We Evict You for Your Own Good: Political Discourse on Roma in Contemporary Hungary

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ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on how ethnic boundaries and a rather hierarchical relationship between Roma and ethnic Hungarians are being reinforced in the Hungarian political discourse. I analyze how an amendment of the housing decree in Miskolc led to the eviction of the Numbered Streets, a predominantly Roma neighborhood, and became one of the most important issues during the local election of October, 2014. I present the results of a content analysis I did on related articles that were published between May 8, 2014 and May 15, 2015, including the period of the political campaign. Beside the content analysis interviews with local civil and political representatives as well as secondary sources will be cited to give a picture about the different political positions and their interpretations on the evictions. I argue that the political discourse on Roma and Roma-related political categories that dominate the discourse significantly contribute to the depiction of Roma as a homogenous group of people who live at the margins of society, in "ghettos", waiting for state interventions to change their situation for the better. This rather one-sided approach is also reproduced in policy making. Roma-related policies are often almost always formulated as if they served the need and demand of the Roma even in cases when they are not even consulted or involved in any stage of the decision-making process. Communicating the evictions as "racial desegregation" and justifying them by linking Roma and criminality in the political speech, can easily mask the different forms of institutional racism and strengthen the status quo of power relations between Roma and ethnic Hungarians.

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INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian Roma, who are the largest minority in Hungary, alongside twelve other minorities are recognized as a constitutional part of the Hungarian society and part of the Hungarian political community. Although Roma-related policies also existed in the state-socialist regime, the transition to market-economy came together with a higher emphasis on recognition and less on redistribution. Roma as a political category has a long history in the Hungarian political discourse, the more than six hundred-year long history of the Hungarian Roma is full of ambiguities ranging from exoticization to different attempts to assimilate.

In case of the Roma class and ethnicity is not understood as distinct, but rather as overlapping categories in the contemporary political discourse. Most Roma-related policies have a clear objective to help the Roma catch up with the majority of society. While imagining the Roma as a homogeneous group of people this approach come together with downplaying the importance of culture: attempts to establish institutions dedicated to celebrate the Roma culture, or Roma schools which place a higher emphasis on Roma culture and language in their curricula but are open to every child regardless of ethnicity or identity are often are often discouraged fearing that instead of the desired inclusion of the Roma into the mainstream society Roma institutions will rather lead to separation. Another argument is that the already overprivileged Roma simply do not deserve more financial or institutional support. Oppositional views to the establishment of Roma institutions can also be understood as opinions being driven out of the fear that the Roma political identity makes its own space in politics and overturns the ongoing discourse that at its best sees the Roma culture only as a means of integration.

Given the relatively weak and unorganized Roma civil society Roma initiatives rarely get much support from the Roma civic sector, the intergenerational gap between Roma activists

and the race of Roma organizations for financial support often put the different actors in a competition. The unproportioned presence of Roma in the underclass when compared to non-Roma obviously also has much to do with the fact that Roma-related policies are imbalanced towards those measures that are aiming to bring about change in the social situation of Roma, often at the expense of supporting culture.

Roma-majority neighborhoods often lack infrastructural developments and are seen as segregated areas, slums, or ghettos regardless of the differences existing among them. Development plans are almost always equal to the eradication of Roma neighborhoods and the legitimacy of such interventions is only debated in the political discourse within the frames of "how", not even questioning whether they are the right means of development or not. Not to mention that in most cases such interventions simply 'export' poverty to different settlements or areas of a given town or city.

The Numbered Streets, one of the neighborhoods of a North-Eastern Hungarian town, Miskolc, got the attention not only of the Hungarian but also of the international media in May, 2014 when the leading right-wing coalition (FIDESZ-KDNP) of the Local Government of Miskolc adopted an amendment of the housing decree which paved the way for the eviction of the above mentioned neighborhood. The Numbered Streets is part of the Diósgyőr-Vasgyár area of the town whose importance in the history of post-industrial Miskolc is unquestionable. In the second half of the last century it became known as home to hundreds of families working in the heavy industry the town was once famous for. In the state socialist era many families saw their prospective future in the town and decided to move to one of the workers' colonies even from surrounding towns and villages. In the last two decades of the state socialist regime and especially after the transition to market-economy the importance of the heavy industry declined drastically, families have faced difficulties to get-by and to comply with the new requirements.

Since the adoption of the amendment authorities have been using different means, ranging from negotiations with families to raising rental fees and modifying leases, mostly as a result of non-complying with requirements to pay rental fees and utilities on time, to force the dwellers of the neighborhood to leave their houses. Obviously, local authorities also have their responsibility in how they apply and interpret the regulations (Fording et al., 2011) .The vast majority of the residents are Roma. Although the slum eradication program of the Local Government was officially presented as a desegregation measure, it was quite obvious from the beginning that this measure was in many ways connected to the Local Government's development plans on the local football stadium nearby the Numbered Streets which is in line with the government's related policies, hence the allocated budget for the investment.

I argue that the political categories used in the political campaign and the political discourse on Roma in general can be seen as examples to reinforce ethnic boundaries and a rather hierarchical relationship between Roma and ethnic Hungarians both by the means of the prevalence of hegemonic language in the political discourse and by the outcomes of institutional mechanisms to ensure a dominant position of the ethnic Hungarians in the arena of politics. On the other hand, I see the different means Roma civil and political actors used during their protests as tactics to convince the majority that they are worth being treated as equal citizens of their country and residents of their city. In my thesis I provide various examples of these tactics. I will also try to uncover why ethnicity was not instrumentalized during the protests and demonstrations in spite of getting a high emphasis in the media.

After establishing the theoretical framework and moving to the methodology section of my thesis I will look at the constitutional framework of minority policy in Hungary and its effects on self-determination and cultural autonomy in case of the Hungarian Roma. In my thesis I present the results of an ethnographic fieldwork and a content analysis of online articles on the Numbered Streets published since May, 2014 to see the discrepancies between the

different interpretations of the eviction and its media coverage. I apply different theoretical approaches to uncover how the objectification and criminalization of Roma in the political discourse can contribute to anti-Roma actions. I am interested to find out what role the issue of the Numbered Streets played in the political campaign preceding the last local elections and how it reflects to the political discourse on Roma in general. While doing so I will also focus both on overt and covert mechanisms politics and local institutions operate with to reinforce the status quo between Roma and ethnic Hungarians. Finally, to learn more about the different means a stigmatized group, such as the Roma, can operate with when representing its interest I will also look at the tactics the residents of the Numbered Streets used during the demonstrations.

CHAPTER ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 The extended case method

„The extended case method applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the „micro" to the „macro," and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexistent theory. (Buroway, 1998)"

Given that one of my main purposes with my thesis is to look at those practices and mechanisms, reinforced by the political discourse, which significantly contribute to a rather one-sided depiction of Roma as a homogenous group living at the margins of society waiting for state intervention to change their situation for the better, I rely on Buroway's extended case method. As also noted above, I see the evictions in the Numbered Streets and political discourse on it not necessarily as a unique case, but rather as part of an ongoing process which connects in many ways to attempts to reify ethnic boundaries, national identity and a rather stereotypical image of "the others". Therefore, when looking at the political discourse on the evictions I hope to "extract the general from the unique". Also, agreeing with Buroway I see the role of social sciences as a means to reveal the discursive and non-discursive worlds of people (Buroway, 1998), not disregarding those covert mechanisms and hidden meanings which reinforce unequal power-relations and result in the hegemony of some over others.

To uncover how those political and institutional practices analyzed by focusing on the eviction are rooted in the framework of the Hungarian nation-building state I will rely on the literature on group boundaries, nationalism, and related theories on group identities, social space and institutional bias. Finally, In the first section I will also look at the importance and applicability of related post-colonialist literature to analyze both the constitutional framework of minority policy and local practices.

1.2 Nation-building states and group boundaries

Roseberry points out that hegemonic processes and common discursive framework are rather state projects than state achievements (Roseberry, 1994), which calls upon the importance of recognizing that different forces on the field are also being reinforced by the state. I argue that such 'state projects' also determine the place of agents in society on the long run. I believe Kymlicka's theory of liberal-democratic states is also applicable for the Hungarian state: he argues that liberal-democratic or Western states have been 'nation-building' states in a sense that they have encouraged or forced their citizens to integrate into common public institutions (Kymlicka, 2001). By different means, such as media, education, employment of language policies, one of the main goals of these states have been the linguistic and institutional integration of their citizens. Ethno-cultural minorities, who are often targets of these policies, have a very limited space for negotiation as their interest might go against those of the nation-building states. Although the definition of nation itself has changed in the course of history from an originally pre-political entity it became something that was supposed to play a constitutive role in defining the political identity of the citizen within a democratic polity (Habermas, 1992), the importance of the nation state as a frame of the analysis is that "the state is perceived as the political extension of the nation" (Connor, 1978). The definition of nation, or in this particular case the definition of who is part of the Hungarian nation and who is not, can lead to a rather hierarchical system between the dominant group and ethnic minorities by recognizing minorities as citizens of the state, but emphasizing the importance of cultural boundaries in the political discourse.

In my thesis I provide examples of different practices and tactics, used both by Hungarians and Hungarian Roma to either reinforce or challenge ethnic hierarchy. For the sake of my analysis I will also consider related theories on group formation and group identity to learn more about the particularities and obstacles of representation and negotiation. Barth argues

that the identification of another person as part of own group supposes that those belonging to the same group share the same criteria for evaluation and have similar judgement on actions (Barth, 1969). These perceptions result in the assumption that all involved in the same group are "playing the same game". On the other hand, the author argues that a dichotomization of others as strangers, as members of another ethnic group, implies recognition of limitations on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgement of value and performance, and a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest.

I am relying on William's theory of ethnicity: "The focus on ethnicity, by definition not an isolated but a relational unit, would bring to an acceptable end the search for a new unit of analysis at the same time that it suggested an appropriate context of investigation—the "national state", with its highly advanced division of labor, and its intense struggle for resources such as employment, wages, housing, education, and political following" (Williams, 2009). I look at the interconnectedness of ethnicity, economy and politics. I also examine some of the structural forces that determine qualifying and disqualifying attributes of belonging to one or another ethnic or social group not disregarding the fact that a person belongs to different social groups meaning multiple social identities (Hanappi & Hanappi-Egger, 2014). Analyzing the political discourse on Roma I will also look at the connections between the concept of "diversity management" (Hanappi & Hanapi-Egger, 2014) and the references to class which, contrary to the neglect of class in the political speech in general, seems to play a very important role in the political discourse on Roma and leads to many contradictions regarding policy designing and decision making (Fraser, 1995).

From another perspective I find it also interesting to look at the consequences of a "politics of difference" where "social relations of power are expressed through collective identities that assign individuals a degree of agency" (Mörkenstam, 2005). In my thesis I will consider the possible obstacles of a more successful representation of the interest of the Hungarian Roma

as well as the way self-victimization, or the internalization of stereotypes can lead to a less effective agency when it comes to the interest of groups and individuals and the ability to influence the public discourse. To learn more about the possible connections between political discourse, or the production and circulation of elements of meaning, and power relations I rely on Foucault's related theory which suggests that although these element of meaning can "pass through systems of communication, power relations have a specific nature" (Foucault, 1982).

When trying to uncover how different political categories are used in the political speech when referring to Roma and how they contribute to the reification of ethnic and social boundaries I mostly rely on Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin's social dominance theory: "Members of dominant social groups tend to enjoy a disproportionate share of positive social value, or desirable material and symbolic resources such as political power, wealth, protection by force, plentiful and desirable food, and access to good housing, health care, leisure, and education. Negative social value is disproportionately left to or forced upon members of subordinate groups in the form of substandard housing, disease, underemployment, dangerous and distasteful work, disproportionate punishment, stigmatisation, and vilification" (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). I am also interested in the conscientiously selected destigmatization strategies Roma civil and political actors operate with (Mizrachi, N. & Herzog, H., 2012.).

In order to analyze how negotiations are played out on the field and what the determinant factors of one's social position are I rely on Bourdieu's related theories. Considering that "the representations of agents vary with their position (and with the interest associated with it) and with their habitus, as a system of schemes of perception and appreciation of practices, cognitive and evaluative structures which are acquired through the lasting experience of a social position" (Bourdieu, 1989) I will analyze both the public discourse on the evictions in general and reflections of Roma political and civil actors to it in relation to their social

position. As I see a strong connection between the social position of Roma civil and political actors and the set of means they can use when representing the interest of their group I look at the protests and demonstrations they organized foremost as "tactics" (Denis, Jeffrey S. 2012). Although I consider the political discourse on the evictions, or on a more abstract level on the Hungarian Roma, as my field that can be studied mostly by looking at the different written or audio-visual materials (not the latter one in my case), I also find it important to look at whether the practices of local authorities can be analyzed as examples of institutional bias.

1.3 Racialized poverty and institutional bias

"Institutional bias involves discriminatory practices that occur at the institutional level of analysis, operating on mechanisms that go beyond individual-level prejudice and discrimination (Henry, 2010)." Henry points out that an institution can be biased regardless of whether the individuals hold any negative stereotypes against a group. He argues that established laws, customs and practices both reflect and produce inequality among social groups (Henry, 2010).

Fording, Soss, and Schram put an emphasis on the importance of policy choice, arguing that local officials have a responsibility to interpret and specify state policies (Fording et al., 2011) In case of the evictions in the Numbered Streets it is somewhat even more important to look at (1) how local rule making reflect on existing regulations on the national level, and (2) what means local authorities use to reinforce unequal power relations: policy implementation might have a more significant role here than policy choice itself.

"The legitimacy of institutional bias involves perceptions that a particular institutional policy is fair, deserved, or justifiable in some manner. Some institutional policies that harm groups with less power go uncontested because of perceptions of legitimacy" (Walker et al., 1996).

Beside the amendment of the housing degree I will also analyze the one which is regulating social norms. In fact, violation of social norms might result in the termination of housing contracts. Considering the role of legitimacy I will also look at how criminality is used in the political discourse to legitimize the evictions.

"[T]he criminalization of the Roma demonstrates how penal nationalism evokes an extreme politics of inclusion and exclusion—a politics that treats perceived differences through confinement, while insisting on a suffocating, hierarchical version of social and cultural inclusion" (Haney, 2011).

1.4 Post-colonialist narratives of hegemony

According to Steinmetz "[m]odern colonies can be defined as territories in which (1) political sovereignty has been seized by a foreign political power and (2) the indigenous population is treated by the conquering state as fundamentally inferior (e.g., as barbarians, savages, heathens, an inferior race, a stagnant civilization, or denizens of a "failed state"). These two criteria can be summarized as the sovereignty criterion and the rule of difference criterion" (Steinmetz, 2008). Although the Hungarian political discourse on Roma provides many examples of the latter criterion, the sovereignty criterion seems to be inadequate when examining the current political and social position of Roma in Hungary. Nevertheless, the political discourse on Roma often times resembles the political discourse on colonial subjects. Thus, when referring to colonialist and post-colonialist literature my main goal is primarily to look at the different means politics operates with to reinforce a rather stereotypical picture of the Hungarian Roma identifying them with a resistance to comply with dominant social norms.

Considering the role law plays in reshaping culture and consciousness (Merry, 1991) changes in a state's minority policy cannot be fully understood without taking into account what consequences they have in how and in relation to whom minorities determine themselves. "[C]olonial body-counts create not only types and classes (the first move toward domesticating differences) but also homogeneous bodies (within categories), because number, by its nature, flattens idiosyncrasies and creates boundaries around these homogeneous bodies, since it performativity limits their extent (Appadurai, 1996)." According to this view differences among Roma exist only on the basis of how much they adapted to the cultural standards of ethnic Hungarians, meaning an elevated cultural and a social status at the same time (Fanon, 2008).

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Details of the research

Beside the theoretical establishment I presented in the previous section I rely on the research I did between the period of February, 2015 and May, 2015. In order to be able to give an overview on the possible reasons an amendment of the housing decree could become one of the most important issues that the campaign of the local election of 2014 centered around and to uncover how a rather hegemonic language of both the media and the political speech contributed to the racialization of poverty and penal populism, I did a content analysis of articles published between the adoption of the amendment, May 8, 2014, and May 15, 2015. I selected all news sites from the 100 most visited Hungarian websites ranked by ite.hu, excluding the ones (in practice only two webpages) that did not report on the Numbered Streets and analyzed every related article that were available on these news sites at the time of my research. Altogether more than 200 articles and 12 webpages were considered based on the criteria I set up. As these 12 pages, however, do not include any Roma or local news sites, four additional (two Roma and two local) news sites were selected to be analyzed.

Coding was based on eight criteria I defined on the bases on a preliminary research on selected articles: (1) whether or not the articles refer to financial compensation the evicted, complying with certain requirements, are eligible, but which was finally provided only to one family; (2) whether the articles refer to the expected development plans related to the DVTK stadium; (3) whether or not the articles raise or refer to security concerns or violation of social norms directly or indirectly justifying the eviction; (4) the way the selected articles refer to the people living in the Numbered Streets: Roma, poor, dwellers and ghetto dwellers were set up as variables; (5) the interpretation of the Local Government's action: fighting against poverty, eviction or both used interchangeably; (6) whether the voice of local residents got an

emphasis in the articles; (7) whether the voice of Roma political leaders and civil activists are represented; (8) the way they referred to the Numbered Streets: slum, ghetto, Roma neighborhood, or simply as the Numbered Streets.

Audiovisual materials, blog entries, political statements, except when published on the selected news sites, were not included in the content analysis; however, some of them are cited or referred to in my thesis when adequate. Also, since my main interest was to analyze the media coverage of the issue in general and not necessarily the differences between the news sites, regarding for instance the political tone of the articles, in cases when the articles' own voice was not clear or only citations were used in the websites, citations were also considered as the own voice of the articles in spite of the fact that the authors of the articles might not agree with the citations they included in their articles.

In the second phase of my research I conducted interviews with local political actors, both Roma and non-Roma, to learn more about their interpretation of the amendment of the decree and its outcomes as well as their opinions about the political campaign of the last local election as elected representatives. The interviews were conducted with Roma civil and political actors and local representatives of political parties. Although not every representative I approached could devote their time for me during my research, in my thesis I present and compare the interpretations and political statements of every significant political actor, relying both on interviews and secondary sources.

2.2 Limitations

I had only unstructured interviews with the residents of the Numbered Streets; references to these are also included in my thesis. The main reason I did not rely on participant observation is twofold. Most importantly, my main purpose with my research was to give an insight of the

hegemonic speech used in the political discourse on Roma and the different means politics operate with to reinforce, even if unconscientiously, the rather hierarchic relationship of Roma and ethnic Hungarians, by objectifying Roma in the political discourse, by drawing an almost unquestionable link between Roma and poverty, and by opposing every attempt to break away from this one-sided depiction of Roma both in the media and in politics. In addition to this, although applying Buroway's extended case method, due to the fact that many of the residents or formal residents of the Numbered Streets have been in an uncertain situation fearing to lose their properties I had ethical concerns to position myself as a researcher on the field. Furthermore I did not want to play any role in objectifying local Roma by treating them foremost as informants of my research. Roma political actors, activists, however, as it was already mentioned above, were interviewed alongside with non-Roma local representatives. Protests and their interpretations both by political actors and by the residents as a means to gain a more effective agency to influence the political discourse and policy making were considered as well, as part of my analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF MINORITY POLICY IN HUNGARY

We proclaim that the nationalities living with us form part of the Hungarian political community and are constituent parts of the State (The Fundamental Law of Hungary).[1]

After the landslide victory of the right-wing coalition in 2010 the Parliament adopted a new constitution, called 'The Fundamental Law of Hungary', which went into effect on January 1, 2011. Similarly to the former constitution of the country, it recognizes thirteen nationalities as part of the Hungarian political community and constituent parts of the Hungarian state. Contrary to the earlier practice when, due to the fact they do not have a mother country, Roma were referred to as an ethnic minority (in Hungarian: etnikai kisebbség), now they are also recognized as a nationality (in Hungarian: nemzetiség) alongside the twelve other minorities living in Hungary. Although the political recognition of national minorities could be celebrated, the above mentioned statement of the National Avowal of the new Hungarian constitution should rather be examined on the basis of who grants recognition to whom, and whose voice is represented in the constitution which is supposed to be the constitution of the Hungarian citizens.

The constitution operates with binary oppositions when speaking about the political recognition of minorities: "*the nationalities living with us"* already implies that there is a clear distinction between ethnic Hungarians, or the majority population, and the minorities who are only "*living with us*", but not *"us".* It has at least two very important consequences regarding

[1]http://www.mfa.gov.hu/NR/rdonlyres/8204FB28-BF22-481A-9426 D2761D10EC7C/0/FUNDAMENTALLAWOFHUNGARYmostrecentversion01102013.pdf

the minority policy of the Hungarian state: it ensures that ethnic Hungarians have an unproportioned share of the political power, which enables them to decide over those who are not "us", and by using the voice of ethnic Hungarians, but recognizing minorities as part of the political community of the state it also emphasizes the importance of ethnicity in defining the boundaries of the Hungarian nation, which is obviously a disqualifying attribute to minorities (Habermas, 1992; Connor, 1978). Therefore it leads to a rather hierarchic system and unequal power relations between minorities and ethnic Hungarians. Not disregarding the historical embeddedness of minority policy in Hungary this is not to suggest that the case of the Hungarian nation state's approach to minorities is special in the region. However, I find it important to establish the frames of my analysis first, by looking at how ethnic and political categories are determined within the frames of the Hungarian nation-state.

Since 1993 citizens belonging to officially recognized minorities have been eligible to vote and run for office in the elections organized to elect members of so-called minority self-governments. The elections are held at the same time with the local governmental elections. However, those claiming to belong to any of the minorities are required to register beforehand. Local minority self-governments are elected directly, the national ones–every minority is eligible to elect national minority self-government as well–had been elected indirectly until the last elections which were held in October, 2014. Since then representatives of both national and local minority self-governments are elected directly for a five-year term.

The minority self-government system was established to ensure cultural autonomy for officially recognized minorities, however in case of the Roma, partly due to a lack of financial support, partly because of the social situation many Roma share, primarily Roma-related social issues have been expected from Roma self-governments to be solved. Although there are many good examples of Roma self-governance, community building and attempts to both familiarize the public, Roma and ethnic Hungarians, with the cultural heritage of the Roma

communities and to practice cultural autonomy, in many cases Roma self-governments are simply ineffective in representing the interest of the local Roma communities. On the one hand it is due to the fragmentation of Roma, meaning mostly but not exclusively class differences within the Roma communities, on the other hand as a result of the mere fact that contrary to what its name suggests the minority self-government system does not provide minorities autonomy, but rather a dependency on local governments and on the state, most Roma have been unconcerned about the elections and only few thousand people register themselves before the elections. There are, however, numerous examples when local minority self-governments, especially in the case of the Roma take an active role in voicing out the problems of their communities and representing their interest.

Gábor Váradi, chairman of the Roma Minority Self-Government of Miskolc, started to be interested in politics in his twenties. He has been member of the authority since 2002 and became chairman of it for the first time in his early thirties. Besides his political role he is also a boxing coach and student of Sociology. His name is well known both in the political life of Miskolc and generally in Roma activism. In the last local election of 2014 he ran for mayor of Miskolc, as he says "as a form of demonstration".

> "The problem is that today the most important question which comes up very often is what to do with the Roma. However, we almost never speak about how to involve them in those decision-making processes which are affecting their lives. Although in the last 25 years we've never had a chance to decide, we've been blamed for things we didn't even want" (Gábor Váradi)

After the transition to democracy Roma civil and political organizations were established, members of Roma political parties also run for parliamentary seats on the first parliamentary elections in 1990. Although eventually none of the Roma political parties succeeded to gain enough votes to pass the 4% electoral threshold (currently 5%), three Roma politicians, Antónia Hága and Aladár Horváth from the Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ) and Tamás Péli from the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) became members of the Parliament.

Parliamentary representation for minorities, although already ensured in the constitution adopted in 1989, became a reality only after a recent change in the law following the adoption of Hungary's new constitution in 2011. The idea of political representation on the basis of ethnicity still divides both the public and the political parties. Roma groups and individuals, however, seemed to be united against the change. The reason behind the strong opposition, which led to organizing online campaigns and other forms of protests aiming to convince the Roma to not to register themselves for the next parliamentary elections as a member of the Roma minority, was that by doing so they would have lost one of their votes on the general parliamentary elections. As Hungary has a mixed majoritarian electoral system, this would have meant that those registered themselves as members of a minority could not have voted for political parties, only for a candidate in their constituency and a candidate of the national self-government of the minority they claimed to be a member of. Thus, differently from practices in other countries, citizens belonging to minorities have to decide between having a representative in parliament of their minority and supporting a mainstream political party. The former one, obviously, means a less significant, almost weightless position considering that there can be only rare cases in parliament when one MP can decide an issue with their vote, not to mention that there would be no parliamentary fraction behind them. Although due to their population Roma and Germans would have been able to meet the requirement to collect enough votes on the election, eventually none of the minorities could send a representative to the Parliament in 2014. This means that as of 2015 every minority has only one spokesperson in the Parliament delegated by the national minority self-governments of the respective minorities. As they have no voting rights, they are practically insignificant in the decision making process.

One of the characteristics of the Hungarian state and its minority policy is that it ensures that minorities enjoy cultural autonomy within the frames of the state, to create and operate their own institutions and to cooperate with local and national institutions of the state as equal partners, but at the same time it gives minority self-governments only symbolic means to have a say in politics. The recent change to ensure that minorities have their representatives in parliament still grants an unproportioned majority for ethnic Hungarians in parliament, guaranteeing minorities only a totally powerless position. To summarize, beside the minority self-government system minorities can now also elect their own parliamentary representatives, although in practice only the Hungarian Roma and the Hungarian Germans could collect enough votes due to their demographic situation. In case of not being able to collect enough votes, every officially recognized minority is eligible to delegate one spokesperson to the Parliament through to their minority self-government system. Spokespersons however do not have voting rights. The Hungarian state might seem to operate with a "binary legal, political, and social structure" (Steinmetz, 2008), in reality the current legal framework of minority policy of the state should rather be understood as an attempt to reinforce the dominant position of ethnic Hungarians both by emphasizing the importance of ethnicity when it comes to the definition of the Hungarian nation and by ensuring minorities only weightless positions in politics.

Appadurai argues that the "modern colonial state brings together the exoticizing vision of orientalism with the familiarizing discourse of statistics. In the process, the body of the colonial subject is made simultaneously strange and docile." In case of the Roma the fear is almost always there what their "strangeness" will lead to when stepping out of their ethnic and social boundaries. The root of the ambivalence of the Roma as a political category is exactly this: giving a chance to catch up goes hand in hand with the fear that in case they outnumber the now dominant ethnic group or they succeed to overturn the hierarchy in certain

territories or cultural, social or political fields of the state it can lead to unpredictable circumstances.

As neither Hungary, nor the Hungarian Roma living in the country has ever been colonized by any other state or empire it might seem to be odd to connect colonialism and Roma. Nevertheless, I apply some of the theories of the colonialist and post-colonialist literature to find out more about the relations between Roma and ethnic Hungarians in Hungary, given that the Hungarian political discourse on Roma which in many ways resembles the colonialist, post-colonialist narratives on the colonized. According to Steinmetz "[m]odern colonies can be defined as territories in which (1) political sovereignty has been seized by a foreign political power and (2) the indigenous population is treated by the conquering state as fundamentally inferior (e.g., as barbarians, savages, heathens, an inferior race, a stagnant civilization, or denizens of a "failed state"). These two criteria can be summarized as the *sovereignty* criterion and *the rule of difference* criterion" (Steinmetz, 2008). Considering the second criterion it does not seem to be difficult to find examples to depictions of Roma as a fundamentally inferior population, stagnant civilization who can only catch up with the rest of the population if renouncing their cultural differences. The Hungarian political discourse provides a wide range of examples of this. The first criterion, however, seems to be simply inadequate, as political sovereignty was never at stake in case of the Roma, also considering the Hungarian state as a foreign political power would be quite misleading.

For the sake of my analysis, therefore, I am rather interested in (1) how the lack of political sovereignty of Roma is reassured in the legislation of the Hungarian state and (2) what the consequences of the rather definition of the Hungarian state as the homeland of ethnic Hungarians are for the Hungarian Roma. Related theories also distinguish between post-colonialism and neo-colonialism: "Although "neo-colonial," like "post-colonial," implies a passage, it has the advantage of emphasizing a repetition with difference, a regeneration of

colonialism through other means (Shohat, 1992). Despite the existing differences between the two terms I find both of them applicable, only with a slightly different meaning: When trying to find out more about the relations between Roma and ethnic Hungarians the emphasis should be rather on hegemony reassured by the symbolic capital ethnic Hungarians, or more specifically the Hungarian political elite own, and we should rather speak about colonialization of minds controlling access both to political power, by continuously reassuring ethnic boundaries, and to different modes of self-determination, by imagining Roma as a homogenous group of people. "[C]olonial body-counts create not only types and classes (the first move toward domesticating differences) but also homogeneous bodies (within categories), because number, by its nature, flattens idiosyncrasies and creates boundaries around these homogeneous bodies, since it performativity limits their extent (Appadurai, 1996)."

Differences among Roma exist only on the basis of how much they adapted to the cultural standards of ethnic Hungarians, meaning an elevated cultural and a social status at the same time (Fanon, 2008). Considering the role law plays in reshaping culture consciousness (Merry, 1991), changes in a state's minority policy cannot be fully understood without taking into account what consequences they have in how and in relation to whom minorities determine themselves. The recent history of Hungary provides several examples of attempts to detach from this rather one-side view of Roma. One of the interesting consequences of such attempts is that those benefiting from the subordinated position of the Roma either economically, politically, or simply by enjoying the advantages of belonging to a group identified with positive social values (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006) openly oppose any step distancing from the current relationship of Hungarians and Hungarian Roma.

In 2012 the right-wing government initiated the establishment of an institution in Székesfehérvár, which became known by the public as a Roma cultural institution. The

project was referred to and the institution would have been called as World Tent. As a result of the protests of local residents, however, the government started negotiations about the project with the city of Miskolc. The Local Government of Miskolc first supported the project which would have been financed by the European Union, but due to the relatively short deadline and to the fact that the institution should have been maintained by the Local Government of Miskolc and not the government as they hoped to, Ákos Kriza, mayor of Miskolc, later announced that the project would not be realized in the city. This was, however, only one of the reasons that caught the attention of the media. The right-wing radical Jobbik opposed the idea from the beginning and called the citizens of Miskolc to express their disapproval. They also collected more than 25,000 signatures aiming to call for a referendum. Thus the so-called World Tent project met a huge opposition for the second time, backed by the right-wing radical Jobbik. The same scenario happened in Sárospatak, then in Ózd, too. Eventually the government had to give up their idea and step back from their own initiative.

Interestingly, in spite of the resistance towards the project and the fear that the Roma would overturn the hierarchy between them and their non-Roma fellow-citizens, World Tent was originally not imagined as a Roma cultural institution, but rather a pan-Hungarian one. The project was described by the government as one that contributes to national unity and social inclusion. Apart from including Roma and other minorities living in Hungary they would have also extended the project for ethnic Hungarians living in diaspora. Besides the extension of the boundaries of nation (Connor, 1978) the institution also would have served as a means of "nation-building" (Kymlicka, 2001; Roseberry, 1994). Miskolc University would have given the scientific support for the project, and both cultural and social issues would have got a high emphasis in the life of the institution. Roma, however, were not involved in the discussion of the project, nor they were consulted at any phase of the development of the

project. It also worth mentioning that following the practice of former policies the project did not consider the Hungarian Roma living in diaspora.

Nonetheless, the main reason of the strong opposition was that the project was seen by many, especially after the campaign of Jobbik as a Roma project and that was more than enough to convince thousands of citizens that such investment would be against their temporary interest. Also, during the campaign the Roma culture was identified with negative social values downplaying the importance of investing in such project. Even Ákos Kriza, mayor of Miskolc, when still supporting the project found it important to note in a press conference that contrary to what had been circulating in the public discourse the institution would not be a 'Gypsy Tent', but a 'World Tent'.

The ambiguities of this rather one-sided approach were also questioned by Gábor Simon, representative of the Hungarian Socialist Party when speaking about education.

> "Of course when speaking about education and catching up we also have to pose the question: if the Gandhi High School (a Roma high school in Pécs, Southern Hungary) is successful why can't we have similar institutions also elsewhere? In case the Local Government had a similar initiative why would it be treated as an attempt of segregation? I think it also worth considering what we mean on segregation today" (Gábor Simon).

CHAPTER FOUR: MEDIA AS A MEANS TO REINFORCE HEGEMONY

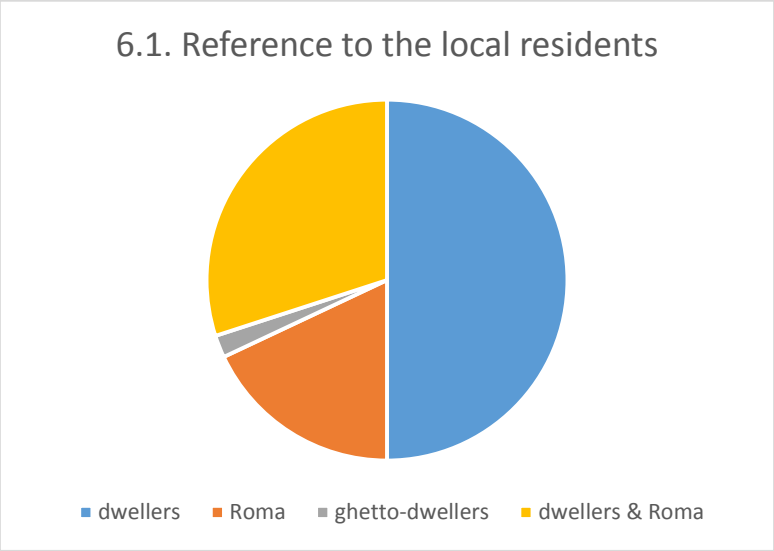
In Foucault power relations and relationships of communication represent two distinct categories that are not products or aspects of each other. Even though communicating, the author argues, "is always a certain way of acting upon another person or persons, power relations, *per se*, have a specific nature, which should not be only seen as elements of meaning circulated and produced in the process of communication. When looking at the media representation of the Roma, more specifically the media representation of the Numbered Streets, my main intention is not to examine the realms of power, but rather to uncover the different means the media operates with to represent the Roma as poor, anti-social, backward persons.

Considering the fact that the political speech, or the political discourse has an unquestionable role in framing political actions and reinforcing unequal power relations, I also aim to examine the different ways Roma related political categories are presented in the media, often times justifying certain political actions. I argue, that the mere fact that certain terms and meanings are connected to Roma in the media, regardless of whether or not the authors of the articles agree with the terminology they are using, or they are only doing so due to lack of space and interest for renegotiating the social position and media depiction of Roma, have a significant effect on attitudes towards Roma and Roma-related measures.

> "Imagine the situation, even as a Roma, that they call these people criminals, anti-socials, drug-addicts, etc. Then one day you hear that one of those families is going to be your neighbor. You haven't even seen that family, but they were depicted in the media this way. Would you be happy? Or would you oppose it? Of course you would, they are criminals"… (Gábor Váradi)

There has been no mention of the fact at all in the media that these people are only victims of the amendment.

As part of my analysis I looked at how the residents of the Numbered Streets are referred to in the articles and how it correlates to the official standpoint of the Local Government and the messages of the political parties. Although the majority of the articles I analyzed referred to the resident of the Numbered Streets as "dwellers', "residents", which I see neutral categories, as I expected ethnicity got a significant emphasis as well. More than one-quarter of the articles used "Roma" and "dwellers" interchangeably and altogether 18% of the articles referred to the residents of the area exclusively as "Roma".



One of the most intriguing findings was, however, that contrary to my presumption they were never referred to as "the poor". I find this interesting because of the following reasons: First of all, social status was given a great emphasis during the protests of Roma and besides the slogans and messages connected to local identity and family histories, references to their social status were often heard and read on the protests. Historically stigmatized groups use their own set of tactics to advance their positions in encounters with the dominant (Denis, 2012). I see the different attempts of Roma protestors to frame the issue of the evictions as a primarily social issue with less emphasis on ethnicity as part of the set of tactics the residents could operate with to represent their interest. As Mizrachi and Herzog point out ethnicity, which agreeing with Williams I see as a relational unit (Williams, 2009), may also be

stigmatizing by itself which implies an inferior social and political position in respect of group identities (Mizrachi & Herzog, 2011). Almost half of the articles, however, referred to the residents either exclusively as "the Roma" or they used "the Roma" and "the dwellers" interchangeably.

Fighting for the common interest of a group, in this case for the interest of those facing eviction, presupposes that the members of the group have a sense of commonality. It is very telling that group boundaries got a very different definition in the media. While from the side of the residents and the Roma Minority Self-Government there was an attempt to go beyond the boundaries of race and to represent the issue on the basis of social status and civil rights, in the media race was used as a primary category.

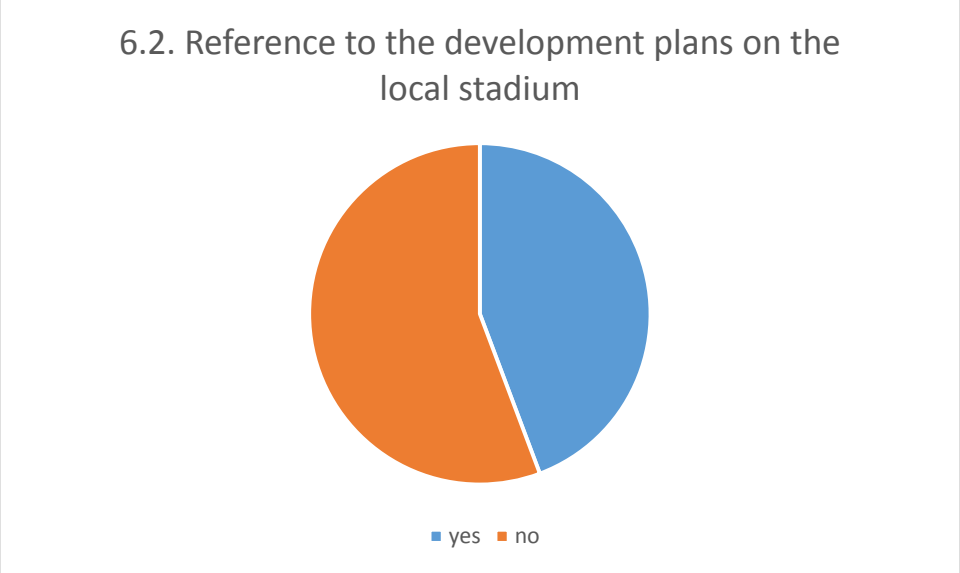
It is very crucial to mention, however, that in spite of the fact that the two cases might seem to be the opposite ends of the spectrum, poverty got a great emphasis in both approaches. According to my analysis almost half of the articles I examined serve as examples of racialized poverty. In many cases race is not even understood as a distinct category in the case of the Roma. Roma are also referred to as a fragment of society rather than an ethnic group.

> "According to our basic attitude we don't make a difference between Roma and non-Roma. I really think that in poverty everybody is alike. In the Numbered Streets social issues are the biggest problem and not that in the 5th Street somebody was selling drugs. […] So in case there were non-Roma people living there in similar conditions, the situation would be the same, I believe" (Gábor Simon).

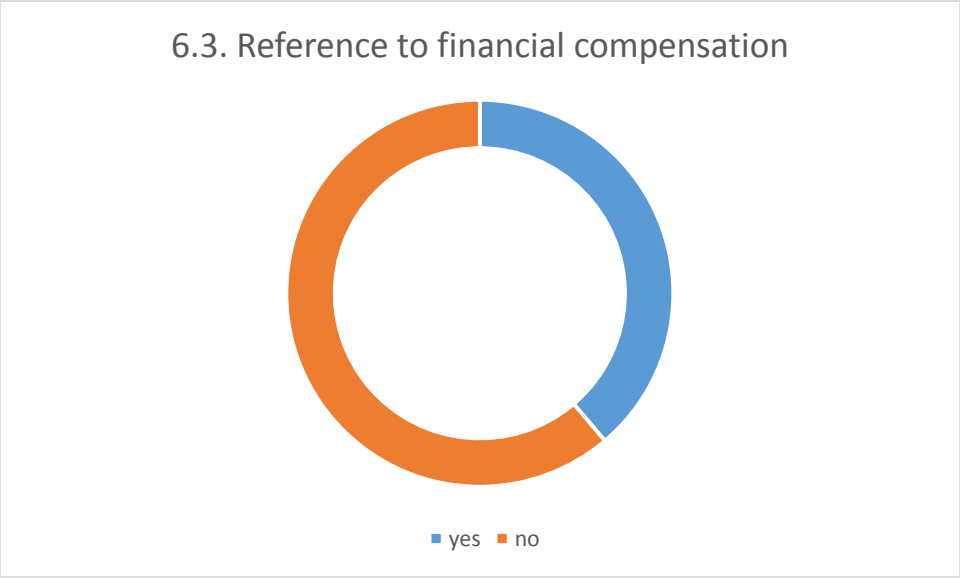
"Different circumstances obviously favour different performances. Since ethnic identity is associated with a culturally specific set of value standards, it follows that there are circumstances where such an identity can be moderately successfully realized, and limits beyond which such success is precluded. […] The important thing to recognize is that a drastic reduction of cultural differences between ethnic groups does not correlate in any

simple way with a reduction in the organizational relevance of ethnic identities, or a breakdown in boundary-maintaining processes" (Barth, 1969).

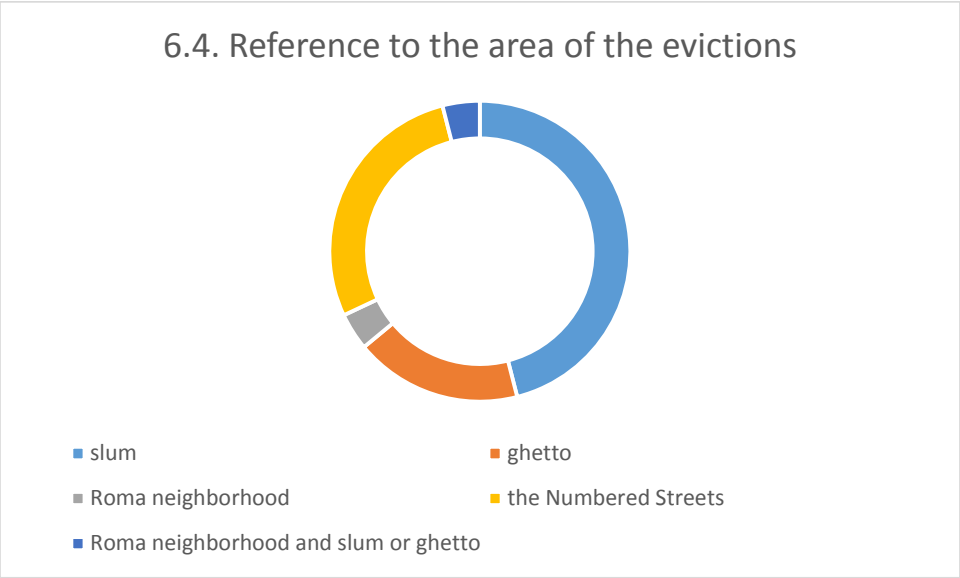
Forty-six percent of the articles raised security concerns and connected criminality with the Numbered Streets, while more than sixty percent of the analyzed articles had no mention of the development plans on the local stadium at all.



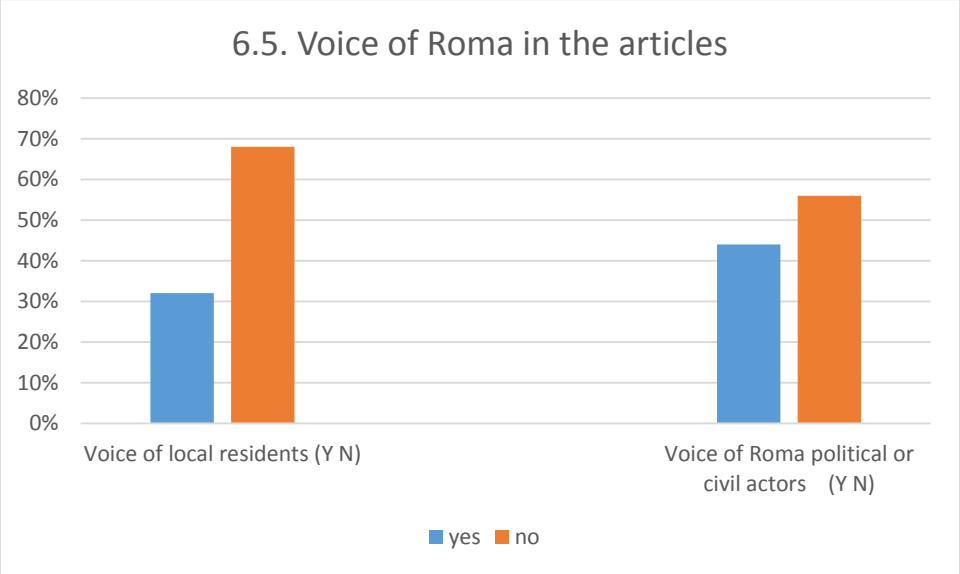
Although—until the related part of the amendment was ruled unlawful—only one family received financial compensation for leaving their home and purchasing another real estate outside the city, thirty-nine percent of the articles also mentioned that those facing eviction are eligible for a financial compensation.



"Ghetto" and "slum" are also used in the media to refer to the area of the Numbered Streets. Due to the consistent usage of the term "slum" in the official communication of the measures by the Local Government, most of the articles, either by relying on citations or by following the trend, describes the Numbered Streets as a "slum" or as a "ghetto". In spite of a few examples of referring to the area as a "Roma neighborhood" the role of ethnicity remained far less significant than that of poverty. Although, given that poverty is already racialized in the political speech, we can rather speak about hidden mechanisms and secondary meanings most of the readers are immediately able to decode and to develop a distancing attitude toward.



Finally, I would like to draw the attention to the fact that more than half of the articles did not have a reference to the voice of local Roma or Roma political and civil actors. There was, however, a notable difference between two. While the voice of local Roma resident was not present in more than two-thirds of the articles, the standpoint of Roma political and civil actors were cited and referred to. In respect of who has a say in the political discourse, the question of legitimacy should not be disregarded. What I mean on legitimacy here is in many ways connected to framing and recognition, and can also results in misrecognition. Roma political actors, who have almost no say in the decision making, were almost exclusively members of the Roma Minority Self-Governance of Miskolc, a state institution which according to the opinion of many captured the Roma movement in Hungary and instead of being an engine of self-definition has only a symbolic function in politics.



"[I]n the struggle for the production and imposition of the legitimate vision of the social world, the holders of bureaucratic authority never establish an absolute monopoly, even when they add the authority of science to their bureaucratic authority, as government economists do. In fact, there are always, in any society, conflicts between symbolic powers that aim at imposing the vision of legitimate divisions, that is, at constructing groups" (Bourdieu, 1989).

CHAPTER FIVE: FROM AN AMENDMENT TO THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

Only 5 months before the local elections of October, 2014, the Local Government of Miskolc adopted an amendment to its housing decree[2] whose main goal was to eradicate slums. Despite the seemingly positive action of the local government, however, one of the elements of the amendment made the residents of the Numbered Streets, a neighborhood that is considered a slum as well by the Local Government, rather worry: One of the requirements of being eligible for a 1,5M – 2,0M HUF financial compensation, was that those applying for it leave the city, more precisely purchase a property outside of Miskolc and would not sell it in the next five years. The amendment became almost immediately part of the public discourse and its criticized element was presented as all if of the residents were automatically eligible for a maximum of 2 million HUF. As this sum would not even be enough for purchasing a property in Miskolc, the only choice seemed to leave the city anyway. The residents, however, organized several protests and demonstrations, also supported by the Roma Minority Self-Government of Miskolc and different organizations, to articulate their demand to stay in Miskolc, either in the already mentioned area or in another part of the city.

> "The lack of investment in the last few years mainly due to the fact that these people can represent their interest the least efficiently. The Roma are much cheaper political means for the mainstream politics than the non-Roma. The non-Roma are able to vote conscientiously if they want change. This is the reason why there is no progress in these areas. That is one of the main causes why the case of the Numbered Streets became the center of attention" (Gábor Váradi).

Nonetheless, it was not enough to convince the dwellers of surrounding towns and villages, and driven by the fear that Roma would soon buy out their properties and poverty would be exported to their settlements they started to organize themselves. Municipalities of some of

[2] http://todo.miskolc.hu/hcr/6phdoc/3330.pdf

these towns and villages also tried to use every possible opportunity they had to prevent residents of the Numbered Streets to settle down, meaning every means the legal framework of local governance provided them.

According to the research of Gabriella Lengyel and Gábor Havas 85% present of those living in the Numbered Streets (5th-10th Streets) and their data are known by the researchers were born in Miskolc. Almost half of the respondents had lived elsewhere in Miskolc before moving to the Numbered Streets. Those with permanent lease were offered housings in other part of the city, but since none of them accepted the substandard houses in the outskirts of the city which were offered to them, the Property Management Center of Miskolc (MIK) said that they would contact the residents again if there is any available housing.

Out of the 112 residents who were surveyed 21 did not have a valid contract, 2 persons were owners and occupiers and 4 persons' status remained unknown. Almost half of those 85 respondents who claimed to have a valid contract live in their houses with a permanent lease. The researchers highlight that even in cases when indebted residents later paid off their utility bills and rental fees the Property Management Center of Miskolc did not extend their contracts. As a result of the amendment the Property Management Center of Miskolc have not extended any of the contracts regardless of whether the residents were able to pay their bills on time or not. Those houses which are abandoned by the residents, either because fearing evictions or because they are already evicted, are made uninhabitable by the Property Management Center of Miskolc.

Altogether 112 houses were part of the research, which make up half of the houses of the Numbered Streets (meaning the area between the 5th and the 11th Streets). Most of the houses belong to the Local Government of Miskolc. Although the majority of the residents are Roma, there are areas where ethnic Hungarians are the majority. In these houses, such as the houses of the 11th Street most of the residents are owner-occupiers. Most ethnic Hungarians refused

to respond to the questions of the researchers, and similarly some of the Roma, mostly those living in better conditions, did not want to take part in the research (Havas & Lengyel, 2014).

The history of the neighborhood starts in 1909, when the increasing number of workers in the heavy industry made it necessary to provide them with housing. Although the Numbered Streets originally meant all the eleven streets of the area, the residents of Miskolc when referring to the Numbered Streets most often mean the area between the 5th and the 11th Streets. The area between the 1st and the 4th Streets is not a segregated area according the Local Government.

The Numbered Streets is a predominantly Roma neighborhood; most of its dwellers live in social housings provided by the Local Government with a permanent lease agreement in more than half of the cases, but also with temporary contracts or illegally. The amended decree of the Local Government of Miskolc has been communicated as a part of the slum-eradication program of the Local Government. As most of the people living in the Numbered Streets are not owner-occupiers, but renters of the houses, they have a very limited space for negotiation.

Concentrated poverty is not a new phenomenon is Miskolc; there have been various examples of how certain areas of the city became the residence of poor and Roma families. The approach of the Local Government of Miskolc to poverty and concentrated poverty, however, did not change so much during the past decades: As the authors point out, the integration of the poor, mostly meaning Roma, has never been the goal of the Local Government. On the contrary, by different means of collective stigmatization they tend to see and depict them as criminals, anti-social people, who are not able to integrate, thus do not deserve any support from the Local Government. This also implies that the Local Government has no moral responsibility towards these people.

In the last few years the number of social housings has decreased by the fifth, which means that those facing evictions have only limited opportunities to become tenants again in other parts of the city.

Despite the fact that the eviction has been communicated as an anti-segregation decree from the beginning, it seems to be quite clear that the expected development plans on the stadium of the local football team, DVTK, also have a lot to do with the Local Government's effort to clear out the place of the Numbered Streets. In fact, as part of the development plans a parking lot is envisioned in the place of the Numbered Streets. The development plans are in accordance with related policies of the right-wing government and also serve the touristic goals of the local government, in which slums, or ghettos, as the Numbered Streets are often times referred to in the political speech, have no place. The political discourse on the Numbered Streets also map some of the most important social and political issues on national level as well, therefore, I see the case of the Numbered Streets not as an exceptional example, but rather as part of deeply rooted practices related to unequal power relations often times resulting in political hegemony.

Beside the fact that the evicted can only apply for social housing in other parts of the town but not eligible for housing automatically, there was another, discriminatory reason the Numbered Streets got significant media coverage and the adoption of the amendment resulted in different forms of protests. In fact, one of the original requirements of being eligible for financial compensation provided by the Local Government was that those applying for it leave the territory of the town and would not sell their houses purchased outside of Miskolc at least for five years. Following a dispute between the Local Government of Miskolc and the Government Office for Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County the disputed element of the decree has been ruled unlawful by the Hungarian Supreme Court. Another interpretation of the decree, therefore, is that the goal of the Local Government is not necessarily to fight segregation and

poverty but to achieve that the Roma, being already criminalized in the political discourse and in the media, leave the city. The initiative of the right-wing coalition was not supported by the opposition, neither by the leftist parties (MSZP, DK, Együtt, MLE), nor by the radical right (Jobbik), it certainly set the tone of the political campaign preceding the last local elections of October, 2014.

On May 8, 2014 only the right-wing coalition, who are the majority of the city council, supported their own initiative, which went into effect in the same year, and has been followed by evictions of families living in the Numbered Streets. According to the official standpoint of the coalition the main reason of the amendment is to fight poverty and segregation, which have been often times connected to fighting against criminality and promoting order in the political discourse.

The leftist parties remained abstain arguing that although they would have supported the eradication of slums, the way the local government chose was rather discriminatory.

> "My opinion is that in practice there is no slum-eradication program in Miskolc. There has been no slum-eradication in Miskolc since they won the election in 2010, and they didn't even have the intention to do it. However, I would like to emphasize that before 2010, when we led the city, there was a slum-eradication program. Their main intention is not slum-eradication, there are slums, such as the Lyukó, where almost 5,000 people live […], but these are not slums. The main message of their campaign was not the eradication of slums by ensuring residents normal, human conditions. On the contrary it was the eradication of slums by screwing the residents living there, mostly Roma out of the city. One of the means of it, which has been ruled unconstitutional by the Hungarian Supreme Court, was giving the residents money on condition that they leave the city. Although, they could convince only one person to move to a family house outside of the city. The Numbered Streets come into the picture because of the development plans on the stadium. They knew it well in advance. But they didn't say that this would be demolished, because we want to build a parking lot here. They were silent about it and instead they started to use the language of double-talk: on the one hand they say that they will eradicate slum […], but on the other hand their political messages aimed at those who are receptive to anti-Roma slogans" (Gábor Simon).

The right-wing radical Jobbik opposed the initiative from the beginning criticizing the right-wing coalition for their intention to provide a financial support for the families facing eviction.

The following month, in June, 2014, both the right-wing coalition and Jobbik started to collect signatures to gain a stronger political legitimacy for their own standpoints and eventually for the eviction plan. Altogether 35,000 people supported the right-wing coalition with their names and signatures in Miskolc, including the leader of the Roma Minority Self-Government, as well.

> "I also supported the initiative with my signature. Of course I did. I'm not saying that there is no need for fighting poverty, but housing should be provided for everybody. Fighting poverty doesn't mean demolishing valuable real-estate. I think in case the needed infrastructural developments were done, this area couldn't even be called a slum" (Gábor Váradi).

The eviction began in August. One case of a disabled woman, and a family with young child got a huge media coverage. On August 6, 2014 the Roma Minority Self-Government of Miskolc started a 4-day demonstration against the "inhuman" eviction at Szent István square, in the heart of the city and another, 10-day demonstration in the Numbered Streets. The demonstrations became known as the "tent protests"- tents were set up at Szent István square, close to the building of the Local Government of Miskolc, to demonstrate that residents of the Numbered Streets are at risk to lose their properties and to become homeless. Walls and windows were turned into means of protest: the dwellers of the Numbered Streets put their personal messages and their demands on the walls or in the windows of their houses. The messages of the protests, either put on the walls or in the windows of the houses, or used as a part of demonstration fall into too big categories: There were those, often times personalized, messages that emphasize local identity by referring to birth and family histories in most cases,

and others which placed a higher emphasis on social status. Only few messages referred to ethnicity.

> "There is no difference between the Roma and the poor. Because the poor are Roma as well in the eyes of the majority. The issue of poverty is mostly represented by Roma. They don't differentiate between Roma and non-Roma poor. […] If somebody is in need, we help them regardless of ethnicity. The majority tends to see also the non-Roma poor as Roma. This way the stereotypes about Roma are projected also to non-Roma" (Gábor Váradi).

The Maltese Charity Service has been working in the town since the summer of 2014. During the autumn of 2014 they made an agreement with the Local Government of Miskolc that they would get one of the emptied houses of the Numbered Streets as an office in order to ensure their presence on the field and to make their work more effective. Eventually, as a result of the agreement they got one of the houses situated in the 5th Street. The house was abandoned before the eviction would have happened. Besides providing help for families, including but not limited to financial support, one of their main roles has been to mediate between the residents of the Numbered Streets, the Roma Minority Self-Government of Miskolc, civil organizations, activists and the Local Government of Miskolc. For August 14, 2014 conciliation was initiated by the Home Office where Gábor Váradi, chairman of the Roma Minority Self-Government of Miskolc, Ferenc Botos and Ernő Horváth, members of the Roma Minority Self-Government, Mihály Dancs, member of the Roma Civil Rights Movement (RPM), Miklós Vecsei from the Maltese Charity Service, Ákos Kriza, mayor of Miskolc, Tibor Pogácsás, Secretary of Local Government, and Károly Czibere, Secretary of Social Security were invited. After the conciliation the leader of the Roma Minority Self-Government said that they agreed on a 2-month long delay in the evictions, however, it was not confirmed by the mayor. The only result of the conciliation was that both the Roma Minority Self-Government and the Local Government of Miskolc accepted the mediation of the Maltese Charity Service between the actors (Havasi, G, & Lengyel, G, 2015).

> "In the beginning of Kriza's term, they started a housing renovation program with the Roma Minority Self-Government relying partly on the workforce of the residents. Actually, although I know the details of it only from the news, I think it was, or it could have been a normal program. But what they are doing now only leads to hopelessness. Families cannot get out of the woods" (Gábor Simon).

In October, 2014 as a result of the lobby the Maltese Charity Service and the Roma Minority Self-Government had been working on, the evictions were temporarily suspended which ensured that four families who would have been evicted could stay in their homes.

> "We have achieved a lot of things with the Maltese and my hope is that these things will stabilize, so not solve, but stabilize certain situations. We also have a long-term agreement with the Roma Civil Rights Movement" (Gábor Váradi).

Aladár Horváth Roma activist, former representative of the Parliament, leader of the Roma Civil Rights Movement connects the current actions of the Local Government to the so-called "ghetto case" in his manuscript to highlight that the measures carried out by the local authorities are part of deeply-rooted practices towards the Roma and the poor.

"It was during the fall of 1988 when I learnt that the Miskolc City Council was planning to build substandard houses on the marshy-boggy area of the Nádszög, two kilometers away from the city. The plan was announced on the TV by General András Túrós, police superintendent of the county. My instinctive outrage led to actions: I showed the record to some of my friends in Miskolc, and I went to the Engineering Department of the Council to see where my students and their families would need to move according to the plans. […] I went to Budapest, and I asked for help; first in a Roma conference, then on the founding meeting of the Wallenberg Association. I was invited to give an interview on the "Ablak" TV program and my statement that this action would lead to a ghetto, resulted in a scandal. Ghetto in socialism? […] It turned out that there was already a plan to establish the Roma Autonomy of Cserehát. […] for those who were not able to comply with the socialist norms of coexistence. Now, after twenty-five years of democracy experiment with some boost (unemployment, discrimination at workplace, right to choose school freely, various forms of educational segregation, spatial discrimination) we are back again in 1989" (Horváth, 2015).

References to "the last twenty-years" were also often made by Gábor Simon, arguing that the Roma and the ethnic Hungarians have been unable to determine how they want to see their future together.

"Actually, it is rather disappointing that during these 25 years neither the mainstream society nor the Roma was able to develop a roadmap of needed measures" (Gábor Simon).

But October was also important for another reason: 12, October, 2014 was the day of the local elections. Mayors, representatives to municipalities and minority self-governments were elected nationwide. Preceding the local elections of 2014 the political campaign in Miskolc was interesting at least for three reasons. According to the polls the right-wing coalition, the leftist parties and the radical right had the chance as well to get one-third of the votes, but eventually the right wing coalition (FIDESZ-KDNP) won the election. The results of the election were surprising in the sense that contrary to the expectation there were significant differences between the number of votes given to the three major parties, or coalitions. Ákos Kriza remained in office and could start his second term as a mayor. His party, FIDESZ, with their coalition partner, KDNP could secure more than 60% of the seats in the municipality. The leftist alliance of the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Democratic Coalition (DK), Együtt, and the Local Patriots of Miskolc (MLP) came second securing one-fifth of the seats. Jobbik, the radical right party is the third political force in Miskolc with the votes of almost one-fifth of the voters. Gábor Váradi got only less than 1% of votes on the mayoral election, although he says he does not consider it a failure, but an achievement to gain more space for representing the interest of the Roma.

> "I saw my position on the election as a form of demonstration. There is no recipe that you can rely on as a Roma aiming to represent human values. And I'm purposely saying human and not Roma. […] I believe that the right to housing for example is not a Roma idea. But unfortunately, people don't buy it. The problem is that there is nobody who could protect us. We can protect only ourselves. I believe that Roma should have their own voice on the parliamentary elections as well. The problem is not that you cannot make politics on ethnic basis […] but given the 5% electoral threshold

> the votes of the Roma are not enough. However, I also think that we cannot expect everything to be decided in the Parliament. Local actions should have their own place as well" (Gábor Váradi).

Besides using social network as a shield, and complying with dominant social norms in Mizrachi and Herzog one of the destigmatization strategies is a reference to shared, universal human traits (Mizrachi & Herzog, 2011). During his interview Gabor also emphasized that his program as a mayor candidate was based on human values and not Roma values.

Promoting order was a very significant element of the political campaign.

"The political discourse has been ruled by slogans, one-sentence long political messages have been circulating and there are only a few who are interested what is behind these messages" (Gábor Simon).

On the one hand the case of the Numbered Streets became one of the most debated issues during the campaign which was also connected to security concerns and criminality. On the other hand I understand promoting order as a means of political populism or penal populism (Haney, 2011).

> "We were outraged to see that both FIDESZ and the opposition started to talk about the Numbered Street in a negative way. It is clear, that this area cannot be described as a slum. The condition of the houses doesn't justify the usage of the category of slum for this area. When people are facing difficulties regarding housing, public property should be used more wisely instead of taking the houses from the families and demolishing them without providing them housing in other parts of the city" (Gábor Váradi).

Similarly to other leftist parties in Europe the Hungarian Socialist Party experienced a severe decline after the financial crisis, which is of course not only the result of the crisis itself, but also relates to many other important factors, such as the loss of working class identity which "has been fueled by the continuing debate on "social identity constructions" that states the importance of alternatives to economic categorization systems and shifts the focus from the

material development to self-expression of people (Hanappi & Hanappi-Egger, 2014). Although new parties, including anti-globalist and Marxist parties appeared on the left, they are still insignificant in politics, and should be rather seen as micro-parties. Given the new, mixed-member majoritarian electoral system, that favors big parties and coalitions, the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) is working together with other leftist and liberal parties both nationwide and locally.

> "MSZP has been in governmental position in three terms, and I think all the three terms were somewhat different from each other. Most of the consequences about the politics represented by MSZP are made on the basis of the last term, the term between 2006 and 2010. Obviously, this is the closest in time, so people remember mostly this period. MSZP has had only very few opportunities to represent their politics without external or internal pressures, meaning on the latter one that MSZP governed in coalition. However, there were periods when we could successfully represent our own politics; the 13th-month pension, raise of wages, and - as a sociologist I think this is a very significant issue for you – according to different surveys between 2002 and 2010 income inequalities decreased" (Gábor Simon).

Gábor Simon is a member of the Hungarian Socialist Party, and has been a representative of the Local Government of Miskolc since 1994.

> "It seems that the 10% of votes Jobbik lost on the election automatically resulted in a 10% increase of the votes gained by FIDESZ. The number of our supports was stable comparing to the results of the parliamentary election of April, 2014. So basically, this match was not played between us. At least this is the way I see. And with their anti-Roma, xenophobic, often times racist campaign FIDESZ managed to reach out to the supporters of Jobbik as well" (Gábor Simon).

Promoting order was also part of the campaign of the leftist parties, although Gábor Simon argues there is a huge difference between what the different political parties, the leftist parties and the right-wing, mean on order.

Nevertheless, Albert Pásztor, former police superintendent, as a mayor candidate supported by the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Democratic Coalition received a huge criticism because of an earlier statement he made as a police superintendent:

"We can tell for sure that the thefts in public spaces are committed by Gypsies" [3]

> "In my opinion Albert Pásztor is a recognized person of the city. His activity as a police superintendent was acknowledged by many. When he made that ominous statement I think it was not by chance that from the Alliance of Free Democrats to the right-wing everybody stood up for him. Actually, we couldn't even imagine accusing him of racism, nor did the majority of the residents, I believe. The fact the many people stood up for him, and that he was reinstated, finally that on consensus basis he received the Pro Urbe prize, one of the highest honors of the city, from Ákos Kriza, mayor of Miskolc means that he story is already over. Another thing is that this case was misused in the political discourse during the campaign" (Gábor Simon).

At the end of December, 2014 there was a racist march in the Numbered Streets, given the close proximity of the stadium, "ultra" football fans were threatening the residents. According to the residents they would use anti-Roma slogans while marching all in black. The "ultra" football fans later claimed that they only want to shoot a movie in the area and that their intention was misunderstood by the residents.

Regular raids, however, are not unknown for the residents. The municipal police claim that the raids in the Numbered Streets are necessary to prevent the violation of social standards.

On February 6, 2015 the Maltese Charity Service organized a forum for the residents of the Numbered Streets. Besides the residents representatives of the Roma Minority Self Government and Roma activists were present, too. Vecsei started with what the residents could expect according to the plans of the local government. He said that part of the 9th Street, the 10th and the 11th Streets would be demolished for sure, given that the development plans on the local football stadium imagine it as part of the area of the stadium. The main emphasis was, he pointed out, on the area including the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, and part of the 9th Streets. He argued that this area was lacking only infrastructural development, and could be turned into a "flower garden". He suggested that residents with terminated leases should have been given the opportunity to rent a flat for a three-month long period and if complying with

[3] http://budapesttimes.hu/2014/07/25/roma-criminality-row-blows-out-the-fuses/

the requirements, meaning paying utility bills on time and complying with standards, their leases would have been extended for another three-month long period, which could eventually convince the local government that they are worth being provided another social housing with a lease for a longer period. He also spoke about the microcredit program of the Maltese Charity Service which would be provided for those who are in debt and should be paid back by 5,000 HUF per month.

On February 9, 2015, only three days after the forum, the government regulation and the government resolution on the stadium development went into effect and contrary to the earlier plans not 4.5, but 8 billion HUF was allocated to the investment.

12 March, 2015: János Kiss, vice mayor: "The Maltese Charity Service helps the city to find out who is worth for a new house." On the same day, maybe as a result of the agreement made between the Local Government of Miskolc and the Maltese Charity Service, the housing decree was amended again: they made it possible to hand in their application for substandard social housings also for those whose leases had not been extended or had been already terminated. The requirements, however, are not easy to comply with: rental fees were raised, rental fees for a six-month period have to be paid in advance, and related expenses should be all covered by the applicants. Those who cannot seek refuge in Canada for some reason are mostly relying on relatives, but there are also families whose only option is to purchase or to rent a house in Lyukóbánya, which is the biggest slum in Hungary.

> "Since May 8, 2014 approximately 50-60 families have left the Numbered Streets. There were 230 families altogether. […] The interesting thing is that in most cases families left their homes not as a result of forced evictions, but because of the notification letters informing them that their leases will not be expended and they will have to leave their homes in 8 days. […] Or the executors appeared in their houses and asked them whether they will be able to ensure their children's housing. So they left out of fear. Some of them are in other parts of the city, we don't know, and others went to Canada. So there is a new wave of immigration towards Canada. Five-ten families ask our help on a daily basis. At the very moment there are approximately 100-150 documents in my office which were issued at the request of the families.

> However, we don't have any information about whether all of they are going to leave the country or not. There is a declaration about Romani identity which is issued at the request of the given person, and we also provide a short analysis of the current situation of Roma in Miskolc. The number of those planning to leave the city is very significant. There are some who are even happy about it, saying that at least we get rid of this…community. […] Unfortunately, these people are not able to read between the lines of history. I do dare to say in my opinion in a few decades these days will be known as "the black days". These days are not about respecting each other. We are living the time of the Holocaust. That was the time, when people were persecuted and annihilated on the basis of race, social situation or religion. I feel this very often. Our responsibility is what we can do this time, which will be valuable even for the next generation. It's not easy". (Gábor Váradi).

In May, 2015 The Equal Treatment Authority and the Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities also criticized the above mentioned amendment claiming that it was discriminatory and unconstitutional. The Government Office of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County found the criticism well established and called the local government to withdraw the disputed element of the amendment. As it did not happened the Government Office of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County went to the court. The Hungarian Supreme Court ruled it unlawful as a result of which the Local Government had to remove the disputed element from the amendment which restricted people to practice their constitutional right to choose freely where they want to live.

> "The solicitous part of the amendment was that those who were eligible for a financial compensation could not purchase real estate In Miskolc. We thought it was discriminative and by the way this has been confirmed by the Kúria. The main reason of our abstention was that although we could not support the amendment we could not oppose it either due to what I called double-talk: because I can imagine that there are some situation in which this amendment could offer a better option than resident has today" (Gábor Simon).

June 6, 2015: The discriminative practice of the municipal police is unconstitutional according to the Ombudsman arguing that the actions are again social solidarity violate the law. Besides criticizing the measures of the Local Government on housing he also called upon

the importance that children's safety is ensured. [4] The Roma Minority Self-Government expressed their agreement with the statement of the Ombudsman made in June, 2015. Ákos Kriza, mayor of Miskolc, however, argued that contrary to the ascertainment of the Ombudsman the criticized measures contributed to the social safety of the residents of Miskolc.[5]

[4] http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150605_Ombudsman_alkotmanyellenes_a_szamozott_ut
[5] http://www.hir24.hu/belfold/2015/06/11/kriza-folytatja-az-ellenorzeseket-a-miskolci-szamozott-utcakban/

CONCLUSION

In my thesis my aim was to look at the different ways and mechanisms that determine both the role of the Roma in society and their representation in media and in the political discourse. Based on the results of my fieldwork and my content analyses of more than two hundred articles published between May 8, 2014 and May 15, 2015 I provided different examples of the hierarchical relations between the Roma and the ethnic Hungarians. After examining the legal context of minority policy of the Hungarian state I also looked at the mismatches between the different attempts to reinforce or on the contrary, to renegotiate the place of the Roma in the political discourse. I also gave a short insight into the political hegemony from the recent years, providing the case of the so-called World-Tent project, which was interpreted and became part of the political discourse as if its main goal was to celebrate the Roma culture, while in reality it was rather imagined as a possible means to extend the nation-building scheme of the Hungarian state. I found it important to draw attention to the rigidity of the system when it comes to the renegotiation of the boundaries and the attributes of different social and political groups. I also gave examples of the different ways "Roma" is used as a political category, which is understood as an intersection of race, class and criminality. I also placed an emphasis on the fact that Roma are both subjects and objects of penal populism and penal nationalism. The intersection of race and poverty, furthermore, was also highlighted in the content analysis, arguing that the representation of group interest in the case of the Roma residents of the Numbered Streets and the depiction of the Roma in the media both use the terrain of poverty but in different ways and for different purposes. While in the first case tactics seems to be a possible way to cross ethnic boundaries which would result in a more effective agency, in the latter case it is rather part of the process of "othering".

Obviously, a detailed analysis of the Hungarian nation state would go beyond the scope of my research. However, in case I extended my study I would look at the consequences of the examined constitutional framework of the country in identity formation and agency. Another possible extension of my study could be looking at the micro-histories of the families living in the Numbered Streets, although as I noted above, in this particular study I did not find participant observation as an adequate methodology for carrying out my research.

APPENDIX

List of analyzed articles

	Portal	Number of articles
1	168ORA.HU	2
2	444.HU	4
3	BOON.HU	80
4	HIR24.HU	8
5	HIRADO.HU	1
6	HVG.HU	6
7	INDEX.HU	9
8	KURUC.INFO	5
9	MA.HU	1
10	MINAP.HU	20
11	MNO.HU	4
12	NOL.HU	13
13	ORIGO.HU	15
14	ROMASAJTOKOZPONT.HU	21
15	ROMNET.HU	11
16	STOP.HU	1
Number of articles altogether:		201

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