University library. In the course book *Post-communist Europe and its national/ethnic problem* Romanies are described as incestuous and consequently mentally ill population: "The reason why many Roma are mentally ill is because in Roma culture it is permitted for sisters and brothers or cousins to marry each other or just to have sexual intercourse with each other" (Jeszenszky, 2009, p. 273). Even though Géza Jeszenszky¹², the author of the book, claims that many Romanies are mentally ill due to their incestuous practices is an example

¹¹For example, see <http://www.errc.org/article/anti-romani-hate-speech-in-romania/643> [Last accessed 29th of May, 2014]

¹²Géza Jeszenszky is a university professor and ambassador of Hungary to Norway.

of discourses of difference, this anti-Gypsy statement caused the reactions which can be read as a social event where more complex power relations are worked out (Jovanović, 2013, p. 154). Some Romani and non-Romani students, for example, engaged in writing protest letters to the author and the event appeared in the media as well.¹³ According to Ann Laura Stoler (2002), George Mosse (1985) and Gisela Bock's (1983) argumentation, the quoted statement can be read as a representation of Romani people as a matter of innate deviation from the norm by using the notion of "degeneracy". Jeszenszky, intentionally or not, got involved in the process of the creation of Romanies as the "sub-human" sexual other. More interestingly, I have argued with the help of Dagmar Herzog's (2004) different perspective as well as with that of Sunil Agnani's (2007) interpretations of Diderot's ideas about interbreeding that we need to move from the well-known concerns in scholarship on the discourses of racism and anti-Gypsism to the realms in which Romani and non-Romani people built more complex relationships, also as a result of Romani resistance.

It is important to understand that there is a resistance to the repressions from both sides. This thesis is another attempt to argue for the importance of the resistance of Romani people, in this case that of Romani women, whose power is also enabled to an important extent through the existence of the "Romani movement". This can, however, again reproduce the understanding that there are two types of Romani people – those who are "good", educated, "empowered" and those who are "bad", with no education, living in the "segregated Romani communities". By watching the videos of the interviewed Romani women, thus paying attention to their self-representations, I now intend to bring a new dimension of looking at power relations within the Romani communities as well and challenge the elitism of the Romani activists, men and women alike.

¹³See, for example, <http://golden-zephyr.com/hate-speech/> or <http://www.hungarianambulance.com/2012/10/hungarian-ambassador-to-oslo-geza.html> [Last accessed 31st of May, 2014]

2.3. *'Roma', 'Romani' or 'Gypsy' or how to fit everyone*

Many activists fighting for Romani rights and those who have written about their political activism accept that, in addition to making themselves attractive to international organizations and finding the way to get into the governmental institutions, the establishment and dissemination of the term 'Roma' instead of 'Gypsy' in English (or instead of 'Cigan' in Serbian, or 'cigány' in Hungarian) is their biggest success (Vermeesch, 2006, p.2). The activists often relate the usage of the term with 'political correctness' understood as anti-discriminatory language. On the other hand, the authors who analyze the "Romani movement" relate the usage of the term to the process of the creation of "Romani identity" or "the nature of Romani identity" (Ibid, p. 11). None of them, to my knowledge, however, looks critically at the fact that the word 'Roma' is a Romani language word derived from *Rom* which means 'man' or 'husband'. Due to this fact, I avoid using the term 'Roma' and use instead 'Romani' people or 'Romanies' that is at least clearly a plural form in English. Both 'Roma' and 'Romani' are the forms used as adjectives. Also in order to argue for gender equality discourse within Romani studies, I use 'Romani' as an adjective form. In addition, the analyses say that the usage of the term 'Roma' as an adjective form is linguistically incorrect.¹⁴

Even though I have decided to use the words 'Romani' and 'Romanies' instead of 'Gypsy' and 'Gypsies', I do emphasize that this is problematic almost as much as the usage of g-words. As it is not true that 'Gypsy' is always used as a derogatory term, it is neither true that 'Roma' is always used in a respectful way. However, it is true that 'Gypsy', 'Cigan', 'cigány' served to label groups of people such as Kalderash, Vlach, Beash, Romungro and Gurbet carry negative connotations too often. The political activists introduced the word 'Roma' into the discourse of

¹⁴<http://romaniprojekt.uni-graz.at/romani-introduction.en.html> [Last accessed 31st of May, 2014]

international politics for at least two reasons. The first was connected to the struggles against negative connotations. The second was that the political movement needed an "umbrella" term to include all subgroups understood to belong to a group previously labeled as Gypsies, even though some groups, such as German Sinties, strongly refuse the term (Gheorghe and Acton, 2001, p. 58).

Firstly, I do not intend to disrespect all the efforts that the activists put into the dissemination of Roma/Romani/Romanies with the intention to break away from social stigma. In addition, most of the activists (and not only activists) of the movement coming from Central and Eastern European countries (whom this paper is mainly concerned with) declare themselves as Roma, and some find the word Gypsy offensive. However, I sometimes use words such as 'Gypsy' and 'gypsyess', the first one in the cases when a person uses the word to describe herself or in the case of direct citation, and both of them when I employ the concept to imply the perception of what a Romani woman is often expected to look like. I am aware that my employment of the terms could cause confusions, but it is meant to make the politics of this paper as inclusive as possible.

3. Key issues of identity and identity politics

*...When I think of a Romani woman, I think of reconciliation,
Of silence, of being silenced, of being shut down,
Of being forced into noiseless,
Of inner lives,
Of intensity of a devastating energy
Coming in through her skin,
Coming out through her gaze,
Quite, deadly, paralyzing weight...*

(Jelena Savić, *Tri pesme o Romkinji* [Three poems about a Romani woman])¹⁵

The aim of this chapter is to highlight some aspects of the identity politics of the Romani women's campaign website as formulated in the organizers' agenda and then to look at if these understandings are similar to the understandings of the interviewed Romani women's discourses. I argue that the agenda of the website seems exclusionary and limited in its attempts in comparison with some alternative understandings of 'identity' upon which the Romani women's politics could possibly be built (I shall discuss them below). By looking at the videos posted on the campaign website, one could infer that the women organizers were mainly interested to find out what does 'to be a Romani woman' mean. For the organizers, it seems, this entails searching for and identifying "key issues" of "Romani women's identity". Even though the organizers do not use "Romani women's identity", through their agenda displayed on the homepage and through their questions they imply that there is such a thing - in its singular form. However, if one looks at the video-interviews and the context by which Romani women's narratives are shaped, she could argue that Romani women's *identities* are multiple, experiential, relational and fluid. This understanding of 'identity' then goes against the fantasy created by the organizers, namely that of

¹⁵Translated by the author of the thesis, Original version available from <http://usernameka.wordpress.com/poetry/autorkei/neke-moje/3-pesme-o-romkinji/> [Last accessed 21st of May, 2014]

Romani women as a homogenous group of people. In order not only to avoid homogenization but to strongly disagree with this essentializing tendency by the organizers, I pay attention to the diversity of the answers the interviewees offer for the audience.

The organizers of the campaign frame the mission of the online campaign in the form of texts on the website, which often do not match the answers of the interviewees. After reading the texts and the videos in "I'm a European Roma Woman campaign", I noticed that there are some conflicts between the main goals of the campaign and the selection of the actual videos of the individual women who were recorded. In order to look at the problematic of the identity formations in the campaign, I conduct a critical discourse analysis of the video-interviews and compare them with the website's agenda. I explore the following questions: what kinds of discourses are articulated in them and by what relations of power they are shaped. I look at the modes of control, such as forms of exclusions of both potential actors and statements as well as at the requirements one has to fulfill in order to be a speaking subject (Howarth, 2000, pp. 56-8). Furthermore, I want to locate and reflect on the three types of assumptions (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 55-61) the argumentations draw on in order to see the work the Romani women perform for the organization of the arguments and trace the perspectives from where the texts come to announce the values they are informed by. The main question here is concerned with the ways in which the organizers try to make the audience believe in their version of events (Tonkiss, 1998, p. 250). Following Tonkiss' suggestions, I select key words or themes, look for "clues in the detail", I search for variation and pay attention to the silences as well (Ibid, p. 257) in order to map possible alternative accounts that are excluded from the horizon of intelligibility of the texts/videos.

3.1. Framings of "Romani people" and "Romani identity"

It is widely accepted among theoreticians that race (see, for example, Smedley & Smedley, 2005), ethnicity (see Harries, 1987), as well as gender (see Lorber, 1994, pp. 13-36), are socially constructed categories, imagined and invented at some historical points, which aimed at justifying the hegemony of the powerful. Even though the understanding that "Romani people" are socially constructed as a group is sometimes employed within the field of Romani studies (see Okely, 1983; Stewart, 1997; Guy, 2001; Vermeesch, 2006), 'identity' is still and often a misused concept. For example, Vermeesch claims that "Romani identity" is often understood "in terms of real common properties and objective characteristics" (Vermeesch, 2006, p. 13), but while he is critical towards the concept, he himself misuses the concept of identity within the concept of Romani identity. According to Vermeesch, there are three main conceptualizations of "Romani identity": the one to define Romani people as a historical diaspora, the one to define them as a genetically related group of people and the one to define them as a group of people who share the same or similar lifestyle (Ibid, pp. 13-20). Even though I agree with Vermeesch' deconstructionist views which rely on the understanding that everything related to "Romani people" should be conceptualized by analyzing the classifications surrounding them, I argue that he contributes to the "abuse" of the concept of identity in the social sciences (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000, p. 2). "Romani identity" is here equal to "Romani people", which implies that Romani people possess "Romani identity" as a group characteristic, and nothing else. Even though, the author states that "Romani identity" is a political category (Vermeesch, 2006, p. 5), his usage of the concept of identity implies that Romani people possess the identity that defines them as Romani. In my opinion, this creates the understanding of 'identity' as one-dimensional, as based exceptionally on 'being Romani'. Importantly, the understanding of 'identity' thus the

understanding of "Romani identity" as multiple, fluid, relational and experiential is as well very political, though not mainstream.

There are even works based on the contradiction, which assume that "the Roma" are an ethnic group, while arguing that "Roma identity" is a social construct (Csepeli & Simon, 2004). Here, "Roma identity" comes to be constructed by "the Gypsy-image of the majority" and "the self-image of the Roma", the relation which further means "more or less homogenous" representations of Gypsies vs. "heterogeneous" self-representations given by "Romani people" (Ibid, p. 129). This simplified understanding of the concept of identity is problematic as it recreates the us/them dichotomy and does not allow "Romani identity" to be understood as the identity of a person who identifies or is identified as Romani and at the same time having the possibility to identify with some other categories of difference. On the contrary, it says that the meaning of 'Romani' depends only on two types of perceptions or "images".

Exceptionally, János Ladányi and Iván Szelényi not only argue but elaborate upon the understanding that "Romani people" are constructed as an ethnic group (Ladanyi & Szelenyi, 2001). While talking about the problem of the systems of classification of "Romani people" as an ethnic group, they argue that answers to the question of who are they depend on the classifiers (self-identification, classification by "experts", and classification by interviewers) (Ibid, p. 80). These answers come to be very different. In addition, they come to be very different in different national contexts even if the classifier belongs to the same category (Ibid, p. 88). Even though this work does not use the concept of identity, it helps me to pay attention to the ways the organizers of the website act as classifiers in the process of "Romani women's identity" formation.

If one understands "Romani people" or "the Roma" as a constructed category, then she understands "Romani women", "Romani identity" and "Romani woman's identity" as constructed

categories as well. My theoretical considerations here start with mentioned deconstructionist views and philosophical perspectives on "race" (Zack, 1998). Naomi Zack argues that to say that "race" does not exist is *a priori* or logically true (Ibid, p. 448). Her statements on logical truths about race say, for example, that "[i]f there is no human biological racial taxonomy, then there is no human biological racial hierarchy (Ibid.). Zack explains that:

[t]he relevant logical truths follow from two assumptions: nonexistent entities cannot be causes, effects, or objects in relationships with things that do exist; nonexistent entities cannot have subcategories that exist. [] for example, unicorns, which do not exist, cannot have an impact on existing ecological systems, and since unicorns do not exist as a general category, it is impossible for grey or golden unicorns to exist (Ibid, p. 447).

This means that I understand that there is a need for questioning the existence of the essences that makes us "Romani women". This further implies that discrimination against Romani women logically does not exist. However, this does not mean that there are no effects of the usage of the categories assigned to people, such as those I show in the section on Romani women's representations. The same as Zack, however, I am doubtful that the solution to the racist practices lies in educating the public on the issues of essentialism (Zack, 1998, p. 461). I argue that Romani women are not in the position to simply wait for this dream to come true. The effects of the usage of the assigned categories are the very reasons for the unity of "Romani women" and a justification for doing their identity politics. However, my understanding of how Romani women's identities should be conceptualized within the politics seems to be very different compared to the identity politics of the website "I'm a European Roma Woman". In the next subsection, I am to look at how the organizers do their politics, how they "decide" who is a "Romani woman", what are her problems or rather effects of usage of the social constructs. In other words, I look at what does 'to be a Romani woman' mean, according to the agenda of the website.

3.2. *The problem with identity politics of the campaign*

Only by looking at the title of the campaign – "I am a European Roma Woman"¹⁶, one could understand its problematic character, which comes from the used singular form in the sentence. This can mislead the audience to think that the website is about one person who identifies as woman, European and Romani. However, this campaign is concerned with Romani *women* as a group, namely with the organizers, the participants in the video-interviews and partly a target group of the campaign. Usage of a singular form to index a group is already a call to question what makes all "European Roma women" exist as one entity. According to Chandra Mohanty, "[t]he relationship between "Woman" (a cultural and ideological composite other constructed through diverse representational discourses—scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) and "women" (real, material subjects of their collective histories) is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address" (Mohanty, 2003, p. 19). Since Mohanty further argues that "[t]his connection between women as historical subjects and the representation of Woman produced by hegemonic discourses is not a relation of direct identity or a relation of correspondence or simple implication", but "an arbitrary relation set up by particular cultures" (Ibid.), even though with the purpose of the creation of the image of a "good European Roma Woman", the self-representation of the organizers of the website appears as hegemonic.

Furthermore, there are other questions emerging from the title: What if a person identifies as a Romani woman, but not as European? And what do they mean by "European"? Is it a political or a geographical concept? What do they mean by "Roma"? Due to the fact that most of the interviewed women are educated activists, those who occupy positions in the governments or

¹⁶<http://www.romawoman.org> [Last accessed 21st of May, 2014]

successful students and ambitious careerists, that they are often the ones who speak more languages and the ones who are informed by the politics of the "Romani movement", an important question emerges – Are those the standards that every other person who identifies as European Romani woman should reach? Led by the questions asked, I intend to see what the agenda of the campaign is telling the audience about "European Romani women".

On the home page of the webpage (*Mission* section), the mission is framed in terms of a motto "Speak out! Be the change!".¹⁷ The second sentence of the motto is part of the famous statement by Mahatma Gandhi "Be the change you wish to see" (B'Hahn, 2001, p. 7), which is most often understood to mean that one has to change herself firstly in order to bring about the change. Below this motto, which is put as a title to their mission, the organizers introduce themselves, the purpose and the goals of the campaign. Their introduction starts with the following sentence: "We are five Roma women who wish to build a movement powered by us Roma women to shape our own image and empower ourselves and our communities as we share our experiences, our view of current issues, our vision of the future".¹⁸ What is striking in this sentence is that the organizers use first person plural pronouns (*we*, *us*, *our* own, *ourselves*, and *our* five times) nine times in one sentence to emphasize how the movement should be built by "Romani women" as a collective, and not by the "others". This is already where the us/them dichotomy is pointed out, even though without mentioning "them". This means that the message indexed by the motto is exclusively sent to "Romani women". Inspired by this, I wished to see if they suggest cooperation with "them", but the only claim in this regard is given in the same section where they list their goals and say that they aim to "build links with other minority women networks and organizations". However, this attempt is not visibly achieved, according to

¹⁷ Available from <http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=mission> [Last accessed 18th of May, 2014]

¹⁸ Ibid.

their *Network* section.¹⁹ Among the twenty four organizations which they have built their links with, there is no other non-Romani women's organization mentioned. There are only two Romani women's organizations, one Romani women's network, two international organizations targeting Romani people in addition to other groups and nineteen organizations targeting specifically Romani people.

In addition to the aim concerning the establishment of relations with other minority women, there are nine more goals identified in the *Mission* section under the subtitle "As members, we all want". According to the organization of the goals that are written here, it seems that challenging stereotypes is the most important, not only because it is the first one in the list but also because it is repeated under the fifth point. The difference between the first ("to challenge centuries-old stereotypes about who we are and the image we have in the mainstream media") and the fifth goal ("to bring current answers to the dilemma of academic success in majority societies having the potential to undermine Roma identity") concerns specification of one of the stereotypes directed often towards Romani people that is related to their "mental" capacities (see Section 2.2). It becomes clear that the politics employed on the website is informed by the misrepresentations of Romani people given in the mainstream media and academic discourses.

However, these goals are neither specific to women nor to Romani women, but they target Romani people's issues in general. Even in those cases where the organizers direct the goal towards Romani women, such as "to bring young Roma women towards admitting to their Roma identity and ultimately increase their self-confidence", it is not clear why hiding the "Romani identity" and the lack of self-confidence are framed as Romani women's issue. Secondly, it is neither clear to what extent the website's audience consists of young Romani women since most

¹⁹Available from <http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=network> [Last accessed 18th of May, 2014]

of the videos are made to be available to the English speakers, some of them even exclusively to them. Furthermore, in this goal one can see that 'identity' is understood to mean 'belonging to a group', that is being part of "Romani people". In the same section, 'identity' is mentioned one more time, under the fifth goal. The organizers write that "majority societies" have the "dilemma of academic success" which they interpret as "potential [of the majority society] to undermine Roma identity". 'Identity' is here understood differently, as 'intellectual potential of a group of people'. According to those understandings, I conclude that on the website "Romani women's identity" is understood as based on their belonging to "Romani people", while it is not in any way related to their gender. Taking this into consideration, and the goals that are not gendered either, I conclude that the politics of the Romani women is not 'gender' based, but it is only 'ethnicity' based. From this, the conclusion can be drawn that the organizers do not justify a need for their campaign as that of Romani women since they do not express any Romani women's specific positioning within society, for example the one coming from the oppressions of the patriarchal system or the patriarchal "Romani movement" and its intersections with the discriminative practices of racists, ageists, and homophobes. However, in the section *Campaign*, where the organizers explain their motivation and the path the campaign "I'm a Roma Woman" went through, gender equality discourse is employed. That gender equality discourse is used cannot be overlooked, but again it leads the organizers to articulate their motivation to consist in the fight for "equal opportunities for all":

In the 20th century, women's struggle for gender equality proved to be the very best investment our societies could make in our world's economic and social development. Could Europe ever have imagined a mere 90 years ago that women would flood the workforce in droves, get the right to vote and, later, head some of the most prominent multinational companies of our times? How do you see a Roma woman today? How do the women of Europe's largest minority see themselves and the rugged road towards equal opportunities for all? ²⁰

²⁰Available from <http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=campaign> [Last accessed 18th of May, 2014]

This might come as a result of the context in which the Romani women are informed by the politics of the "Romani movement" and not by the politics of feminisms, not even by the politics of the women activists coming from minority groups even though the organizers express their willingness to learn from them. That the organizers are informed by the "Romani movement" is clearly expressed by the organizers of the campaign in the same section when they themselves explain their background to the audience: "We five young women, from all over Europe, got acquainted throughout years of common action and participation in the International Romani Movement". It is important to notice that, according to their biographies²¹, three out of these five women work or have worked for one of their donors – Open Society Institute, two of them in Roma Initiative Office (RIO), which is one of the main agents of the transnational "Romani movement" in the region.

Furthermore, this is one of the few places when the organizers refer to "Europe". This is why I assume that "European" in the title of the campaign index a geographical and not a political concept. However, since it is in the title of the campaign and it comes up as part of the identity statements in the only photo on the homepage²², "European" appears as significant, but the reason for the employment of the concept remains unclear. As we will see in the next section, the interviewed women do not use this concept almost at all, which results in this objective of the website organizers appearing as meaningless in relation to the "real" women's experiences. This only confirms Mohanty's understanding of 'identity' as created by arbitrary relations. The usage of "European" then comes to represent a hegemonic process of reduction of the *cultures* of Romani women to the *culture* of a "European Roma woman".

²¹ Available from <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=news> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

²² Available from <http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=mission> [Last accessed 18th of May, 2014]

In addition, one could see that the organizers take the existence of the "Romani movement" for granted. However, I argue that the organizers do not utilize many existential assumptions. That there simply are such things as "Roma identity", "Roma communities" and "Roma women" are the only displays of existential assumptions I have found in the homepage of the website. It is important to notice that the women appearing in the campaign do not take the existence of the Romani women's movement as given, but they express their wish to build it, by which the organizers imply that the Romani women's movement does not exist. It is important also to point out here that Romani women's activism, or rather activisms, do exist, but the question is if these activisms have resulted in a political movement. However, the organizers of the campaign do not manage to avoid the value assumptions that are in line with the values promoted by the "Romani movement", at the same time. In the homepage of the campaign, these are connected with the discourses of "giving back to the community", family and pride.

'Family' as a value characterizing an ethnic group is often produced by arguing that family is part of "Romani traditions". This discourse is, however, not specific to Romani people but it is often related to nation-building politics in other contexts concerned with reproductive potentials of an ethnic group. Gayle Rubin (2007) and George Mosse (1985) argued that the discourse of nationalism is limited to heterosexual and reproductive behavior and that non-heterosexual and non-reproductive behavior are created as belonging to those who endanger "health and safety, women and children, national security, the family, or civilization itself" (Rubin, 2007, p. 163). In this campaign, the Romani women are those who reiterate this discourse by drawing on 'family'. They express this in the section *Mission*, by mentioning family relations ("Our own strength ensures that our children grow up healthy, ready to learn and proud.")²³, and interestingly, in the end of the section *News*, where they post their biographies, they refer to themselves as

²³<http://www.romawoman.org/?page=mission> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

"daughters" ("In the Beginning/There were 5 Roma Daughters/Who Decided to Change")²⁴.

Mentioning Romani women and children together, according to Anna Daróczy who studied discourses on health used in EU Roma integration framework and the Hungarian national social inclusion strategy, indexes their belonging to the same group, which might mean that Romani women are in the same power position as children or that their primary role is assumed to be that of caregivers (Daróczy, 2013, p. 29). Furthermore, a Romani family is a "proper" family, namely it is healthy and takes care about its children's education.

The same role assigned to women is related to the "community". "Community" is mentioned twice on the homepage, every time related to "empowerment". In addition, both times, the women put individual empowerment as preceding community empowerment ("to create a vision of the future for Roma youth which stresses the opportunities offered by social activism to increase self-empowerment and community empowerment" and "We work together to make our lives and our communities stronger!"). If one connects these sentences with the sentence of the motto "Be the change", she could understand that there is a call for Romani women to empower themselves in order to help their communities. This expectation is, however, not specifically directed towards the women, but since informed by the politics of the "Romani movement", which is, in one of its aspect, dealing with giving scholarships to Romani students²⁵ and at the same time organizing for them different events such as seminars, conferences and camps²⁶ in order to create and recreate the value of responsibility toward their communities²⁷, it targets young Romani people in general. This makes me see that the discourse of "giving back to the

²⁴<http://www.romawoman.org/?page=news> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

²⁵For example, see Scholarship Program of Roma Education Fund available from <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/how-apply-scholarship-1> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

²⁶ For example, see the call for applications for Barvalipe Roma Pride Summer School, available from <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/grants/barvalipe-roma-pride-summer-school> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

²⁷ For example, see points 3, 4 and 5 in Evaluation Grid for Roma Education Fund Scholarship Program, available from <http://romaeducationfund.hu/risp-guidelines-0> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

community" is based on the propositional assumption that every Romani person has her community which is often understood to be a Romani settlement and sometimes it is even understood to mean all Romani people of the world, while many Romani students are not coming from "segregated" communities and they do have difficulties to imagine how and to whom to "give back" even if they feel the need to do so.

Discourse of "pride" is closely related to the discourses of family and "giving back to the community" in the context of the "Romani movement". One might understand community as some kind of extended family since Romani people, as I already said, are mainly taken as a group whose relationships are based on common historical background and kinship. The Romani women use 'pride' in the homepage and relate it with the discourse of family in the following sentence: "Our own strength ensures that our children can grow up healthy, ready to learn and proud". One of the strategies of the "Romani movement" actors is often "building Roma pride" which is a key to a Romani person's "quality" seen as responsibility towards the community. It is very interesting to see that this ideology is employed by a Romani woman, organizer of the campaign, whose article appears on the Open Society Foundations' website.²⁸ Those "not-of-a-good-quality" Romani youngsters "do not know their history, the achievements of their community, or have role models that they can look up to — all things that they should be proud of — or have the opportunity to do anything related with their identity", she claims. 'Identity' is here again exclusively understood to mean belonging to an ethnic group.

My main criticism of the agenda of the organizers of the website is related to the understanding of "Romani women's identity" as it is in their *'being Romani'*. Identity here is one-dimensional since it is considered to mean one's belonging to an ethnic group and this belonging

²⁸Available from <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/barvalipe-building-roma-pride> [Last accessed 15th of May, 2014]

is not articulated as a matter of doing, accomplishment but one that is innately given by one's "ethnicity". It is not useful to talk about Romani women only in relation to their supposed ethnic identity, since it only encourages the denial of intragroup power relations. This would mean that other dimensions of identity, such as gender, does not affect Romani women, or at best, even if it affects their lives, it does not have to do anything with them 'being Romani'. This would mean that Romani men and Romani women are in the same power positions, which is far from the reality, as I have shown in Section 2.1 and as I am to show in Section 3.3. This is why I argue that the campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" is not gendered, which further leads me to ask the question why the campaign comes to be concerned mainly with women. Ethnicity, furthermore, as such is not understood to be a constructed category, which leads to the understanding of ethnic identity as simply existing in all the people who are perceived as Romani or who declare that they are Romani. I believe that the time should come when Romani women activists have to show that they acknowledge constructedness of *the Roma*. In my opinion, if they do not do it, they will continue to deny multiplicity and fluidity of identities what Susan Hekman sees as the problem with identity politics:

And yet, in the real world of identity politics, the constructedness of identities is denied. Once a political movement fixes on an identity, it becomes the foundation of the new political truth that the movement espouses. The identities of identity politics are not tailored to individual differences. Nor do they recognize identities as fluid and constructed. Rather, they fix identity in a new location (Hekman, 2000, p. 295).

3.3. *Romani women's identities real and imagined*

The video-interviews are important to analyze for several reasons. Firstly, the interviewed women show diverse discourses. Contrary to the agenda of the organizers, they expose discourses which show diversity among Romani women as well. Importantly, many of the interviewed women's discourses, in my reading, and again contrary to the agenda of the organizers, justify the need for a Romani women's campaign which would be at the same time a gendered campaign. Sometimes, discourses of the interviewed women conform to the discourses of the women organizers. This means that like the discourses of the organizers, some women's discourses are also informed by the politics of the "Romani movement". This may come as an effect of the ways the interviewees are being chosen. In the section *Campaign*, while explaining the two campaign videos they have created, the campaign organizers say that "[they] always looked for those women, those stories, those situations which came most naturally and reflected the activists' self-awareness, acquired through years of social activism".²⁹ What "most naturally" means is not clear, but the organizers clearly articulate that they are choosing activists. Moreover, from the section *Campaign* it becomes clear that they did not choose those activists specifically concerned with Romani women's positioning in society, but those dedicated to "Roma empowerment". However, sometimes the interviewed women's discourses show a different picture. They oppose the understandings displayed on the website's agenda related to the questions of who Romani women are. This means that some of the women understand 'identity' and "Romani women's identities" differently compared to the understanding promoted by the organizers. When it comes to the displays of the "Romani women's issues", the interviewed women again give more diverse

²⁹Available from <http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=campaign> [Last accessed 18th of May, 2014]

answers. To support these arguments, in this subsection I discuss the themes which are used by the interviewed Romani women.

In order to see around which ideas the women's stories come to be formulated, I have watched all the videos posted on the website. So far, there are ninety eight videos. Most of them are those of individual women, but there are also two men interviewed, two campaign videos produced by the organizers of the campaign (one of them is repeated three times, once it appears without translation, once with English and once with Spanish subtitles), one short documentary aiming to ask for donations for the Romani victims of hate-crime and one video representing a roundtable discussion with Romani women and travelers activists. After I had watched all the videos, I extracted the themes which are the most represented, such as education, poverty, discrimination/stereotypes/prejudices, commitment, community, tradition/culture/modernity, difference/sameness, family, identity, pride, resistance, power, capacity, unity, gender equality/feminism and also those that are less represented such as hate-crime, sterilization and violence. Then I went on to organize the themes according to the analysis of the agenda of the website. I discuss the Romani women's narratives in relation to the question whether they conform to the agenda or not.

It is very important to show all the strategies used by the organizers of the campaign. In addition to the texts posted on the home page (*Mission*), *Campaign* and *News* sections, they have employed other strategies for doing their politics. They chose the women for the videos and post the interviews with them on the *Video* section. Furthermore, some parts of the videos have been cut, which is another potential indicator to show that the organizers of the website manipulate not only the choices concerning which women are interviewed, but also the ideas to be presented to the audience. Importantly, the website organizers sometimes also extract parts of the interviews and attach them as texts posted next to the videos. It happens that they also add texts below the

videos. Sometimes these are the same texts as they post next to the videos, sometimes they post different parts of the interviews and rarely, they post also the short biographies of the interviewees or other information related to them or their activities. These practices of attaching the texts are not consistent though. However, if this strategy is employed, this means that the implementers show to the audience what part of the speech is the most important to represent the woman speaker. In addition, these women's discourses are shaped by the questions asked by the implementers of the campaign. Even though, most of the time the audience does not hear the questions, sometimes the questions visibly affect the women's narratives. All these strategies influence the given state of the website campaign. If one considers them, she can realize how the current situation to show the ideas which come to the focus, and also those who do not, comes to be formed.

It is not surprising how many interviewed Romani women promote the value of *education*. Firstly, this is an effect of their own experiences and as I have already argued, the implementers of the campaign interviewed educated Romani women almost exclusively. And since almost every interviewed woman is formally educated, mostly already with a university degree, it is understandable that they go for education because they believe it will bring them something good. However, for this paper, it is more important to look at the individual narratives of the Romani women and see the ways in which they promote the value of education.

While some of the women do not explain why Romani women should get formal education, many of them do. They mainly emphasize that if a woman is not educated, there is no way for her to become "somebody". This is something often pointed out by the students. For example, a student from Slovakia emphasizes: "My dad has always pushed me to study, as they

didn't have the opportunity to do so, and wished for me to become somebody".³⁰ By sending a message to Romani people³¹, a student of Central European University (CEU) from Serbia says: "If they want to become somebody, they can do it only through education".³² "To become somebody" in these interviews comes as a goal desirable to be achieved in order to escape poverty. The university students are not the only ones to value education. For example, a Romani woman from Croatia who struggled to get a high-school degree tells us her story to bring other Romani women to the conclusion that otherwise "they would not be able to feed their children".³³ "To become somebody", however, implies a different meaning as well, which I have found elaborated in another narrative of a CEU student. A Romani woman from Serbia sends her message to young Romani women: "Young Romani women should certainly do something to upgrade and improve their education first, because I think it is very important. And once [] they get this impression of importance of themselves, I think that some things will start to change".³⁴ This means that "empowerment" of Romani women, which comes through education, can, in her opinion, create a condition for change.

In the videos, the value of education is often created as a standard for Romani children or specifically for Romani girls to reach, but not for all of them. Sometimes, the messages are directed to a certain social strata. A teacher from Romania sends her message about the importance of education to the girls who belong to "lower medium" social status.³⁵ A French Romani man sends a message especially to Romani women and children: "I know that this is difficult nowadays, that there is a lot of poverty in Roma families. But those, who don't have that

³⁰ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=766> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³¹ From the interviewees' answers it is often not possible to assume the question asked which then lead the audience to the dilemma related to the difficulty to understand to whom the interviewee sends a message, to Romani women, Romani young women, Romani youngsters or Romani people.

³² <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=746> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³³ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=706> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³⁴ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=751> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³⁵ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=966> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

level of poverty, send your children to school! It is very important!"³⁶ Another Romani woman from Moldova sends her message about the importance of education to Romani women and says that she is "really disappointed [] of Roma families who can afford education for their children, but they just choose to keep them at home".³⁷ From these videos, one can see that the messages concerning education are not sent to all Romani girls/women, but only to those who can "afford" education. This means that the children who belong to the lowest social strata are not a concern of the discourses of the video-interviews.

It is striking to see to what extent the Romani women employ the discourses of the "Romani movement". In relation to the value of education, many of them employ concepts such as 'role-model' which is closely related to both the expectations imposed, namely that of "giving back to the community", and many Romani women's need to help other Romani people. A CEU student from Serbia uses this concept: "If they [Romani children] see me as a role-model who is studying and fighting for education, they can see that this is possible".³⁸ Another CEU student from Romania dreamed to study more, to be a "model" for her community and other people to "follow" her.³⁹ A Romani woman activist from Albania, while talking about what she would like her daughter to achieve, says that she would not like her daughter to be a housewife and adds: "I hope she finds her place in mainstream society and become[s] respectful member of open society and [] a role-model for other Roma children".⁴⁰ A teacher from Romania, by talking about the importance of education, also operates with the concepts of 'role-model' and 'giving back to the community': "It's not at all easy, but just think, girls, that you represent the main source of inspiration... smaller children, Roma children, they need you! And you have to be their role-

³⁶ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=546> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³⁷ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=936> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³⁸ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=746> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

³⁹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=731> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴⁰ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=761> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

models and pillar in their lives". She, however, also says that this is "not necessarily [their] obligation", but if they "have the opportunity" to go to study, this means that they "should help the others", "go back to the communities [they] come from and help the ones around [them]".⁴¹ The same as in the discourses employed by the organizers, the interviewed woman assumes that every Romani girl comes from a "Romani community".

Poverty is not the only reason identified as an obstacle to education. Several women, but also one man, talk about the "attitudes" or "views" of the community related to education of women and "traditions" related to marriages and family values as another difficulty. In those interviews, the speakers express their opinions that these attitudes within the communities have to be changed, while in some other interviews Romani women merge traditions, marriage and motherhood as values Romani women should keep while also going for education. That getting a higher education for a woman from the community is not easy is explained, for example, by a CEU student from Romania. She openly says that "they pull her down" because they are "traditional and they focus on marriage and family life". In her community, as she says, "the girls are made for marriage". This is what she wants to change. She sends a message to other women to study and "not care what the others say".⁴² Tradition is related to valuing 'family' and getting married. She had to struggle to overcome traditions, which she does not celebrate but rather sees a need for changing it. Another Romani woman from Romania wants to encourage Romani women to "stand up" as well: "So if we don't stand... What we are waiting, another generation of Romani girls to sacrifice in the name of tradition and culture because we don't have the courage to stand up? This is nonsense! And every time when I have the opportunity to talk about these, I

⁴¹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=966> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴² <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=731> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

am talking about trafficking and early marriage."⁴³ A Bulgarian Romani woman also expresses her understanding that her community "has to change", in order to "survive".⁴⁴ In a Hungarian Romani woman's narrative one sees a discourse reproducing the us/them dichotomy, but based on the understanding that "we have to develop ourselves, study, work, integrate", and that we "want to be like Gadze".⁴⁵ In my reading, "being like Gadze" here comes to be related also to "survival".

Some interviewed women use *education* and *tradition/values* to talk about Romani women at the same time confronting them to each other and merging them together and creating a desirable fusion. Education is defined as against both the community traditions and the perceptions of the majority population in one of the interviews. A CEU student from Romania argues that "it can't be that in the name of tradition we deprive rights to freedom, education and personal integrity". However, she points out that this does not mean that they have to "renounce" their ethnicity and their values.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, in this interview one does not find out what the values of her community are. In another interview of a Serbian Romani woman it seems to be struggling to answer the question related to the values of ones "family and traditions", since her speech involved pauses and a technical cut in a specific place in the video-interview. Even though, after all, she numbers the values such as "being honest", "pride" and "engagement", she seemed to be insecure on her way to answer the question.⁴⁷

Keeping the culture and traditions are framed as resisting assimilation as well. This is very important in order to challenge the discourses of victimization. A Portuguese Gypsy woman also creates a desirable fusion of keeping the culture and traditions through unity and resistance

⁴³ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=741> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴⁴ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=916> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴⁵ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=686> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴⁶ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=896> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴⁷ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=751> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

to the attempts of assimilation, on the one hand, and education, on the other. Again, the culture and the traditions are not defined. She explains what a day of a Gypsy woman in her community looks like, but relates it to the life of disadvantaged people.⁴⁸ In her narrative, the audience does not understand education as something to possibly endanger the culture and traditions of the community.

A Romani woman from Hungary also values education as something that enables Romani women to become successful while she also promotes motherhood and keeping "Romani identity": "The point is that every Roma woman should have a career maintaining their Roma identity and besides this they should maintain their roles as mothers, which I consider very important".⁴⁹ The meaning of "Romani identity" again remains unexamined. However, it is important to notice that motherhood and "Roma identity" are here understood as something endangered by a career, contrary to the discourse of the Portuguese woman. The interviewee points out that Romani women should not "forget where they come from". There are other women concerned about those Romani people who get into "high position[s] [but] sometimes they forg[e]t that they are Roma".⁵⁰

Importantly, there is a video-interview to challenge the wide range of discourses related to the theme of education, employed both by the women organizers and the interviewed women. More specifically, I think of these discourses which produce the understanding of a highly educated Romani woman as a standard one should reach, but, as we could see, as a standard only for those who do not belong to the lowest social strata. An Austrian Romani woman says that "no one should be forced to be educated or to have success" and that if someone is "so in love with

⁴⁸ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=586> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁴⁹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=846> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁵⁰ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=341> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

his tradition, he wants to stay at home, he should, can stay at home".⁵¹ In my opinion, if one wants to look at the discourses of the Romani political activism, she has to be concerned with the "alternative" narratives as well, because their discourses are the ones to show the heterogeneity of the "movement". Another Romani woman from Macedonia directly confronts one of the women organizers' objectives articulated on the homepage, but this time related to their wish to "bring young Roma women towards admitting to their Roma identity". She argues that "[w]e have to understand why certain Roma hide their identities":

[W]e shall not be judgmental over their choices, because at the end of the day Rromanipe is about survival and Rromanipe is about adoptive skills to adapt and to adjust to changes and that is what I appreciate mostly about the Roma. So, if today, we meet still people who hide their identities, that's a signal that our societies are still not safe for people to be whoever they feel they are. So I would not [] judge those people, I would rather talk to them and I would rather offer them information about the life of Roma and about the social history of Roma, political history of Roma and let them decide how they're going to cope with it, because at the end of the day, it's going to be them personally who have to feed their families, not me, not you, not anybody else. So we cannot really interfere in people's choices as how they're going to survive.⁵²

Many of the interviewed women bring to the picture another obstacle to education – discrimination. However, they argue that one has to struggle through these experiences, since the education should "prevail". On the website, there are many individual stories related to the experiences of discrimination. A woman from Macedonia is one of those who use this opportunity not only to talk in public in order to say that she was discriminated but also to point out that she "survived" this and finished university.⁵³ Discrimination, even though always understood as something to bring troubles to Romani women, can also result in an "empowered" Romani woman who is now even more motivated to work for "the Roma cause". A human rights lawyer from Romania, who tells the story about her experiences of discrimination she

⁵¹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=296> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁵² <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=256> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁵³ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=376> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

encountered during her life, says that even though it was very disappointing, at the same time it motivated her even more to continue her education and study human rights.⁵⁴ A woman from Turkey also talks about her experiences of being discriminated against while searching for a job, but this experience made her see the problem more clearly and start working in a local Romani organization.⁵⁵ The employment of the discourse on discrimination, however, cannot avoid the us/them dichotomy. In my opinion, one has to try to counter not only discrimination, but also generalization or at least to acknowledge that not all of "them" are discriminating "us".

Very different elaborations on "*us*" and "*them*" are given by the interviewed women. It is interesting to see how a woman from Romania while emphasizing family values reproduces the us/them dichotomy. She speaks in the name of her family by referring to her husband and children and by using a pronoun *we*. For her, it was very important to say that even though when being with "them" they feel that that they are "modern" because they have the same life, they have something "additional", which is "being Roma". To her, "being Roma" means learning from elderly members of her family and keeping family relations, which she understands as their "tradition" and something to be proud of. "Roma tradition" also comes to mean listening to "original Roma music" and having a "large family". It is important to notice that this woman is also the one to say that the fusion of modernity and tradition is "a little bit difficult", because she wants to "take care about her husband" and "wait for her children", but at the same time she also wants to work, to create.⁵⁶

A French Romani activist is another Romani woman to display the discourses of pride, traditions and family. She says that the girls learn from their mothers from the early age how to "keep a family". In her community, there seem to be strict gender divisions, since girls go with

⁵⁴ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=771> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁵⁵ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=691> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁵⁶ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=716> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

their mothers and boys with their fathers to learn how to work. It is interesting that she does not speak about the desirable fusion of education/modernity and tradition, but on the contrary, she argues that there is a confrontation between school and the "learning of life". She clearly separated the "gadze world" from the world of her Romani community by explaining that there is "a difference in the priorities". While for her community "promotion of the individual happens within the family", for the "gadze world" "social climbing is made through work, which can cause the problems on the family level".⁵⁷

Finnish Romani tradition is defined also as grounded in the "respect for elderly people", thus employing 'family' as a value emerges as well in another interview of a woman from Finland. It is very interesting that this is the only video where one can see a woman wearing the traditional (Finish) Romani dress (in addition to the two campaign videos produced by the organizers of the campaign) and where this is actually discussed. The interviewed woman accepts the dress as "normal" because it is part of the "tradition". Contrary to the Romani women wearing the traditional dresses for political reasons (the Romani women's body politics will be discussed in Section 4), this woman defines the dress as something that married women "usually have to wear" because otherwise they "would not be accepted from the family". The dress comes to mean something to carry "a lot of responsibilities" with it as well. Also, she says that those who did not grow up with these costumes think that this is "not fair" and she associate wearing the dress with prejudices, so the costume comes to index her "gypsiness" as well.⁵⁸ That 'being a Gypsy' can be read as an obstacle to the success shows a Hungarian Gypsy woman who has converted to Islam. She says that she was denied employment either because of wearing the veil or because of her "features". From this video-interview, interestingly, one sees that the way Gypsy or Romani

⁵⁷ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=661> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁵⁸ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=571> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

women are dressed does not index their gypsiness or romaniness only, but can be read as related to 'being a Muslim woman'. This Hungarian Gypsy Muslim woman uses "wearing the veil" as a synonym for 'being a Muslim woman'. That the Romani women's identities are not based only on their belonging to an ethnic group is clearly expressed in this interview. There is display of the intersection of ethnicity, religion and gender as well, since the woman connects wearing a veil also with her view that "not showing everything about oneself is a human value" and that "God did not create a woman for her to be a piece of meat on the market".⁵⁹

A student from Serbia talks also about the us/them dichotomy. Importantly, she is one of the very few women who directly challenge the essentialist discourse of the "Romani movement". It is clear from the video that she was asked to talk about that. She argues that Roma are not "different species", they only have "different start", referring to their economic situation in general.⁶⁰ As we could see, there are more situations where poverty is expressed as an obstacle to education. But poverty is here understood as the only difference between "us" and "them". A woman from Hungary talks about her experiences of attending high school and, even though she does not use "different start", when talking about her experience, she explains how difficult it is to start going to school with no money.⁶¹ Another Hungarian Romani woman also points out that all she needed is a "chance for a start". Then she goes on to emphasize how Romani people are not different from the others as well.⁶² A highly educated musician, activist and scholar in ethnomusicology is another woman to give a different perspective on the us/them dichotomy. Even if she bases her message on the dichotomy which concerns "Roma" and "gadze", she challenges essentialist views. In her opinion, both "Roma" and "gadze" believe that Roma have

⁵⁹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=681> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶⁰ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=746> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶¹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=611> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶² <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=561> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

different genes, thus they cannot do more than "playing music" or "wandering around". She emphasizes that Roma and Gadze have the same genes. What is different, in her opinion, is the culture. She displays the discourses of a desirable fusion of "elevating the culture" and "achieving something".⁶³ It is not clear to whom a Romani woman from Macedonia sends her message, but she as well challenges the essentialist discourse: "To tell them that we are not in any way different than they are, to tell them that we are not unique in any ways. We may have different life styles, we may have specificities around language and around way of doing things, but that does not make us in any way different human beings than anybody else on the globe".⁶⁴

On the other hand, there are women who reiterate the essentialist discourse. A woman from Serbia does not challenge but recreate these kinds of views by saying that there is "no need to ask what it means to be a Roma woman" because this is something "natural":

I never faced the problem of what a Roma woman means. I always knew... If someone asks me - Why are you feeling Romani woman, I would know it like instantly [], with the same certainty as if someone asks me what is your name, for example. I live my whole life in a Romani community, I am a Romani woman, I speak Rromanes, I get crazy when I hear Romani music. It's a natural thing. [One] doesn't have to much to think about that. I am a Romani woman. Simple like that.⁶⁵

That one is "born a Gypsy" is an essentialist discourse employed by a Hungarian Gypsy woman also. While talking about the possible reasons for her being unemployed, she points out that discriminating practices did not make her question why she was "born a Gypsy".⁶⁶ However, that there are Romani women who do question why they are "born Roma", shows a Romani woman

⁶³ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=446> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶⁴ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=256> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶⁵ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=736> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶⁶ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=681> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

from Romania: "When I encountered discrimination from both my teachers and my colleagues [], I was thinking why is [] wrong to be Roma, why am I like that, why I was born like that".⁶⁷

'Gender relations' or rather a *'specific position of a Romani woman'* is a theme which is not frequent, but still represented in the video-interviews. For example, 'to be a Romani woman' for a Romani woman from Serbia means "double standard". She argues that "you have to prove yourself twice, as a Roma and as a woman".⁶⁸ A Romani man from Macedonia employs the discourse of "double discrimination" as well by saying that "Romani women face double discrimination and exclusion".⁶⁹ Another Romani woman from Serbia points out challenges that Romani women have to face from both the community and outside world.⁷⁰ A Romani woman from Macedonia focuses only on the relations between Romani men and Romani women and argues that "we know very well that the Roma women is the lowest", which means that "they are under the Roma", but that "[they] can prove them that [they] can be equal with them".⁷¹ A Romani woman from Romania argues that "Roma women [in the traditional communities] are [thought] to obey and to be under the rule of the men".⁷² A Gypsy woman from England is also concerned with the intragroup power-relations. She says that "Gypsy women are oppressed, under the rule of father, and then of husband".⁷³

The narrative of a Romani woman feminist and activist from Macedonia is a rare but very important not only because it challenges essentialist views on 'what a Romani woman is', but it also goes against the elitist discourse promoted by the organizers of the website through their agenda. She argues that although she is "happy to discuss about Roma women's problems at the

⁶⁷ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=771> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶⁸ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=751> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁶⁹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=509> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁷⁰ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=736> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁷¹ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=696> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁷² <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=921> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁷³ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=534> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

conferences", what is needed is asking the women in the communities what they want and what their problems are. Moreover, she raises a point that there are Romani women victims of violence who think that this is their fault. In addition, she is one of the two women to index that 'gender' is performative, a matter of 'doing' and not that of 'being': "The daily life of my mother and the daily life of the other women in my community and my country taught me what it means to be a Roma woman and it is something that I don't really like []. [W]hile we are growing up in our family and our community we are taught to be a Roma woman. [W]e are taught how to act with our husband and how to act with our family, that means that somehow we have to be a 'slave' to our husband and our family and not really to have the right to decide". She openly talks about "forced marriages" that are happening in her community.⁷⁴

Another woman to challenge the elitism of the Romani women's activism is a Romani feminist activist from Romania:

I am a little bit disappointed by ourselves, by myself first [], and this is because we have started very well and [] succeeded to do a lot - in terms of image, in terms of awareness raising, in terms of advocacy to international level. We have done a lot, but I would not say that we are a movement. We mobilized some Romani women activists around feminism and Romani women's issues, [but] we are not a real movement because we didn't yet arrive in the Roma communities at the local level.⁷⁵

It seems to me that Romani women who are informed by feminist scholarship are those to express sensibility towards the categories of difference, in comparison to other Romani women activists who do not create this kind of discourse. There is also a Romani woman from Romania whose narrative creates the discourse based on intersection of ethnicity, class and gender: "Ever since I was small, I had felt inequalities between boys and girls because, as girls, we were not

⁷⁴ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=776> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁷⁵ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=466> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

allowed to do certain things [] that my brother could easily do". She goes on to emphasize how much feminism means to her:

"When I arrived in Bucharest to go to the university, I got introduced to the world of feminism, that was very important for me and it still is. I discovered the women who not only intuitively understand the differences between men and women, but actually position themselves in a certain way, [] women who actually fight towards balancing the inequalities between men and women".

Feminism was for her "like a breath of a fresh air". After that, she employs the categories of gender and ethnicity applying them to a particular context, namely that of Romani women's experiences: "It is very complicated when you are a woman and also Roma to be able to differentiate between what happens because of being a Roma and what happens because being a woman". She also challenges the elitist discourse as well by saying that Roma women from the communities are "not powerless or low in self-esteem", but that they are "simply never asked: What do you want? How do you see things?"⁷⁶

It is also important to see how these discourses are being opposed to. Three women express that they do not believe that there is gender inequality between Romani men and Romani women. A woman from Belgium says that the women from her community are "afraid to show themselves, to speak out, not because they are afraid of their husbands or they are oppressed by their fathers. "On the contrary", she argues, "they are brought up equal to boys" and their fear comes from the history of exterminations. It is a fear of "the others".⁷⁷ Another Romani woman, who is at the same time one of the women who launched the campaign, argues:

The thing is that I come from a family where all women are very strong, all women. And I think [that] Romani women in general, despite [] the stereotype that they are just after the men, [] at home, and many time also in the street doing their everyday business and stuff, [] have a very strong position, and they just

⁷⁶ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=956> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

⁷⁷ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=519> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

have to, because there are so many things to do every day as [taking care] of the family and providing income as well.

A woman from Sweden, when talking about a conference where some Romani women activists came together, explains that "gender dimension [as a concern of the conference] is based on human rights, social rights, economic rights, violation against Roma, the anti-tsiganism". She further explains why she rejects gender dimension: "I cannot put gender on all these issues because it's affecting women, children, men, young, older, it's affecting [] the whole Roma community and this is a modern way - to speak about gender."⁷⁸ Why the discussion was realized only with the women is a question that emerges to me again, since when watching the video I could not detect even one theme specifically related to the positions of Romani women within the society.

In this section, I represent diverse discourses created around different themes that the Romani women discuss. I either quote or paraphrase parts of the thirty eight video-interviews in order to show that, even though sometimes reiterating the discourses of the women organizers, thus that of the "Romani movement", these women bring to the picture the themes that are reflecting on the diverse and specific positioning of Romani women in society. When answering the question 'what to be a Romani woman means', the interviewed women talk about different problems that Romani women face. This is why I argue that it is not possible to separate the question of "Romani women's issues" from the question of "Romani women's identities" within the context of Romani women's politics. The interviewed Romani women themselves show that the meaning of "Romani woman" comes as an effect of their experiences that emerge in relation to their different positions within the complex set of inter- and intragroup power relations. This is why I argue that Romani women's identities are experiential and relational. They are also

⁷⁸ <http://www.romawoman.org/?page=article&id=241> [Last accesses 11th of June, 2014]

multiple since affected by the usage of different categories of difference. Finally, they are not static since they are not based on their "ethnicity", but on the different effects of the usage of the socially constructed categories.

3.4. *A realistic approach to identity*

When criticizing Judith Butler's concepts such as *inessential woman* or '*woman*' *constituted by discursive forces*, Susan Hekman contends that we cannot make use of these (Hekman, 2000, p. 290). Instead, she suggests a "core" of identity which is not fictional, but relational and experiential (Ibid, p. 301). I understand identity, by putting together the ideas of Hekman and Butler, as multiple, fluid, experiential and relational. Both Butler and Hekman, however, reject identity politics and argue for its replacement with politics of resistance, and identification, respectively (Ibid, p. 291, 304). When analyzing the video-interviews, on the contrary, I argue that the politics of identity is needed, possible and it does not deny but is constituted upon resistance and identification.

I hoped to show that Romani women need unity which comes as an effect of their internalization of the discriminative practices directed towards them. This is exactly what I understand as a common dimension of Romani women's identities. I came to promote these ideas motivated by the difficulty to understand why Hekman makes a clear distinction between *core* and *cause*. I argue that while suggesting the politics based on *cause*, she misses to theorize the importance of the connection between 'identity' and 'identification', namely a relation between *core* and *cause*. If Romani women build politics around identity which is relational, they could avoid essentialism and mobilize around Romani women's cause. It would open the possibilities of including people who are not regarded as Romani, but who feel the Romani cause as well. This is

a new opportunity for women to fight the forms of exclusion within and outside the "Romani movement" and a reason why I suggest that women should mobilize around 'feeling Romani women', instead of 'being Romani women'.

If the women activists gain a deeper understanding about the categories of difference, they would not attempt to set the standards what a "European Roma woman" should look like. They could then mobilize around the issues such as discrimination, discriminatory representations, lack of opportunities, rejections of those understood to be the others, while at the same time reject the mainstream discourses of the "Romani movement" which appear as masculine, elitist and nationalistic and do not confront those who discriminate against Romani women.

In order to avoid the reiteration of these discourses, I suggest that women activists' actions should be informed by the history of feminist thought. Firstly, they would find out about the mistaken use of the us/them opposition or, as Susan Stanford Friedman names it, a "dead end" (Friedman, 1995, p. 5). She explains that we can never be able to learn from each other if we continue to accuse, confess or deny, because there are complex systems of power relations that stay unexamined. By looking at the diverse cultural narratives, Friedman challenges questions of 'identity' by promoting the concept of relational positionality, in a similar way Hekman has started to do. However, Friedman does not reject the possibility of the politics of identity. Even though she sees the identity politics built upon fixed identities as "fundamental", she as well sees that this is not the only possible form, thus acknowledging its potential to open itself for changes (Friedman, 1995, p. 18). She powerfully goes against simple and limited oppositions such as masters/slaves, victimizers/victims, first/third world. In her attempts to challenge these misconceptions which only lead to further separations, she concludes:

We cannot afford to give up the utopian dream of coalition and connection. As the globe shrinks, as racially and ethnically inflected confrontation increase worldwide, as weapons become even more deadly and available, as transnational economies further polarize wealth and poverty, as U.S. demographics (like those of many other countries) move toward an even more multiracial and multicultural society, our survival as a species depends on our ability to recognize the borders between difference as fertile spaces of desire and fluid sites of syncretism, interaction, and mutual change (Friedman, 1995, p. 41).

Only the facts that Romani women are now able to mobilize around different issues, that they are able to educate themselves and others and to occupy certain positions from where they can act represent a significant move forward. However, it is not good enough for women to organize without any justification why they are doing this. I argue that it is not clear why this campaign is exclusively women lead, neither it is clear why their targets are almost exclusively women. In this way, the Romani women could continue to miss critical standpoints. They do not state concrete problems, such as the masculine character of the "Romani movement" itself or patriarchy. A gendered campaign does not work without addressing gender based discrimination.

Intersectionality, however, could be a temporary solution to this problem. Kimberley Crenshaw envisaged it as a critical intervention into identity politics (Crenshaw, 1994). That intersectionality is a useful theory and methodology in the context of Romani women's struggles has been demonstrated. This has always been in the interests of women. Once they learn it, they could go on to make the next step of rethinking the core of identity upon which they build their politics. The intervention related to intersectionality would be using intersectionality to gender their politics not in order to reproduce constructed categories, but to make their politics justified. However, as intersectionality cannot avoid reproduction of the constructedness of the categories of difference, Romani women political activists must then take a step forward and overcome it. They must go beyond intersectionality. Intersectionality is also, as the concept of identity, a

complicated concept to use because it means interviewing of the categories of difference, such as gender, class, ethnicity, age and sexuality, which do not logically exist and we should aim to deconstruct. Going for anti-essentialist politics of identity is crucial in this struggle. In my view, promoting a core of identity which is relational, based on our experiences comes as a solution. Romani women activists must integrate conceptualizations of the authors who challenge essentialist views into existing politics in order to reconstruct it. It is not the politics of identity which is needed to be rejected. Rather, it is a core of identity used within the politics.

4. Romani women's bodies matter

For me and many others, both Native and non-Native, we are left with pieces; and there among them, divided and blurry, lies the revolution.

(Laura E Smith (2005), Photography, Criticism, and Native American Women's Identity, in *Third Text*, 19:1, p. 62)

In this chapter, I explore the importance, possible interpretations and context of the photographs posted on the campaign website as well as the relationship between them. When analyzing the photos, I aim to explain why Romani women's bodies matter both for the campaign organizers and for the audience. In other words, I examine how 'identity', identity politics and visibility of women's bodies are related to each other. Among others, Linda Martin Alcoff argues for the importance of bodily features in our lives (Alcoff, 2006). She asserts that one cannot ignore them because even though our perceptions on the basis of the physical features are learned, they "operate" through their visibility (Ibid, ix). I argue that the organizers of the campaign do their politics by making their own bodies look more "Gypsy-like". Romani women's body comes to be visible through their dress code. The campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" in my reading is an example which proves Alcoff's point that, although bodily features are "means of segregating and oppressing human groups", they are "the means of manifesting unity and resistance" as well (Ibid, p. 7).

I analyze three out of ten photographic images on the website.⁷⁹ Eight are those of the Romani women organizers and I have chosen three of them for several reasons. Firstly, they are the most visible ones on the website. This means that they are either located on the main page (the home page) or that the reader needs only one click to the link located just next to the home

⁷⁹The number of the photographs on the website changes depending on the website updates.

page, which then implies that there is a bigger possibility for them to be noticed compared to the other photos. The first photo I am analyzing is the only one appearing on the home page.⁸⁰ The two other photos appear as the first two images on the next section where the women explain how the idea of the campaign developed.⁸¹ Moreover, four out of ten photos are visible only in the "News" page and only after scrolling to the bottom of the page and opening the sub-links named "My Short Bio".⁸² The second reason concerns the subjects of the images. Out of ten photos posted on the campaign website, nine shows Romani women's bodies. Out of those nine, I have chosen three particular images firstly because the scope of my thesis does not allow me to analyze all of them and secondly because the other six images are all in the already mentioned "My Short Bio" section thus not easily reachable by the audience.

In order to show how the women's bodies operate through the images, in this chapter, I conduct a visual analysis. However, before the actual analysis, while arguing for the recognition of the importance of the concept of the body in the Romani identity campaign, I first give a short selective overview of the literature that supports the acknowledging the importance of the concept of the body in relation to the formations of identity. In addition to that, I demonstrate how identities are produced in several different contexts by using photography.

⁸⁰<http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=mission> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

⁸¹<http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=campaign> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

⁸²<http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=news> [Last accesses 2nd of June, 2014]

4.1. *Body and embodiment*

As Meenakshi Thapan argues in her book about Indian womanhood, social constructions of embodiment are of crucial importance in studying constructions of womanhood and women's everyday experiences (Thapan, 2009). The process of constructions of embodiment is a condition where women can be made 'women' by others or by themselves. I take here the argument made by Denise Riley who says that women are not 'women' all the time but when "gendered self-consciousness" and its "flickering nature" allow it (Riley, 1988, p. 96). Henrietta Moore also argues that identity formations and expressions are to be seen as particular moments of embodiment. She sees embodiment as "the essence of identity" (Moore, 1994, p. 31). Roger Griffin, while arguing for the importance of the concept of the body in historiography, points out the relevance of the dress code, to which this paper will pay significant attention:

A mature, semiotically informed perspective sees the body as a material entity inscribed and pierced by the forces of collective mythopoeia to a point where clothes become the interface between the physical and the metaphysical. [...] [W]hat people wear to conceal and expose their persons can take the historian to the core of complex social and political processes of stability and change, conformism and challenge to the status quo. Seen historically, dress is simultaneously cosmetic and functional, superstructure and base, surface and fundament, appearance and reality, private and public, ornament and the 'real thing'. (Griffin, 2002, pp. 217-8)

We find in Griffin's assertion that the category of the body is central to the production of identities. Identities of women on the photographic images are both gendered and ethnicized. I approach the data from this specific perspective in an attempt to avoid focusing on dichotomies such as us/others or sameness/difference.

The authors who have written on Romani people in general, as I have already argued, almost exclusively focus on representations of Gypsies by others, which often results in an understanding of Romani/non-Romani relationships as victim/oppressors. This logic of

representation results in, to put it in Janet Lyon's words, the gadze modernist colonial project (Lyon, 2005, p. 526). *Gadze* is a Romani language word which means 'the ones who are not Romani', thus the distinction might be read as if the colonizers were "the others". However, a *Gadzo*, when defined from Romani perspective means someone who is "not one of us, who generally has no shame, who doesn't speak Rromanes and does not respect the tenets of Roma traditions" (Tcherenkov & Laederich, 2004, p. 523), which entails that Romanies can be *Gadze* as well. "Gadze modernism" colonial project then refers to those who are not of "Romani origin" and who express their concerns for, or act upon achieving the "modernization" of Romani people. Throughout the paper and in this chapter, I articulate a different concern, though my interest is not in othering Romani people in their representation by the non-Romani majority. I put an emphasis on Romani women's self-representations in order to avoid already familiar and passionate studies of differences, such as Lyon's, that are, in my understanding, reproducing and maintaining otherness. I am interested to see what happens when Romani people, in this case, women, "colonize" their own bodies. The Romani women in my data produce "a proper Romani woman" by managing their own bodies.

I believe that the recognition of embodiment could transform theoretical debates on Romanies in general, but also the debates surrounding the particular cases of Romani politics. In addition, the recognition of embodiment, as the analysis of the campaign will also show, invokes questions of gender. A new understanding of representations of the body, as well as that of the relation between body and its representations, could possibly expose transformations in power relations between Romani women, Romani men, and non-Romani people.

4.2. *Photography as an instrument in identity production*

From the main argument that the Romani women on the website are managing their own bodies in order to do their politics and create the identity of a "European Roma woman" many questions emerge. One of those is a question of interpretation of the images of "European Roma women". Due to the fact that so many images of Gypsies in the media are harmful for both Romani and non-Romani people's perceptions, Romani activists are spending a large part of their energy to represent so-called positive images. But what is for some people positive, for others, can be negative. The existence of different readings of the same photographic images demonstrate, as Laura Smith argues in her article, that it is impossible to send a singular message to the audience since a photograph "both informs and destroys knowledge, provokes and distances, and presents and denies a vision of the subject through the gaze of the photographer and the viewer" (Smith, 2005, p. 54). In Patrick Vauday's article on photography and problems of identity, the author questions the split between *gens de Soi* and *gens de Autre* and argues that "[w]hether one wants it or not, even in the photographic self-portrait, it is always someone other than oneself that is photographed and who takes the photograph" (Vaudau, 2002, p. 49).

My analysis is therefore an attempt to challenge Romani women's expectation of "positive" perceptions of the photographs on the campaign website. I search for the answer to the question - Is it a "type" of Romani women presented in the photographs for a "positive image", namely a successful woman who at the same time keeps her "traditional Romani identity", one who is "modern" but not "assimilated"? In addition, this question also entails asking why Romani women activists should need only positive representations of Romani women on the website. Whose identity is at stake here?

Romani women have been denied self-representation until recently (Csepeli & Simon, 2004, p. 135). This is why the organizers of the website wanted to put an emphasis on images that will show powerful Romani women instead of digging themselves deeper into the familiar discourses of victimization (See section 2.2). However, I wanted to see if the self-representation on the website is yet another "myth of opportunity" upon which Romani women's identities are being created (Guerrero & Tinkler, 2010, p. 64). That is, I want to find out if the photographs in the context of the campaign construct identities as fixed and thus do not give the possibilities either for expressions or for interpretations of diversity among Romani women. From this perspective then, I am interested to find out if there are different ways of representing a "European Roma woman" through photographs that would leave the women's identities more fluid and ambiguous, more open to interpretations. I believe that the art of photography potentially could be used for Romani women's identity politics in a way that opens up the possibilities of understanding gender and ethnicity implications on the women's real life experiences.

Robert Hariman's and John Louis Lucaites' article on public identity and collective memory and American iconic photographs studies images that affect the public in a way to invoke American people's memory of the Vietnam War. The "Accidental Napalm" from 1972 is a product of a photo-journalist. There are many other photographic images to show the tragedy of the Vietnam War, but this was the one that won the Pulitzer Price. It is an image of a naked girl running toward the photographer, screaming from the burns. There are other children around her but she is in the focus of the image. There are also soldiers behind her, "walking somewhat casually" (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003, p. 39). The authors talk about the strategic production of interpretation, which involves the manipulation in the prospective interpretation of the photographs. They argue that interpretation is also constructed. For instance, according to

Hariman and Lucaites, the naked girl in the "Accidental Napalm" photographic image may effectively shape the public reception of the "immoral war" in which Americans were involved also because of its "inappropriateness". Even though the editorial board discussed if the photo should be published because it involved nudity, they decided to do so since "the photograph violates one norm of propriety [but it] represent[s] a greater form of misconduct", or as the authors also put it "that breach of public decorum also disrupts larger frameworks for the moral justification of violence" (Ibid. 41).

I find it interesting that on the website "I'm a European Roma Woman" one cannot see anything that "violates the media's norms", and on the contrary, the images of the Romani women actually reproduce what has already been shown to us that are normative perceptions of gender and ethnic social identities of Romani women. In this way, the photographs lose their ability to index to the viewers that the specific ideological aims of the campaign should be to challenge stereotypes (That this is the very intention of the campaign organizers is presented in the analysis of the videos in Section 3.3). I ask, however, in so far as these patterns of stylization have already proven to "work", what would happen if the images of the campaign would be "inappropriate". What kinds of perceptions would they then be able to create?

4.3. Romani women's bodies as a medium in the politics of the "Romani movement"

My interests here are focused on the photos - images of the women who organized the campaign. My aim is to see if and how the women use their own bodies as a political tool by analyzing three of the photographic images of the Romani women, who are organizers of the campaign website. I shall perform a compositional analysis that focuses on the image itself, it reads what is in the image and does not look either at what is around the picture or how it is used (Rose, 2001, pp. 52-3). This type of visual analysis is conducted as a useful introduction to analyzing possible effects of the images. By analyzing a website as a mass-media product one must pay attention to all the tools used by the organizers. In addition to the texts and video-interviews, the organizers of the campaign use photography as a way to represent themselves. Photographs, the same as words, are not innocent. They bid views of the world and they offer interpretations in very particular ways. I hope to show what Gillian Rose argued that "both what is seen and how is it seen are culturally constructed" (Ibid, p. 6). I pay special attention to the type of clothes the women wear and to the context of the photographs in order to argue for the importance of the visuality in the campaign, due to the fact that the women construct and reconstruct "Romani women's identity" by using their bodies displayed through the images.

In my critical approach to visual images, I follow three main principles. Firstly, I concentrate on the compositional modalities in order to avoid focusing only on the context, since photos have their own effects as well. Secondly, I think about social condition of the visual objects. Finally, I take into consideration that I look at the images in my own way which differs from other people's way of looking at them (Rose, 2001, pp. 15-6). In addition to compositional interpretation, where I look at colors, content, light, spatial organization and expressive content (Ibid, pp. 33-53), in my analysis of the photographs, I use discourse analysis as well, as a method

also discussed by Rose (Ibid, pp. 135-86). Discourse analysis, which draws upon the work of major social theorist such as Foucault, Levi-Strauss, Marx and many others, pays attention to the social modality, which would be neglected in case the visual analysis is focused only on the image itself. Discourse analysis, after using it for interpreting the agenda of the website and the video interviews, will allow me at this point to put together texts – verbal and visual, institutions and social practices. I mix visual methods because I am interested in more sites, precisely in those of *image* and *audiences*, while less in this of *production* (in its technical terms), and because I look at more aspects of each of these sites, namely at compositional and social modalities (Ibid, pp. 16-7).



Image 1 (<http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=mission> [Last accessed 13th of January, 2014])

In the first chosen image (*Image1*) we see five women. All of them are the online campaign organizers, which we can learn already from the home page. They stand in front of a

collage made of small photographs of many other people showing mostly their faces or busts. We also see the logo of the Romedia Foundation, the organization within which the campaign is organized. The photo has a subtitle to it, containing three short declarative sentences, statements of identity. The most important aspects of this photo are two compositional features – colors and spatial organization. The five women are lined up in the middle, all facing in the same direction, looking out of the frame, directly into the gaze of the viewer. They spread out their left arms as if pointing to or reaching the identity statements in the caption. They all have a smile on their faces as well. Their posture indexes confidence and joy.

Red, white and black are the dominating colors in the image. However, the woman in the middle and the collage background itself bring a pattern of different colors. The woman in the center wears colorful traditional clothes - a long sleeved blouse with a flowery light pink-green-white pattern. She wears also a pair of earrings, noticeable in size and a ring. On her two sides, the women wear earrings as well, but little less noticeable. They do not have rings on their hands. This difference in the three women's jewelry comes to be significant when compared with the parallel difference in their clothes. Those two women wear rather different clothes – business looking suits. They wear white shirts and dark trousers. The other two women, standing on the two sides of the row, wear colorful traditional clothes: one with silver sequins over it, the other almost all in red. In addition to her red fringed scarf with some green and yellow flowers for its pattern, she also wears a big red flower in her hair. Due to the fact that red is a dominant bright color, the women who wear red come to be dominating the image. Compared to them, the two women wearing black and white clothes are effectively "minoritized" in the image. Their association with "modernization" comes to be downscaled. The background photo-collage is very diverse in colors, but light violet is dominating. The text input in the image is calling for attention

too, because of the white letters on the black background and also because it is noticeable in volume.



Image 2 (<http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=campaign> [Last accessed 13 January, 2014])

In *Image 2*, one sees the same five women in the same clothes - three women in "Gypsy" clothes and two women wearing white shirts and dark trousers. The differences here are in the women's posture, their facial expressions and the background, as well as in the absence of the media logo and caption. In this photo the women look serious compared to the first image where they are smiling. They wear the same clothes, but these colors are now contrasted to an all green

background. The background color is not neutral. Grass green symbolizes nature. This may be read as an association with the Romani flag, which consists of a background of blue and green and a red wheel in the center. As a result, the women do not emerge as the only focus of the image, but since red is one of the dominating color of their clothes, they can be associated with the wheel, representing "the tradition" of Romani people. Compared with the first image, where the women are standing in a line, spread across the horizontal line of the image, all on the same level, here they stand in a queue, on different levels, thus the first woman in the queue seems to dominate the photo. It is important to note that the woman "leading" or "heading" the line is the most traditionally looking, the one with the big flower in her hair, wearing a traditional floral pattern fringed scarf on her shoulders.



Image 3 (<http://www.romawoman.org/index.php?page=campaig> [Last accessed 13 January, 2014])

Image 3 is very different from *Images 1* and *2*. Unlike in the other two images, in this one the four women are not posing for a photo-shoot, they are shown at work. They are in a conference room. They wear headphones and seem to take notes on the sheets of paper in front of them. They sit next to each other and they are not looking in the direction of the viewer, but absorbed in their activity. Comparing to the previous images, one can see that the women are here located in a different environment. The environment here seems to be "real", thus the technological conditions of the image lead us to view the photo as "a snapshot of real life" (Rose, 2001, p. 19). In this context their clothes, although predominantly traditional "Gypsy-style" dresses, do not come to be conspicuous. The relevance of the dress code for the constructions of their identity is mitigated by the multilingual image of their work evoked by the headphones and desks.

I also want to look at the effects of the images. Therefore, I look at the creation of the image which is offered to the society, but also at the broader context related to the online campaign and the women's appearance. What the organizers do not articulate but is the main argument of this chapter is that certain types of clothes that Romani women wear in the photos do the work of body management. This is why I analyze the technology of embodiment through clothing, which enables the women to do their identity politics in a certain way.

A few academic sources and also some reports on "Roma cultures" or "traditions" talk about Romani women's clothing (Tcherenkov & Laederich, 2004; Stewart, 1997; Engebrigtsen, 2007; Edden et al., 2011). They say that Romani women traditionally wear long skirts, headscarves and aprons and they do not wear trousers and one-piece dresses, which they connect to the notions of shame and moral cleanness (Engebrigtsen, 2007, p. 63-4; Tcherenkov & Laederich, 2004, pp. 655-7). On the other hand, the ideas about traditional clothes nowadays being related to Romani women belong mostly to "gadze imagination" (Tcherenkov & Laederich, 2004, p. 657). Additionally, Romanies themselves, fighting against stereotypes, often assert that

"[f]lowers, colorful skirts, blouses, and head scarves are not specific to Romani women but can be found everywhere in the East from India and Iran up to the Balkans" (Council of Europe, Dosta Campaign, 2014). A project report on Spanish Gypsy dresses argues that nowadays one cannot distinguish Gypsies from non-Gypsies on the basis of their clothes (Rom Fashion Program, Spanish Gypsy Dressing Report, 2009). In my knowledge, the existing literature rarely and only superficially talks about Romani traditional clothes. This is why one is unable to find out if the clothes we see on the images stands for "traditional" Romani clothes or not. The only possible understanding of the clothes presented in the campaign images is that it is the one perceived by both Romani and non-Romani people as traditional.

By wearing what is said to be traditional Gypsy clothes, some of the highly educated and career oriented Romani women may produce an understanding that "Romani tradition" is not something that should be perceived as "backward". As one could see by reading the website content, they intend to educate the public by showing that Romani women are not what they are stereotypically represented to be, that is, they are neither poor, uneducated women nor overpassionate, exotic singers easily available to men's consumption. The self-representation of educated successful Romani women implies that there is some visible awareness on behalf of the Romani women that in the eyes of the public Gypsy women's bodies are othered bodies (see Section 2.2).

However, at the same time, I ask the question: By wearing what is expected from them to wear, do these women other themselves as well? In a critical approach to photography, it is important to look at the effects of the gaze. Vauday defines "exotic" photography and emphasizes that it "lead[s] a culture to self-caricature: simplified, crudely reduced to a few features that are more significant than others for the gaze of the Other, it loses diversity and perhaps the conflictual nature which made it living" (Vaudau, 2002, p. 50). Moreover, it leads to the

reproduction of prejudices and a narrow vision of the photographic subject. As my analysis shows, the women who dominate the photographic images in the campaign are in "traditional", colorful clothes. Since, according to the works on Romani women's representations by the majority populations, Romani women are exoticized exactly by people imagining them in colorful clothes. This leads to the conclusion that the Romani women here exoticize themselves, fitting into the images of the "mainstream". The women may mitigate this effect by wearing other types of clothes, in addition to the "traditional" one, but the "traditional" one dominates all three photographic images analyzed here. As I read the photos, the juxtaposition of the two types of clothing implicate those women indexing that a woman can be modern and traditional and she can still be a Romani, but by looking at the images, one can see that the women's "Gypsy-like" clothes are more effective.

By performing severity, in *Image 2*, they now again reduce the possibility of reading the image as exotic. By contrasting traditional and modern to each other, while at the same time representing themselves as a group of educated activists with serious expressions in their faces, their figure implies that "gypsiness" does not make them less able to be positioned as decision makers, able to reach success. Without those two women in black and white, wearing the business attire, the image would completely conform to the dominant imaginations of Romani womanhood.

In the images, especially in image 1 and 2, there is a visible contrasting, and not only compounding relation between modernity and tradition. This means that while the women are differently dressed, they are together in the images and together in the campaign fighting for common goals. Romani women perform sameness as well as difference. While some of them look differently compared to other "modern" women, some look exactly like them. By doing this, they reproduce the us/them dichotomy in and for their political actions. This shows that the body

does not "sound[] a simple notion", but it is instead an "action system", a "mode of practice", as Giddens puts it (Giddens, 1991, p. 99). Romani women organizers of the campaign are being aware of the fact that "bodily appearance concerns all those features on the surface of the body including modes of dress and adornment which are visible to the individuals and to other agents and which are ordinarily used as clues to interpret actions" (Giddens, 1991, p. 99).

The fusion of modernity and tradition is a strategy that works in a given political context of the "Romani movement" whose discourse is mainly based, as I have shown in Chapter 3, on emphasizing its "national pride". The campaign "I'm a European Roma woman" is about performing gypsiness and success. By wearing "Gypsy clothes", these women are saying – *I am a manager in an international organization and I am a Gypsy, I am a filmmaker and I am a Gypsy*; and so on. This performance is connected to the notion of pride, which is, as I have also argued in Chapter 3, very influential within the "Romani movement" in general. It is to say - *I am proud to be a Romani*, or in this context, more precisely, *I am proud to be a Gypsy, European and a woman*, respectively (See *Image 1*). By wearing "Gypsy clothes", these women first perform their assigned ethnicity and then their gender.

It is important to point out here that if one does not look critically at the images - photos, narratives and videos which are presented in the campaign, she could easily take these women's "gypsiness", as well as their femininity as given, which could then result in the invisibility of "fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (Butler, 1990, p. 173). Judith Butler argues that "if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (Butler, 1990, p. 174). By using Butler's approach and after the analysis of the women's clothes, which shows domination of the "traditional" over "modern" and

leads the difference as dominating the sameness, I conclude that Romani women organizers of the online campaign create an understanding of their own inner-self both as gendered and ethnicized. It is exactly in this way that difference is being materialized, as Butler continues to argue in her further elaborations of her theory of performativity (Butler, 1993).

As highly educated Romani women mainly do not wear "Gypsy clothes" on an everyday basis, this performance can be understood also as a process of reinvention or even invention of the tradition. "Gypsy clothes" are the only thing to constitute some women who declare as Romani as Romani, since without that, their belonging to Romani people as a group is not visible. Many questions arise from the simple fact that what is visible is a sign that calls for interpretation. Also, inversely, if there is no bodily marker to call for interpretations, this leads the audience to skepticism.

Highly educated Romani women are often perceived by some as non-Romanies. A piece of clothing – very colorful and shiny, with a lot of flowers on it could reestablish Romani women's feelings of belonging in relation to other people's perception. It could be also that fashion helps enforcing the awareness of belonging to the "Romani community". Marx observed that "history most often invents the future by taking as its model a past with which it is in the process of breaking" (quoted in Vaudau, 2002, p. 48). This would mean that Romani women can invent the tradition if they never had something visible to make them a Romani. Sometimes, perceived markers of gypsiness, such as skin color and last name, are shown not to be enough.

The fact that most of the "successful" Romani women do not wear traditional clothes in their everyday lives gives to the dress code in the images an important or crucial dimension – that of politics. Traditional clothing in these images is a symbolic political practice and an instrument of transformation, a way of reconstituting and disrupting social order, intervening into power relations. As Eric Hobsbawm explains, "a village's claim to some common land or right 'by

custom from time immemorial' often expresses not a historical fact, but the balance of forces in the constant struggle of village against lords or against other villages" (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 2). Even though, by giving this example, he intends to distinguish between traditions and customs, I have found here the same effect – searching for a way to maintain or obtain power. I argue that without a marker of gypsiness, these women would not be perceived as Romanies. Due to the fact that there are powerful, common and dominant understandings of what a Romani woman looks like, as explained before in the paper, and that those women do not fit into the imaginations, they find no other tools for their visual self-representation. This is the way they reclaim the power through the clothes, which is the most visible compositional part of the images. Fashioning in the chosen images involves the practices of gendering and ethnicizing of the body politics. As Parkings argues, "the body is never simply a neutral clothes horse on which items of clothing are placed to signal political affiliation, like sandwich-board advertising or the wearing of team colours" (Parkins, 2002, p. 5).

Importantly, the body politics is a gendered construction, as "Gypsy women's identity" is to be understood through wearing certain type of clothes, almost always perceived as feminine, due to the fact that Romani men are not being related that often with traditional clothes either in the academic sources or in the reports on Romani cultures and traditions mentioned before in this chapter. Moreover, "traditional" Romani clothes which women activists and others are often wearing in Budapest is produced by "Romani Design", a fashion store in Budapest, where "traditional" clothes are created and sold. Not surprisingly, most of the clothes are made for women and by women. Fashion is often understood to be a matter of style and industry and it has been, for a long time, unconnected with politics. But on the contrary, fashion plays a significant role in politics, as we can see by analyzing the campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" and as a book "Fashioning the Body Politic: Dress, Gender, Citizenship" shows (Parkins, ed., 2002). The

book presents diverse historical and national contexts, where the way of clothing affects political participation and the creation of identities. For example, in Christine Ruane's article about the politics and dress in imperial Russia, we find out that when Peter the Great imposed "German" style on Russians in 1701, "European dress became a key way of separating 'liberated' aristocrats from those who held to the old gender norms" (Ruane, 2002, p. 51). However, as Ruane further explains, European style gradually spread onto other layers of the society, subsequently changing social expectations about women and men and their relations. But when Catherine the Great decided to create new court uniforms in 1782, while men were supposed to look like Europeans, women's bodies were "intended to represent national identity and thereby heal the social and cultural breach created by Peter the Great" (Ruane, 2002, p. 52).

It is expected from both men and women to be bearers of the nation. However, women and men make themselves differently when it comes to the visibility of their nationhood. For example, if we look back at *Image 3*, we can see that it differs from *Image 1* and *2* because women are put in context. Here we can see a dynamic photo, compared with *Image 1* and *2* which are static. They wear Gypsy clothes, but they are positioned in an academic environment, namely in a conference. However, we rarely see a successful Romani man wearing something that could be perceived as Gypsy traditional clothes, not even at some cultural events, especially not at academically and politically related events, such as congresses, conferences, important meetings etc. The campaign put in the political context, it seems, displays the relationship between men, women, and fashion, and it shows that the political domain has always been imbued with the performative potentials of the body. Women's clothing is given a political significance. Women in the three images represent the body politics by wearing the clothes recognized as Gypsy and traditional signifying the fusion of modernity and traditional values, merging them into the representation of a new "gypsyess" or now rather "romaniness".

Practices of dressing and fashion are shown to be symbolic political practices in the campaign. It is important to understand them as practices that are situated in the political, historical, social, and cultural context. Romani women's performance can be understood both as resistant and compliant. While it resists the context of nation-states where Gypsies are always a national/ethnic minority and where their agency is dismissed by the majority, it complies with the masculine nationalistic discourse of the politics of the so-called Romani movement. The embodied subject is not an isolated, separate entity; it is always in relation to the world around it. The importance of looking in this context is also argued by Wendy Parkins. As she puts it, "Habermasian dismissal of practices of display as always 'bad politics' overlooks the multi-accentuality of dress in political contexts, the capacity of the dress to be articulated to a variety of causes and contexts" (Parkins, 2002, p. 4). She further explains that "practices of display or adornment could be deployed within a sphere of political communication by those unenfranchised by or opposed to existing political formations as a means of contestation or critique" and shows that the "semiotic capacity of practices of dress" is "to either contest or reinforce existing arrangements of power and 'flesh out' the meanings of citizenship" (Parkins, 2002, p. 4). This also leads me to the conclusion that not everybody can effectively use these strategies. There are certain bodies that are able to do it even if they are marked by the categories of difference, in this case, by 'gender' and 'ethnicity'. This is where intragroup class differences come to the picture again. These Romani women's bodies should be understood thus as privileged bodies as well, as not every Romani woman can perform her "romaniness" "effectively".

The idea that there is an analogy between the body and the social collective has been shown by Arnold Harvey (Harvey, 2007). His book *The Body Politic: Political metaphor and political violence* is concerned with the ways the body as a metaphor may lead to action, from ancient to modern times. The campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" is an example of how

the ideas about the body can be turned into an action. The idea of a human body affects the body itself through its actualization, as Harvey argues. The analysis of the images presented in the campaign tells us that Romani women's bodies are "flesh and blood" bodies but they also represent ideas and metaphors. As both, "flesh and blood" and metaphors, Gypsy women's bodies are used for strategic and political purposes.

4.4. Photography for resistance vs. photography for participation in the polity

My main argument is that the women who put together the website use their own bodies as a political tool. I point out that specific type of clothes the Romani women wear in the photos functions as a form of body management, which is meant to result not only in expressing one's identity, but also in the creation of a new image challenging the stereotypes. Furthermore, and most importantly, I argue that this body management "technique" used by Romani women is that of presenting their bodies in "gypsy" clothes to the audience of the campaign. Firstly, the women's "gypsyess" or "romaniness" and femininity are not only performed, but performative as well as they have a potential to effectively materialize the differences between "us" and "them". Secondly, the Romani women perform the sameness as well as the difference in aiming to present and represent a desirable fusion of tradition and modernity by what Eric Hobsbawm would call an invention of traditions, to produce and reproduce their womanhood and their "gypsyess" or "romaniness". Importantly, the body politics of the campaign "I'm a European Roma Woman" is gendered, as Gypsy women's identity is to be understood through wearing certain type of clothes that are perceived as feminine.

The campaign proved Wendy Parkins' point about the way of clothing which affects political participation and the creation of identities. She points out "the importance of practices of

subject-formation – of which dress and the presentation of the self are good examples – in participation in the polity" (Parkins, 2002. p. 11). In the context of Romani identity politics, however, I believe, the most important aspects are critical and resistant minds, those who understand identity politics as performative, in order to bring about change. If the "Romani movement" is to take a step forward, it has to consider those who disidentify, but who are "equally crucial to the rearticulation of democratic contestation", as Butler asserts (Butler, 1993, p. 4). The "European Roma culture" created in the images, I believe, does not allow for many women to identify with the image on the website. While the women challenge stereotypes, at the same time, this time through the photographs, they simplify *the cultures* of Romani women in order to bring about *the culture* of a "European Roma woman".

Photography helps the denaturalizing identity. It shows how the female body becomes a site through which to design an ethnic/national identity. I believe that Romani women lack a critical stance in the campaign and by not taking one, they could be misunderstood as only decorative objects of the masculine nation-building movement. For instance, they do not challenge the stereotype that says that Gypsy women and Gypsies in general are not mixing but may reinforce the charge of ghettoization. Self-representation in these photos is about the creation of a new identity, an act of incorporation of modernity into the "westernized" gaze, but this did not help much in challenging the exoticizing assumption of sexualization that Gypsy women who are beautiful should wear long, colorful skirts, golden jewels and dance to oriental and exotic rhythms (Council of Europe, Changing negative perceptions: Roma women and media, 2014). I conclude that the women organizers of the campaign should choose photographic images more carefully (or make them), if not "iconic" images, then those that will produce a stronger relation with the "strangers" on the photos, an "emotional link" which is crucial for the result when a photograph is catchy and engaging (Hariman & Lucaites, 2003, p. 61).

5. Conclusions

The us/them dichotomy as used on the website's agenda mostly defines "them" who discriminate against "us". The particular employment of this dichotomy further implies that the agenda does not show its openness to the idea of cooperation with other women. These are the two reasons why in this paper I argued that the women activists have to overcome the us/them dichotomy firstly. Secondly, the discourses of the organizers index that Romani women are a homogenous group of people, as implied from the homepage of the website. Furthermore, both as implied from the agenda and my readings of the photographs posted on the website, Romani women's *cultures* come to be reduced to the *culture* of a "European Romani woman". The readings of the discourses of the Romani women organizers and some of the interviewed women's discourses create a "proper European Romani woman" – educated, proud, "traditional" and heterosexual.

I argued that all these implications come as a result of the employment of the discourses of the "Romani movement". I argued that this is the reason why in the agenda, 'identity' is formed as static and one-dimensional. "Romani women's identities" comes to mean Romani women's belonging to an ethnic group. Through the analysis of the videos I read this understanding of 'identity' as confronted to the methodology of the organizers of the campaign. This means that the specific employment of 'identity' does not make the audience understand why the organizers interview almost exclusively Romani women and not men as well.

In addition to the employment of the elitist discourse as well as the lack of the employment of anti-nationalistic and feminist discourses, the particular set of the value assumptions adds to the exclusive character of the online campaign. From the discourses of the official agenda of the organizers, I argued that one can imply that a "European Roma woman" is

or should be the one who reproduce the next generation of healthy, proud and educated Romani people. Furthermore, the propositional assumption that Romani women exceptionally come from the "Romani communities" is followed by the value assumption which talks to the problematic of the discourse on "giving back to the community". The value of pride is not well represented in the agenda of the organizers ('proud' is mentioned only once), but it comes up often in the video-interviews as a direct result of the questions asked or/and as a result of the discourse of the "Romani movement" upon which many of the interviewed women build their narratives as well.

Although I argued that many of the interviewed women's discourses, the same as those of the women organizers, are informed by the politics of the "Romani movement", I showed that many of them bring "new" themes into the picture. These themes are exactly the ones to justify the need for a gendered campaign, namely that of Romani women. This means that they expose the diverse but specific positions of Romani women in society, for example related to the discourses on early/forced marriages, trafficking and violence. The discourses of the interviewed Romani women challenge nationalistic, elitist and masculine character of the Romani politics. However, the discourses lack its awareness of the existence of many Romani women who do not fit into the heteronormative agenda of the Romani politics. It is very important to notice that neither Romani women organizers of the campaign nor the interviewed Romani women expressed their worries related to the creation of a "proper" Romani woman being heterosexual. It seems that Romani lesbians, for example, are not a concern of the political activists, even though it is well documented that Romani lesbians are being beaten, silenced and deprived of their basic rights (see for example Kurtić, 2014).

In this paper, I did not argue in favor to some "general truths", such as - "Romani women are discriminated on the basis on their gender, class, age, ethnicity and sexuality", in order to argue that they are oppressed by Romani men and their fellow citizens. This means that I do not

argue that all Romani women are necessarily affected by these five categories of difference pointed out throughout the paper and I neither imply that there are no other social constructs affecting Romani women's lives. I used an intersectional approach to show that Romani women's identities are not exclusively built upon their "ethnicity". They also come to be created and recreated as an effect of the usage of other categories of difference.

Even though the main aim of the thesis was to show that there is a need for the reconstruction of the concept of identity in the context of Romani women's self-representations, the scope of the paper did not allow me to test the assumption related to the applicability of Romani women's identities as multiple, fluid, experiential and relational to the context of the Romani women's identity politics. Furthermore, in order to understand if the politics of identity is useful for Romani women, it is important to look at the scholarship not only evaluating the concept of identity, but also the one to argue both in favor and against identity politics in the particular contexts.

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