

# **Who Creates and Who Follows the “Rules of the Game”? Rethinking Roma Political Representation in Macedonia and Slovakia**

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the Roma- the largest European minority, have become a key priority of international institutions such as the European Commission and the Council of Europe. A similar interest has also been shown by policy-makers and scholars from disciplines such as sociology and social anthropology. In political science, one of the topics which gained attention is the political (under-) representation of the Roma at national and transnational levels. However, the under-representation of Roma in recent scholarship, is explained mostly based on sociological understandings and methods which limit the possibility to examine questions of power relations, and agency in political processes such as the representation of minorities.

Using the currently dominant approach in political science, new institutionalism, this thesis focuses on the question: in which ways can political institutions discourage Roma representation? Moreover, linked to the first question, the thesis attempt to bring into the debate the question: how are institutional structures and rules used by political actors to keep power relations between majority and minorities in their favor? Hence, tracing two cases of Roma representation, in Macedonia and Slovakia, the thesis open space for a theoretical discussion on how political institutions through their formal and informal rules shape the dynamics of Roma representation. Relying on qualitative interviewing and on secondary sources, the thesis provides insights on how the features of the electoral systems, party regulations and informal rules embodied in the political system are used by mainstream parties in order to preserve the political marginalization of the Roma beyond their ‘natural’ under-representation.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**DSR** – Democratic Forces of Roma Party [Демократски Сили на Ромите]

**ERRC** –European Roma Rights Center

**OlaNO** – Ordinary People-Independent Candidates Party [Obyjani Ludia a nezavisle osobnosti]

**OFA** –Ohrid Framework Agreement

**M**- Majoritarian system

**Most-Hid** – Bridge [Slovak-Hungarian Party]

**PCER**- Party for Full Emancipation of Roma in Macedonia [Партија за Целосна Еманципација на Ромите]

**PR** – Proportional Representation System

**SRK** –Party of Roma Coalition [Slovacka Romska Koalicia]

**SDSM**- Social Democratic Union of Macedonia [Социјалдемократски Сојуз на Македонија]

**VMRO-DPMNE** –Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization-Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity [Внатрешна Македонска Револуционерна Организација-Демократска Партија за Македонско Национално Единство]

## INTRODUCTION

The estimated 10-12 million<sup>1</sup> Roma are the largest European minority<sup>2</sup> (EU Framework for National Integration Strategies, 2011), yet one of the most marginalized ethnic groups. In recent years, the public interest in Roma has increased on the transnational and national level. In 1994, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR) was the first international organization to form a special body - the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in 1994 (OSCE -ODHIR, 2001) as a promoter of Roma inclusion in society. Besides OSCE, in 2011 the European Commission introduced the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (European Commission, 2011), calling upon member states to adopt National Strategies for Roma Integration. Roma political representation is not prominent in these documents.

In the literature of Romani studies, the most prevalent issues debated in connection to the Roma are Roma identity and representation (McGarry 2008; Huub Van Baar, 2011); Roma political participation and representation (Vermeerch, 2011); Roma mobilization and advocacy on national and transnational level (Klimova, 2002; Sigona and Terhan, 2009; McGarry, 2010; Huub Van Baar, 2011); and parliamentary representation (Barrany 2001; Friedman 2005). A number of scholars apply sociological explanations and methods to research on the Roma minority in Europe, addressing questions of Roma identity, language diversity or cultural practices within the community. These explanations have been translated into the question of political participation and representation as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Over the last twenty years, national governments and international organization use unofficial data regarding Roma population in Europe. One of the usual justifications is the difficulty to gather ethnic-based data.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Roma at Glance World Bank Report (2009) Roma are more than 5 % of the total population in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Macedonia and Serbia. Less than 3 % of the population are in BiH, Kosovo and Croatia.

In terms of Roma representation as a topic in the literature, the debate among scholars is still around two core understanding of the concept-descriptive vs. substantive. Hence, questions of who represents Roma interests and how these interested are represented are still being theorized, although the presence of Roma in parliaments and legislative bodies in some European countries is very recent. Therefore, in order to gain a deeper understanding of a political process such representation, its importance for a small minority, and the obstacles that Roma candidates face, additional perspectives are needed.

One of the dominant approaches in contemporary politics science is “new institutionalism.” The approach highlights the role of political institutions and of formal and informal rules in different aspects of political life (March and Olsen, 1984). Feminist scholars are among those scientists who include the institutionalist perspective in their analysis. Similar to the case of Roma representation, the question of women’s representation has been predominantly explained through a sociological lens focusing on women’s characteristics as representatives, candidates, aspirants or as voters. The Recent feminist scholarship provides arguments for a better understanding of how political institutions shape women’s representation using the so-called “feminist institutionalism” theoretical framework (Krook and Mackay, 2011). The application of this framework has contributed to 1) moving the focus from the individual to the institutional level of analysis; 2) putting power as a central topic in feminist theories; 3) transforming the mainstream politics through gendered perspective (Kenny, 2007).

By transposing this framework to the analysis of an ethnic question, I intend here to bring back in the role of the institutions of the literature on minority representation. Although the Roma are different from women in that they are not only structurally, but also demographically a minority group, the new institutional framework can open up space for a broader theoretical understanding

of the question of Roma representation. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the question: in which ways do political institutions hinder Roma representation? Moreover, the answer to it provides an exploration of the question: how are institutional structures and rules used by political actors in order to preserve the political marginalization of the Roma beyond their ‘natural’ underrepresentation?

Looking at the current state of the literature on Roma representation, the first general conclusion that can be drawn is that the Roma minority still lacks a level of political representation commensurate to their population share in most European countries<sup>3</sup>. On the one hand, if factors such as territorial dispersion, the relatively small size of the Roma minority compared to other minorities, and diverse identities among the groups are taken into consideration as well, then the current small number of Roma MPs such as three in Romania, two in Macedonia, one in Bulgaria and none in Slovakia, are not so surprising. On the other hand, if descriptive representation should correspond to proportion of Roma on national context, then the existing number of Roma MPs or members of the council are compared to the official data of Roma, which is far less than the unofficial one, in almost every European country (World Bank, 2009). Therefore, claims of underrepresentation of Roma interests would be legitimized, taking into account the higher unofficial demographic proportion and the long history of marginalized position. Thus, the primary focus in exploring possible explanations for the claims of underrepresentation of Roma in national and local bodies has been put on Roma as active citizens, Roma political parties, or specified institutional features but without tracing the role of political institutions, their formation and imposed formal and informal rules in general.

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<sup>3</sup> Even at the EU level, the number of Roma members of the European Parliament is two.

In “Who speaks for Roma,” McGarry (2010) discusses the question of Roma representation with a special focus on the transnational level. The author concludes that due to the states’ incapacity to provide appropriate organizational structures for Roma representation, the question of Roma representation has been transferred to the general Romani movement and to Romani NGOs as “representatives” of Roma interests. For McGarry (2010, p.34), there are two options to ensure the Roma minority’ political participation – through parliamentary representation and through civil society organizations. Nevertheless, the author argues that it is questionable whether Roma candidates from mainstream parties would advocate Roma interests. Using Pitkin’s terminology, the question of the “acting for” type of representation is challenged in that case.

Regarding the question of who represent Roma interests, Romani parties have been the focus of some of the scholarship on Roma representation. However, the most common approach consists of an analysis of their capacities to lead the process and secure candidates in the formal institutions, as well as questions of legitimacy and accountability. For example, McGarry (2009, p.121) considers that Roma parties in Hungary and Romania do not enjoy high support from the Roma electorate, because of the problematically defined common interest in the context of actively claimed nationalism by mainstream society. Barrany (2001) also acknowledges the lack of electoral success of Romani parties in Eastern Europe, which he subscribes to factors such as a weak capacity for negotiations; a lack of will for coalitions among themselves, but also with mainstream parties and lack of capacities for mobilization to reach the 3-5 % threshold often required to get into parliament. Indeed, Roma political parties have weak institutional and organizational capacities which, even if they manage to enter the political arena, puts them in a challenging position.

However, none of the recent scholarship tackles the role of the institutions and the implications posed by certain institutional arrangements in the political system. Romani parties are part of the broader system of already existing rules, norms, and accepted practices. Thus, any scholar looking into Roma parties either as a mechanism through which representation happens or as critical actors in the process of deliberation of Roma interests, has to take into consideration the general constellation of the political system and its opportunities.

The question of how political institutions create barriers in the process of Roma representation is not new to scholars in Romani studies. However, although it has gained positive attention from some scholars, it has never been central and questioned in terms of keeping power relations between non-Roma majority and Roma minority unchanged.

Rovid (2012), discusses different approaches which may be used by Roma communities in its attempts to secure political participation and representation. One of Rovid's observations regarding parliamentary representation is that the number of Roma candidates who tried to enter national legislatures either through mainstream parties or through Roma political parties is still less under-represented compared to the demographic proportion of the Roma population (Rovid, 2012). Another important observation that the author pose, is related to the strong representation on a local level, the fact that the number of Roma council members has increased in most of the Central European countries (Rovid, 2012, p.12). These examples demonstrate that in recent years, there has been an improvement in the representation of Roma on the national and local level. However, these changes have not been theoretically explored and analyzed in order to identify common patterns.

Another study regarding Roma representation is done by Catherine Messina Pajic (2012). The author has compared electoral mechanisms in six countries in terms of improvement of Roma

representation. She shows that Serbia, Romania, and Kosovo have adopted institutional mechanisms such as reserved seats and low thresholds in order to assist the Roma in the minority representation process. No such measures have been taken in Hungary, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. Based on the results of her study, Pajic (2012, p.37) claims that, although electoral mechanisms such as reserved seats or low thresholds are generally implemented with the aim to ensure minority representation, such mechanisms can also hinder this representation by limiting it to a particular level (such as the local level). Therefore, their existence as such is not an indicator of the quality of Roma representation.

Friedman (2005) analyzes the parliamentary representation of the two largest minority groups in Macedonia and in Slovakia in line with the change of the electoral system from majoritarian to proportional representation. The author (2005, p.393) concludes that, although the PR system succeeded in improving the political representation of ethnic Albanians and Hungarians, it did not have the same effect regarding Roma representation. Basically, even under a proportional representation system, Roma political parties in Slovakia did not manage to enter parliament in several elections, while Roma political parties in Macedonia have been keeping the same number of MPs during PR and majoritarian system (Friedman, 2005, p.393). Finally, the author suggests that the threshold in Slovakia (5 %) and the weak negotiation strategies of Romani parties in both countries are factors which contribute to the ongoing under-representation of the Roma. Nevertheless, after more than ten years, there is no new study on the same topic taking these two countries as case studies in order to investigate whether Roma representation has changed.

The presented body of literature shows that a variety of institutional mechanisms have been tried by some of the European countries with aim to ensure minority representation. However, not all introduced mechanisms have produced satisfactory outcomes in terms of Roma representation. It

is noticeable that in their attempts, some of the countries did not take into consideration specific conditions which are related to Roma as a minority in a particular context. These specific conditions such as 1) the capacities of Romani political parties to negotiate with mainstream parties; 2) the territorial dispersion of Roma and 3) the lack of resources for mobilization were all captured by scholars as possible obstacles in the process of representation. More importantly, although certain aspects of an institutional mechanism such as the electoral system have been tackled, the role of the institutions and of the political actors in encouraging or discouraging the political representation has not gained the necessary attention in Romani studies.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how political institutions, through formal and informal “rules of the game,” influence Roma representation, this thesis explores two cases, Macedonia and Slovakia. The main argument of the thesis is that political institutions have a crucial role in shaping the dynamics behind the representation of a small minority through keeping power relations between different minority groups in favor of only one group. Hence, by its formal and informal rules, an institution creates opportunities for key political actors to use the “rules of the game” in their favor. Therefore, any strategy aiming to improve Roma representation on a national level, without targeting political institutions and mainstream non-Roma actors, is a limited and is likely to have a short-term impact at best.

The first chapter of the thesis briefly presents new institutionalism as an approach in political science with particular focus on the work of some of the most prominent scholars on the topic of feminist institutionalism, whose arguments are also applicable in the case of ethnic minority representation. The second section of the chapter introduces the concept of representation and its meaning to Roma as a minority group. In addition, in this part, the current scholarship on the subject of electoral systems is presented and its implications on representation as institutions which

are particularly examined in the analysis. The second chapter introduces the methodology of this thesis in terms of case selection, data collection, and analysis of the data.

The third chapter is divided into two sub-chapters, each focusing on the analysis of one of the countries. The first sub-chapter provides key insights in terms of the role of the political institutions and of the key political actors in shaping the Roma representation in Macedonia, while the second sub-chapter provides insights in terms of the role of Slovakian political institutions and the main actors in the process of Roma representation.

Finally, the thesis concludes with a conclusion which compares the gained insights from both countries and provides recommendations for improvements of the representation of Roma in Macedonia and Slovakia.

## CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1. FEMINIST INSTITUTIONALISM AND THE QUESTION OF REPRESENTATION

In recent years, mainstream political science has taken a turn towards new institutionalism, taking institutions as a pivotal feature of democratic societies, or as March and Olsen (1984, p.738) argues *“political democracy depends not only on economic and social conditions but also on the design of political institutions.”* Following the same argument, scholars such as Kenny (2007) and Krook (2010) have attempted to combine feminist theory and new institutionalism into a new approach named “feminist-institutionalism” (Kenny, 2007; Krook and Mackey, 2011; Krook, 2010; Mackey 2008, Thomson, 2017) in order to investigate the role of the institutions in the process of women representation. No such move happened in the scholarship on ethnic minority representation though, especially in the case of Roma representation. As I will discuss in this section, debates on Roma representation have much to gain from taking on board insights from feminist institutionalism though, as similar mechanisms are actually at play.

Among the first who attempted to open a space for dialogue between institutionalism and feminist theory is Kenny (2007). The author argues that feminist institutionalism is the new promising theoretical perspective on issues of gender, institutions and power relations (Kenny, 2007). Kenny sees the utility of using institutional conceptual tools and institutional analysis in gender studies as twofold: adding a gender perspective is crucial in the study of institutions and placing power (not women) at the center of the institutional literature (Kenny, 2007). Similarly, in the case of Romani studies, the institutional analysis would usefully shift the focus from the Roma community itself to power relations between the majority and the Roma.

Mackay (2008) provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for the substantive representation of women, using the perspective of feminist institutionalism. Her principal argument is that the understanding of the complex issue of women's political representation requires a complex intersectional approach. Thus, understanding why women should represent women interests in national parliaments and why women should act upon these interest requires the tracing of the influence of key political actors, institutions or interactions, else any explanation of underrepresentation will be limited and unfinished. For Mackay (2008, p.130), institutions have a crucial role in the construction of gender, but informal norms and practices also have a role in shaping the power distribution and power relations. The author argues for a broader theoretical framework of the concept of representation, which according to her will provide insights into the different elements outside the descriptive notions of representation or number of women MPs compared to a number of women in the population. In addition, such broader framework will enable access to an examination of conditions that foster substantive changes on policy level regarding women issues. This is in line with the observed ongoing debate in the literature in terms of overcoming descriptive notions of Roma representation to substantive ones. Hence, the identification of the dominant formal and informal rules embedded in the institutional designs will create space for more substantive interventions by Roma political actors.

Thomson (2017) moves the discussion even further, combining the concept of "critical actors" (Childs and Krook, 2006) with feminist institutionalism. For her, the interest of feminist scholars in the "rules of the game" (Klook and Mackay, 2011, p.1) should not be only with an aim to pursue positive gendered changes in the institutions but rather on identification of ways how institutions still resist, reproduce or disable such changes to happen (Thomson, 2017, p.1). The author argues that using the concept of critical actors in a particular case study we can observe how some key

individuals and their positions in the institutions restrict certain changes which would be to the benefit of the particular minority group (Thomson, 2007). The author gives an example of North Ireland and the debate around abortion legislation. Hence, tracing the actions undertaken by the conservative actors, she demonstrates how key political actors kept restrictive abortion laws alive (Thomson, 2017, p. 11). Although different from Roma representation, still the example shows how ethnic based issues may resist change due to the will of some significant political actors.

Similar to Thomson, Krook (2010) applies feminist institutional theory to the case of candidate selection and its influence on political representation. The author argues against the supply and demand model of explanation of the number of women representatives in parliaments. Krook (2010) claims that the feminist-institutionalism framework provides insights into the dynamic of candidate selection and the influence of institutions in the choice of who “should” be a candidate among women. Such institutionalist analysis draws attention to the question why special mechanisms such as quotas and reserved seats have mixed effects in various contexts. Looking at the question of the quota system, Freidenvall and Krook (2011, p. 45-46) argue that their impact depends on the link between the quotas and their specific details; the nature of the electoral and party systems and the balance between political actors who oppose or support such special mechanism for representation. Hence, in the case of the Roma, it is important to explore all these formal and informal aspects of the political system before advocating for special mechanisms.

All of these scholars have attempted to apply the new institutionalism perspective to the topic of women’s political representation. No such attempts have been made in the recent scholarship in Romani studies, although most of the work by many scholars is based on previous theoretical insights provides by feminists’ scholars. Therefore, it seems natural to operate the same move (from “women in politics” to “gender in politics”) in Roma representation (Kenny, 2007, p.91). In

other words, to focus away from the Roma themselves to the power relations that structure the field of political representation in such a way that the Roma minorities remain politically more marginalized than their number would have it. Moreover, the question is how can the theoretical discussion move beyond the notion of descriptive Roma representation and tackle the conditions under which adequate *substantive* representation would operate.

Based on Mackay's work on women's substantive representation, one possible solution is a broader theoretical framework which, besides normative claims of representation, additionally address questions of power relations and institutional arrangements that keep such relations alive. Thus, new institutionalism can provide answers to why the substantive representation of Roma interests is still lacking, both in contexts where Roma actors (namely Roma parties) are present in the political systems and in contexts with no significant organized Roma actors. Hence, from a functionalist point of view, it is important to address the question how political institutions affect different ethnic groups. In other words, why an institution which is formed to protect minority groups in the political system, fails to perform its function? In addition, from a path-dependence point of view, it is crucial to identify how already formed institutions may reinforce power relations in such a way as to keep the privileged position of one group to the detriment of the position of another group (Kenny, 2007). Hence, it is important to investigate how established institutions can be changed in order to change the asymmetrical power relations between non-Roma and Roma.

Looking at the Roma representation literature, such questions either explicitly or implicitly have been addressed in terms of electoral systems and their rules, the existence of special mechanisms for representation and party regulations (Spirova, 2003; Rezdepi, 2009; McGarry, 2010). However, the missing element is that almost none of these studies put the emphasis on the role of the institutions and their formal and informal rules in connection to political actors who manipulate

with these rules in the representation process. This is due to the missing institutionalist label in their scope. Hence, the use of new institutionalism as theoretical framework makes space for a critical examination of how the formation and continuation of certain political institutions assist some political actors in keeping power over others. More precisely, such analysis will shift the attention from “who should representation Roma interest” to “how can institutions and political actors promote a better representation of Roma.”

## 1.2. THE CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATION

The feminist-institutionalist theory provides a general framework through which to view Roma representation. However, before moving to the analysis of the case studies, it is important briefly to introduce the concept of representation and its meaning regarding a specific minority group, the Roma. The concept of representation has been discussed by many scholars in relation to gender or ethnic minority relationships (Pitkin 1967, Phillips 1992, Young 2002; Mansbrindge 2003). Some of these scholars focus on a particular aspect of representation (Young, 2000) while some others, like Pitkin (1967), discuss the concept in a broader normative perspective. The following section will present some key arguments for the importance of representation as a concept and as a process.

One of the most prominent scholars who developed the concept of representation is Hanna Pitkin (1967). She discusses the concept as “standing for” and “acting for” type of representation. The author defines the first type of representation using the metaphor of mirror and map. Hence, in the case of the parliament as a formal institution, descriptive representation is achieved if the constituency of the Parliament resembles the general society. Another important type of representation is the so-called ‘acting for’ or substantive representation. Basically, elected

members of the Parliament should act on behalf of those who they represent, and the judgment of effective representation is based on their actions. Pitkin (1967, p.89) pointed out that that “the best descriptive representative is not necessarily the best representative for activity or government.” She argues that if formal representation includes only the descriptive part of the representation concept, then the idea of accuracy is not taken into account but only the idea of resemblance (Pitkin, 1967, p.89). Another distinction made by Pitkin is related to accountability. She argues (1967, p.90) that the descriptive type of representation does not include processes such as accountability. Thus, voters hold elected representatives accountable for their actions, not for belonging to the same ethnic group.

Pitkin’s distinction of descriptive and substantive representation has been used by many scholars after her. When it comes to Roma, the challenge of the discussion has always been around question such as whether only Roma can represent Roma interests, in other words, whether it makes a difference for the community to have Roma MPs in the parliament or not. However, the crucial point is not a selection between having only Roma to represent Roma interest, no matter of substantive changes, or Roma interests to be brought by a non-Roma representative. Rather than that, the discussion should move to the direction of identification of most appropriate institutional mechanisms which will secure both descriptive and substantive representation.

Among other scholars who discuss the concept of representation as descriptive vs. substantive are Phillips and Regfeld. For Phillips (1995, p.51), if the aim of what she calls the “politics of presence” is to address the permanent exclusion of a particular group, then a proportional representation system with already existing preferences, would not be enough to address this issue. The author claims that such system would still leave the question whether ideas without presence can be represented. For Rehfeld (2006) the common discussion among scholars on the topic of

political representation focuses on descriptive vs. substantive representation, but that this debate fails to provide an account for the second. For both authors, the division of the “being” from the “acting” of the representatives can explain whether someone is representative of someone else, but not how well the representative is performing (Rehfield, 2006, p.17). Rehfield’s argument principal argument is that political representation results from the group’s recognition of a person who will stand for the whole group. Thus, it is the represented group, using a set of rules of recognition, who should judge who is to represent them. Rehfield’s point on recognition as key feature is a valid and new perspective in the descriptive vs. substantive debate. Applied to the case of Roma representation, questions such as legitimacy and accountability have been mostly related to actors who make a claim of representation outside of the formal representation such as actors from civil society and activists. In contrast, Roma representatives elected through elections are not questioned in terms of accountability and legitimacy because the community have trust on the democratic process of their selection.

Melissa Williams (2000) in “Voice, Trust, and Memory” addressed the question from a different angle. Referring mainly to Afro-Americans as a historically repressed group, she highlights the problem of trust – respectively lack of trust - between the (historically repressive) majority and the minority. Williams (2000, p. 177) points out that:

*Claims of marginalized ascriptive groups to special representation in politics are legitimized by a clear and strong connection between present inequality and the kinds of past discrimination that were sanctioned by dominant social groups and often enforced by the state*

The core elements of the theoretical argument of the author are 1) group representation of marginalized group should foster deliberative dynamics in the decision-making process; 2) the citizens’ capacity to trust their representatives depends on the belonging of the representative to

the same group identity, 3) patterns of marginalization groups in the society has to play an important role in definition of legislative constituencies (Williams, 2000, p. 9). In terms of Roma representation, if the long history of severe (and continuing) discrimination of the Roma and their subordinate position in European societies since the beginning of migration until today are taken as indicators of “marginalized position,” then arguments for group representation are objective and valid. Furthermore, an under-researched element in the case of Roma is how trust relations between the Roma and the dominant groups influence the process of representation, taking into account political actors such as mainstream parties which have a crucial role in it.

Another scholar whose work can be related to Roma representation is Young (2000). The author discusses the concept of representation as a special relationship between the representatives and their constituency. In particular, Young (2000, p.128) argues that more important than the normative notions of representation is the investigation of the concrete relationship between the representative and the constituency. An essential element of her theory is the argument for special representation of disadvantaged or marginalized groups. Young (2000) advocates the need for democratic institutions to include social groups in the decision-making process which otherwise are excluded, or whose preferences most likely would not be heard by the majority of the society.

Hence, Young discusses four specific institutional mechanisms for group representation: 1) reserved seats or positions in the representative body for the specific social group; 2) quotas in party lists or other types of rules based on the proportion of the social groups; 3) political parties with special focus on the preferences of the particular social group and 4) suitable electoral systems with opportunity for representation of such excluded social groups (Young, 2000, p.149-151). In the case of the Roma, the implementation of such mechanisms in some countries such as Croatia, Romania or Serbia is already secured by special laws. However, the question is whether countries

with such institutional mechanisms differ in terms of Roma representation from countries that do not have such special tools. Another valid point for the case of Roma representation is Young's argument related to local representation. Hence, the author (2000, p.152) argues that the justification of group representation applies in the case of local representation as well. Therefore, legislative bodies should provide institutional mechanisms through which each citizen would have the opportunity to exercise power in the decision-making process.

Before focusing on the literature on electoral systems and their implications for Roma representation, a few insights should be drawn from the scholarship on the normative notions of the concept. Hence, the "standing for" or symbolic and "acting for" or substantive understanding of representation is appropriate for Roma as an ethnic group as well. However, the implications of both types of representation may be different if we compare to other ethnic minorities, taking into consideration that Roma minority on the transnational level is large, but on a national level, according to official data, in some countries is less than 2 % of the population. If we add the discriminatory behavior by the mainstream society, forced marginalized position and the gap between official and unofficial data on Roma population, then the power of numbers has a different meaning for Roma and the rest of the minority groups in terms of political representation.

### 1.3. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON ROMA REPRESENTATION

In contemporary politics, some questions of minority representation have been discussed for a long period of time. For example the debate over majoritarian vs proportional representative system (PR) has shown that PR system is better option for ethnic minorities in proving representation on national level (Lijphart, 2012) due to the majoritarian systems' limitations for small ethnic based parties to ensure enough voters' support for entering in the Parliament (Nedelcu and DeBarleden,

2016). For Nedelcu and DeBarleden (2016, p.388) PR through different mechanisms can either promote or prevent the presence of ethnic parties in parliaments. The authors argue that electoral systems cannot be taken as the only factor in explaining the variation in the representation of minorities (2016, p.393).

In “Electoral systems and the protection and participation of minorities report” for Minority Rights Group International, Reynolds discusses A few variables which, according to him, need to be included in any theory of electoral design. Taking into consideration the influence of the socio-political, cultural, historical and demographic context (Reynolds, 2006, p.26), the key indicators that have to be considered are 1) the size of the minority group; 2) the degree of separation or concentration of the group; 3) the existence of homogeneous ethnic based parties or multiethnic based parties; 4) turn-out; citizenship and franchise as elements of who votes. Basically, the observation of the state of these indicators will answer the question of which electoral system is most appropriate for minority representation.

Reynolds (2006) also discusses two important aspects of PR systems, e.g. threshold and type of party lists. In the case of low threshold, ethnic-based minority parties can mobilize enough voters to gain seats, but in the case of a high threshold (such as in Slovakia 5 %), although the electoral system is a PR system, minority groups would be left out (Reynolds, 2006, p.11). This implication was observed by Spirova (2003) as well, who argues that due to the high threshold in Slovakia, only one ethnic political party managed to enter the parliament, while in the Czech Republic, no single ethnic party has reached the necessary number of votes. In the case of the Roma, the threshold is a key variable in explaining the success (or the lack) of Romani parties due to the small proportion of the electorate which supports these parties.

The second aspect discussed by Reynolds is related to the situation when PR lists are closed, and basically, voters choose based on the already rank order done by the political parties. Closed lists are problematic when Roma candidates are systematically put in very low-ranked (unwinnable) positions in the PR lists. In practice, Reynolds's theoretical implication is observed in cases such as Macedonia- where only one Roma candidate is generally put in a high position on the PR list as a result of the negotiations with the Macedonian mainstream political parties. The favorable placement has until now ensured that Roma candidate to be elected, which otherwise it would not have been possible. Moreover, one of Reynolds's suggestion is a "hybrid system" which will ensure two entrances through local districts and national lists for the geographically dispersed minority. On the one hand, this would provide minorities with the possibility to use the advantages of their geographical concentration in particular districts and mobilize enough votes for candidates from their district to be elected. On the other hand, the parallel PR system would provide high chances for getting seats if the minority is geographically dispersed.

Spriova (2003) in her study of electoral rules and ethnic political representation, examines the effects of two different electoral institutional arrangements on the success of ethnic parties in the representation of their constituency. The author selects Bulgaria and Romania as diverse case studies in terms of electoral arrangements – the Bulgarian Constitution bans ethnic based parties while Romania has reserved seats for minorities in Parliament. Spriova (2003) concludes that these institutional differences regarding electoral design had an impact only in case of the Roma minority in both countries, while the Hungarian minority in Romania and the Turkish minority in Bulgaria have been keeping the same successful representation regardless of the institutional constraints. This study serves as an example that institutional arrangements are an important factor

in the explanation of the Roma representation on the national level, although they may not be sufficient condition for it.

Except for the electoral rules, some scholars have focused on explaining additional factors which may contribute to the process of minority representation in a particular context. For example, Bochslers (2011) examines the relationship between electoral rules, territory, and the entrance of new ethnic parties in parliaments in post-communist countries. The author argues that besides electoral rules, the territorial structure of the ethnic groups plays a significant role in the success of ethnic-based parties. In order to test his argument, he created a dataset for 123 ethnic minority groups with information on the electoral system, the size of the group and territorial structure. The results suggest that ethnic minority representation is influenced by 1) both territorial structure of the electorate and particular elements of the electoral system, such as district magnitude or threshold 2) the size of the ethnic based party (if it is small then a concentrated electorate is better in district-based system) 3) the existence of special mechanisms such as quotas or reserved seats. Therefore, analysis of the electoral system as such and its implication representation should target the joined impact of all these specific elements on Roma.

To sum up, the existing scholarship on the representation of minority has already pointed out some very important aspects which should be taken into consideration in the discussion of electoral systems and Roma representation in Europe. The Electoral design may not be a sufficient, but surely it is a necessary condition in the process of ensuring appropriate Roma representation. Also, electoral rules have to be embodied in the political system and practiced by political actors before their impact can be evaluated (Birch, 2003, p.3). This leads the discussion towards specific elements of the constellation of the political institutions and the embodied rules and practices that are used by political actors.

## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. CASE SELECTION

The thesis takes comparative perspective focusing on two countries as units for analysis – Macedonia and Slovakia. The two case studies provide a cross-case and a within case analysis on the causal mechanisms which enable Roma political representation and its outcomes (Rohlfing, 2012). The selection of the cases is based on the countries' different outcomes in terms of parliamentary representation and local representation. Hence, Macedonia as a diverse case stands for a positive example of a parliamentary representation of Roma since the independence of the country, while Slovakia as an opposite diverse case stands as a negative example having only one Roma MP in the history of the country.

On the second criterion (local representation) the countries have different outcomes as well. Slovakia is known for the surprising recent trend of a high number of Roma mayors and local councilors, while in Macedonia the local politics and Roma representation has taken slow improvement, although the country introduced a decentralization process. Hence, one of the primary goals of such case selection strategy (based on the outcomes) was to identify the potential causes that influenced the process of representation, primarily focusing on the role of the political institutions but also with the within case analysis I was able to identify the potential causal mechanism behind these changes over time (Rohlfing 2012). Some factors such as the general electoral system (PR), the similar proportion of Roma minority in the country and the presence of other ethnic minority groups has been taken into account as well as indicators of the similar general context.

## 2.2. DESCRIPTION OF THE SELECTED CASE STUDIES –MACEDONIA AND SLOVAKIA

The following part of the thesis will briefly give an overview of some of the most relevant information regarding the Roma community in Macedonia and Slovakia in order to provide a general context, while deeper analysis of the question of political representation is provided in the next chapter.

### 2.2.1. *Roma in Macedonia*

The number of Roma population in Macedonia according to the official data from the last National Census in 2002 (Statistical Office Macedonia, 2017), is around 54 000 or 2.67 % of the total population. However, according to the non-official estimated numbers by World Bank Report (2009) “Roma at a Glance” the real share of Roma in Macedonia is around 10-12 % of the total population. The gap between official and non-official data is relevant for political purposes as well, especially in the Macedonian context where the political rights and equitable participation and representation in institutions are regulated based on the proportion of the minority in the population. Territorially, the Roma are inhabitants in 64 municipalities, and 45 % of the total proportion of Roma are present in 10 out of 64 municipalities (ERRC, 2013). In terms of other socio-demographic characteristics, according to the Roma Inclusion Index (2015) numbers show that there is a gap between Roma and the total population in terms of education, access to health, housing and unemployment rates. While the employment gap (14 %) between Roma and non-Roma has been reduced from the period 2005-2014, the risk of poverty indicator shows that more than 75 % of Roma are at risk of poverty (Roma Inclusion Index, 2015, p.51). In addition, around 36 % of Roma living in Macedonia have experienced discrimination. Improvements have been noticed in the level of finished education, access to health insurance and holding property housing documents (Roma Inclusion Index, 2015).

### 2.2.2. *Roma in Slovakia*

The official recognition of Roma as an ethnic minority in Slovakia happened in the early 1990s initially as a step towards successful EU integration (Degro, 2015). As a result, the government adopted Resolution No. 153/1991-Principles of Governmental Policies targeting Roma, through which the ethnic identity of Roma was officially recognized (National Strategy for Roma Integration, 2011). The obvious gap between the official and non-official numbers is present in the Slovakian case as well. Hence, based on the official Census data, the number of Roma in Slovakia is around 90 000 (1.67 % of the total population), while from the non-official data, the number is estimated to be around 350 000-380 000 (6-7 % of the total population). In terms of territorial distribution, most Roma live in the southern and eastern parts of Slovakia, concentrated in districts Kosice, Rimavska Sobota, Presov, Trebishov and Michalovce (Matlovicova et al., 2012). Regarding the socio-economic conditions of Roma in Slovakia, the data from the Roma Inclusion Index (2015, p. 65-66) show that only 16 % of Roma are officially employed, while 21 % have some informal job. In terms of education, 52 % of Roma children receive education in segregated schools, while the infant mortality rate is estimated around 18 % for Roma and 5.3 % for non-Roma living in Slovakia (Roma Inclusion Index, 2015). More than 40 % of Roma reported that they had faced discrimination by the Slovakian society. Improvements are observed in terms of preschool education, access to electricity and access to health insurance (Roma Inclusion Index, 2015).

### 2.3. DATA COLLECTION

The thesis is based on a qualitative research design. It includes an analysis of primary and secondary sources on documents and articles related to the political representation of minorities in Macedonia and Slovakia. The process of data collection involved the identification and selection of data from local and parliamentary elections for the period of 1994-2016 for Macedonia and for Slovakia. Additionally, data on the number of Roma political parties was used from previous research projects on the similar topic for both countries.

Besides the collection of secondary sources, I have conducted semi-structured expert interviews in both Macedonia and Slovakia. The semi-structured qualitative interviewing is an appropriate technique when there is no more than one chance for an interview (Bernard 2006, p.212). Hence, the nature of the method allowed me to provide certain freedom to my interviewees in answering the questions, but also it enabled certain control over the focus of the conversation (Bernard, 2006). Based on the focus of the thesis, the aim was to conduct exploratory interviews which will highlight certain hidden aspects in the process of parliamentary and local representation which otherwise cannot be found in the documents (Seidman, 2006). Before the conduction of the interviews, a general interview guide was developed with questions related to several aspects of the topics covered in the theoretical framework such a representation, Romani parties, Roma political participation, electoral system and relations with the mainstream parties. The topic guide consists of opening or profile questions, main questions for each of the covered areas and ending questions (Keats, 2001). Additional questions were added based on the profile of informants and the developed discussion. The general topic guide is available as Appendix No.1.

The selection of people was based on the following profiles:

- Current/former member of the parliament from Roma origin;

- Former candidate for member in the parliament from Roma origin;
- Current/former member of the council from Roma origin;
- Former candidate for member of the council from Roma origin;
- Current/former mayor of a municipality from Roma origin;
- Leader or active member of a Roma political party

These profiles of people are considered to be the “critical actors” (Childs and Krook, 2006) involved in the process of political representation and have a certain level of direct experience how the institutional arrangements function in practice. Additionally, it was important to juxtapose the local vs. national perspective of minority representation in both countries.

In the case of Macedonia, after several attempts of contacting people who belong to the above-mentioned profiles, the final data collection includes six interviews conducted in the period of 24 April -1 May 2017. Although anonymity was proposed to all interviewees, they all agree to reveal their identity. Details on their position and experience on the topic are available in Appendix No.2. The first interview was conducted with S. I. who is the current president of the council of the municipality of Shuto Orizari- the only municipality in Macedonia with a Roma majority(Crowe, 2000). The second interviewee is Mr. F.S., who currently holds the position of president of the elections’ commission for the municipality of Shuto Orizari. Both of them as members of a Roma political party participated in negotiation processes with Macedonian mainstream parties. Therefore, besides their official role, the party membership has been considered as important aspect as well.

The third interview was conducted with Mrs. Z.S. who is a current council member in the municipality of Skopje. Mrs. Z.S. is part of PCER –Roma Party which, after several years in the opposition, entered into the government after the last election in 2016. Another interview was conducted with I. R. who is also a member of the council in the municipality of Kicevo- a town in western part of Macedonia. In addition, Mr. I.R. is part of the local team of DSR Party. At the local level, besides the opportunity for membership in the council, the law provides every municipality with an officer for Roma-related issues. Such position has been used as an additional mechanism in municipalities where there is no Roma member of the council. Thus, I decided to include this position as a profile of Roma representative. I conducted an interview with Mr.E.A., who is a current officer for Roma issues in the municipality of Shtip, a town in the eastern part of Macedonia. Finally, the sixth interview was conducted with Mr. Sh.S. who is a founder and current leader of the DSR Roma party and former Roma MP for the period of 2006-2008. Mr.Sh.S. has long experience as Roma politician and lawyer.

In the case of Slovakia, with the help of Roma Education Fund and its local team in Preshov, I conducted six interviews with Roma mayors and former Roma members of parliament. Like in the case of Macedonia, all of the informants agreed to publish their names. However, I use their initials (except in the Appendix No.2). The first interview was conducted with a former Roma member of the Slovakian parliament P.P, who has been the only Roma MP ever elected to the national parliament. Previously, Mr. P.P. had run for regional and national elections several times. Another important aspect is his membership in a mainstream Slovakian party.

Due to the recent trend of higher numbers of Roma participating in local elections as candidates for mayors, I also wanted to conduct interviews with some of the current/former Roma mayors from several municipalities in order to investigate the factors that contributed to their success.

Thus, the four interviews with Roma mayors were conducted in the period of 11-17 May 2017. One of them (M.S.) is the current mayor of Lunik 9-Kosice, while the second is Mr. R.V. who is current mayor of Paskova. The rest of the interviews were conducted with former Roma mayors: Mr. I.V., who currently works for a Roma NGO, and Mr. V.K. who has a long experience as Roma politician and mayor in Rimavska Sobotka.

## 2.4. LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of interviewing as a method is the interaction between the social identities shared by the one who is leading the interview and the interviewee (Seidman, 2006, p.99). Hence, in the case of the thesis, my own ethnic identity as Macedonian Roma, on the one hand, helped to develop the trust at the beginning of the interviews, but on the other hand, it could have possibly created a potential bias over the way how the answers were given. Another limitation is related to the interviews conducted in Slovakia. Thus, the lack of knowing the Slovakian language created an additional challenge in the dynamic of the interviews. I assume that the short provided answers by the responders are to a certain extent related to the language barrier, although with the Roma mayors a translator was present during the whole interviews. Nevertheless, the raised limitations are related to the conducted interviews which have been used in the first exploratory phase. All information gained from the interviewees were checked and supported by secondary sources and legal documents.

## CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS OF THE CASES

The following chapter will present the analysis of Roma representation in Macedonia and Slovakia, based on the insights drawn from the analysis of some of the most relevant legal documents concerning institutional changes in the majority-minority power relations, from the conducted interviews and the analysis of the secondary sources related to both cases. The chapter is divided into two sub-chapters, each focusing on the one analytical unit (the country). Using arguments from the theoretical framework, data from the secondary sources and from the information shared by the interviewees, I provide a brief analysis of the key components of the political representation of Roma in both countries, highlighting the role of the political institutions and political actors in shaping Roma representation both locally and nationally.

### 3.1. MACEDONIA AND THE CASE OF ROMA REPRESENTATION

The political participation and representation of all officially recognized ethnic minorities in Macedonia is ensured through two key legal documents- the Constitutions and the Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA). Based on the first, all national minorities enjoy equal civil and political rights (Article 9, Constitution of Republic of Macedonia, 1991). The international community proposed the Ohrid Framework Agreement as a peaceful solution to end the ethnic conflict in 2001 that opposed the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority in a short civil war (Bieber, 2008). Looking from the perspective of minority rights, the OFA institutionalized higher status and rights for all ethnic minorities living in Macedonia, including Roma. This is an example of how a particular document with a set of rights opened an opportunity for the creation of new political institutions with the main goal of ensuring implementation of the Agreement. Nevertheless, after more than 15 years of implementation, still it is questionable whether OFA

promotes power-sharing only between two blocks (Macedonian-Albanian) or the rest of the minority groups are being treated as political actors as well.

The active participation of Roma in the politics of the country started in the same period when most of the prominent Macedonian politicians and political parties decided to peacefully transit from former Yugoslavia to independence. After achieving independence in 1991, the first democratic parliamentary elections were held in which the first Romani party –PCER took participation as well. Since then, the total number of parliamentary elections (regular and non-regular) that were held is nine (Election Archive Macedonia, 2017).

Macedonia has a closed-list proportional representation system with six electoral districts. The Assembly (Parliament) consist of 123 members- from which three members are elected based on the votes of Macedonians living abroad (Macedonian diaspora). The rest of the seats (120 in total) are equally dispersed among the six districts. No special threshold or reserved seats are part of the design, except for the gender party-quotas introduced in 2006. It is interesting in the Macedonian case, the fact that the electoral system has been changed three times from pure majoritarian to mixed and finally to a PR system (Berisa, 2016). In terms of Romani political parties, now the official number is eight. In the last election in December 2016, almost all Roma parties made a coalition with the conservative Macedonian party VMRO-DPMNE, while only one Roma political party (PCER) was in coalition with the oppositional party of the Social Democrats. The novelty in the last election was the election of a Roma candidate for a member of the Macedonian parliament as a member of the Social Democrats mainstream party. Over the years, the number of Roma representative in parliament was never higher than two seats, while the number of Roma parties has increased (Friedman, 2005; Pajic, 2012). Table 1 displays the total number of Roma MPs and the change of the electoral system.

Table 1. Number of Roma members of the Parliament and electoral system 1991-2016

Election' Year	1991	1994	1998	2002	2006	2008	2011	2014	2016
Number of Roma MP	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	2
Electoral system	M	M	Mixed	PR	PR	PR	PR	PR	PR

Sources (Vasic, 2014; Friedman, 2005)

Taking Pitkin's point on descriptive representation, it would not be surprising to conclude that the Roma electorate was not lacked from "representation" in the central political institution (parliament) in the country if we take into account that in every election at least one Roma candidate was elected. However, as Pajic (2012) argues, having Roma MPs has not been a successful mechanism in bringing changes for the whole community, which leads to the point of the importance of the substantive representation as a separate feature (Pitkin, 1967). Still, for Roma, the difference between having one Roma MP or four is crucial, due to the fact that 3-4 MPs have possibility to form an intra-parliamentary group. In this way, an intra-parliamentary group formed by Roma MPs would have more power to bring the Roma interest in the parliamentary agenda.

### *3.1.1. Macedonian electoral system and its implications on Roma parliamentary representation*

From an institutional point of view, one of the most important aspects of the parliamentary representation is the electoral system and its implications on the number of Roma MPs over the years. As it has been already pointed out, Macedonia has changed four times its electoral system over the years. One of the most important changes happened in 2002, after the ethnic conflict. Thus, the country changed its majoritarian system into the proportional representation with closed lists.

The appropriate electoral design is one of the key factors which influence the political representation of minorities in multiethnic societies (Spirova, 2003; Reynolds, 2006; Bochsler, 2011). In the case of Roma representation, scholars have demonstrated through several examples that the number of Roma MPs highly depends on the specific characteristics of the electoral system (Spirova, 2003; Friedman, 2005; Pajic, 2012). Thus, the electoral system as an institution and its rules have an impact on the process of representation.

In the context of Macedonia, from the conducted interviews, it seems that there is a general agreement among the political actors involved on the local and national level, that the current electoral system does not enable the potential of Roma votes to reach the expected estimated number of MPs. Such an observation has been documented by some of the scholars interested in the topic of minority representation in Macedonia (Friedman, 2005; Pajic 2012). Hence, the territorial division into six electoral units does not limit Roma candidates to mobilize voters in almost all units due to the presence of Roma community in each of these six districts. However, none of the small parties have a real chance in the political competition without previous agreement on the entering into a coalition. This is as a result of the fragmented Macedonian party system (Sedo, 2012). Therefore, on the one hand, all ethnic political parties, except for the Albanian ones, follow the informal rule of making a pre-election coalition with one of the mainstream Macedonian parties. On the other hand, the Albanian political block has proved to be the key actor needed for the formation of a government.

Nevertheless, this fact cannot be subscribed only to the electoral design, without exploring the question of how political actors use formal and informal rules in the political arena in favor of only one minority group. One of the interviewees pointed out: *“this model is not the best for Roma, it is a fact, and it only serves for the Albanian minority. I can say that there was initiative a few years*

*ago to change the system into one electoral unit, which in my opinion would have been better for Roma, but unfortunately, in that time even our Roma MP did not support the initiative.”* (Interview with F.S). The same pattern is noticed on the local level as well. Hence, representatives from the local level also tend to agree that the current electoral system is not in favor of Roma in terms of national level. Mr. S.I. says:

*There is a potential to have at least 3-5 Roma MPs if Macedonia is one electoral unit. Based on the number of eligible Roma to vote, with such design, we can reach our potential fully and have 3-5 Roma in the parliament. Still, it is good that with the current one, at least we have the opportunity for coalitions because, without a coalition with the mainstream parties, small parties have no chances for entrance in the parliament* (Interview with S.I).

Nevertheless, the discussion of appropriate electoral design in Macedonian context has always been involving considerations preferred by the mainstream parties to the detriment of the small parties (Pajirc, 2012). This is in line with the assumption posed by feminist-institutionalists scholars that the dynamics of the institutional arrangements are used by political actors in their attempts to keep the same power-relations order in the society in order to ensure their positions as key actors. The literature on electoral systems shows that changes in the electoral system usually take place aiming to solve an ethnic conflict, party fragmentation or other aspects of the political system (Reynolds, 2006; Lijphart, 2012, Wolfgang, 2014).

### *3.1.2. The decentralization reforms and local politics*

Besides the electoral system, another important institutional reform that needs to be taken into account when the role of the political institutions is discussed is the decentralization process. Hence, one of the main purposes of the Ohrid Framework Agreement has been to ensure political, cultural and social participation of all ethnic groups in Macedonia (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008). The decentralization reforms have been taken in order to assist such political, cultural and social

participation by enabling some of the ethnic minorities group, concentrated in one area, to have the power of local governance (Lyon, 2015). This reform was introduced through the “Law on the Territorial organization of Local Self-government in the Republic of Macedonia” in 2004 (Friedman, 2009). The law changed the proportion of ethnic Albanians and Macedonians in some municipalities such as Struga and Kicevo, enabling the ethnic Albanians to become a majority and overcome the threshold of 20 % for usage of their language as an official language of the municipality (Friedman, 2009, p.217). Besides the language rights, the two mentioned municipalities in 2012 got their first ethnic Albanians mayors.

In terms of Roma, the law did not change the boundaries of Shuto Orizari- which remained as the only municipality where Roma are the majority. Additionally, the territorial change did not have an influence on the proportion of Roma in other municipalities as well. Thus, looking for the other ethnic groups in Macedonia such as the Turks or the Serbs, we can conclude that the only minority that benefited from the law was the Albanian minority group.

The question of decentralization is also seen in terms of power due to its principle of self-governance and autonomy (Law on Local Self-Governance, 2002). Related to that, it is important to mention Shuto Orizari which has been known in the literature as “The Roma state” (Crowe, 2000) - the only example of a municipality in Macedonia led by a Roma mayor and council where the majority of the members are of Roma origin. The current composition of the municipality’s council has the highest number of Roma councilors in its history as a municipality – 15 out of 19 (Interview with S. I). Taking on that experience, the current president of the council argues “*I work already 8 years in the municipality. For me, the local administration is more important than the central because in the municipality people have to come at least five times per year, while in the offices of certain ministry maybe once per year or even not at all*” (Interview with S.I.). Similar to

Mr. S.I., the current president of the elections' committee argues for the importance of the local representation stating *"If we see, the council member has the same power at the local level as the MP at the national level"* (Interview with Mr. F.S.).

The municipality of Shuto Orizari is a unique case of Roma representation in local bodies. However, there are examples of municipalities where Roma are a minority, with no single Roma counselor or only one member of the council. Therefore, most of the total number of Roma councilors are actually elected from Shuto Orizari. Nevertheless, taking into account the decentralization, then the discussion over the importance of having Roma representative in local bodies seems relevant regarding the size of the minority. For example, one of the Roma councilors considers that *"the council is a body elected by the people, so at the local level it is important Roma to have their representative who will disseminate the information from and to the community"* (Interview with Z.S.). It is obvious that Shuto Orizari cannot be taken into account when the general comparison between all municipalities is made regarding the presence of Roma. However, although it is a unique example of representation, still in terms of power the municipality has its own limitations compared with other bigger municipalities. Therefore, the question is whether the decentralization process and the territorial law on self-governance have only assisted in the descriptive representation of Roma or they also brought substantive changes for the Roma community. The example of Macedonia shows that these reforms did not bring any changes in terms of Roma representation neither in Shuto Orizari, nor in other municipalities where Roma live.

Besides representative from Shuto Orizari, interviews were conducted with representatives from other municipalities where Roma are a minority both in terms of population and presence in the council. Questions related to the real power and influence of a Roma council member inside the council were addressed aiming to capture power relations among the non-Roma and the Roma

members of the council. For E.A, it is not only the descriptive representation important aspect but the mechanisms through which Roma candidates enter in the local bodies. Taking the municipality of Shtip as an example, E.A. highlights the importance of the power relations inside the council among the members of different parties and the ways through which Roma councilors can position themselves. According to him:

*The power of the Roma councilors depends on the composition of the council. For example, in our case, we have a small difference in numbers between the two mainstream Macedonian parties, and our elected councilor, who was an independent candidate, had the key role in very important decisions of the council. It's not the same when the Roma member of the council is part of one of the mainstream parties, in that case, he/she has to support the party position on the particular issue (Interview with E.A.).*

Such calculations and strategies show the hidden aspects of the informal rules posed by the mainstream parties and followed by the small parties, which usually have the role of just one co-partner in a big coalition. This example shows how political actors use the already established rules to maintain the status quo.

Those rules are present both at the local and national level. In the case of Macedonia, although the decentralization reforms have provided certain opportunities for local power and independence of the municipalities, still from actors directly involved in local bodies, we can observe explanations related to the influence of the central government on the local politics. Respondents were referring to this phenomenon as “who leads the game at the national level dictate the politics at the local level.” Such finding is not a surprise considering the literature of party politics and feminist-institutionalism.

### 3.1.3. *Political Parties as key political actors*

Looking at the electoral system of Macedonia and some of the most important institutional reforms which have been undertaken recently provide some insights in terms of how political institutions affect Roma representation. However, the influence of the institutions is not separated from the influence of the political actors who use institutional arrangements in their favor. In the case of Macedonia, the analysis shows that political parties are the key actors that need to be explored as well.

The party system in Macedonia is divided along ethnic lines (Sedo, 2012). The two most influential blocks are the Macedonian and the Albanian parties. As Sedo (2012, p. 171) points out most of the small ethnic parties form a collation with the mainstream Macedonian parties, although some of them do not even receive parliamentary representation and such a description fits for the Roma political parties as well. Over the years the number of Roma political parties has increased while the number of Roma elected as members of the parliament has never exceeded two. For Redzepi (2011, p.8) the participation of six Romani parties in the government coalition is a high challenge given their organizational and cultural capacities. However, Romani political parties are still the key actors in the process of Roma integration, and mostly their participation in the political system is seen as the first step towards effective representation which will lead towards effective changes in the community

In the last parliamentary elections December 2016, out of six Roma political parties that made a coalition with VMRO-DPMNE, only one of them had the party's leader as a candidate on the common list. One of the responders during the interview has shared his opinion on that, stating that *“it was the choice of the Macedonian party [VMRO] to put the person that we put on the list, and the rest of the parties negotiated for other positions in the government or in the institutions,*

*but it was not our joined decision as coalition partners”* (interview with Mr. Sh.S.). This is criticized by Roma representatives on the local level as well, who are not directly included in the negotiation process. As E.A. points out *“if you ask me do we use the power of our votes I would say no because the Roma electorate is the easiest target for manipulation from the Macedonian but also from the Romani political parties. The same people are in politics for years already; this has to be changed”* (Interview with Mr. E.A.). Nevertheless, the negotiation processes do not result only with a number of Roma candidates on the list for the parliamentary or local elections.

Apparently, from the negotiations, Roma parties in exchange for votes, receive promises for employments in state institutions. However, in the case of Macedonia, the employment in public and state administration is regulated with the Ohrid Agreement Framework, following the principle of equal representation of all ethnic groups in Macedonia based on their proportion of the total population (Article 4.2 in Ohrid Agreement Framework). Basically, even without “certain exchanges” in the negotiation process between the Romani and mainstream political parties, the representation of Roma in the administration has to be fulfilled if the Ohrid Agreement Framework is fully respected. Based on the data provided by the Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, Roma are still under-represented in the state administration offices. Hence, the Ombudsman office recommends *“the institutions should take precise measures and activities for mandatory respect and actual implementation of the principle for adequate and equitable representation of the members of all communities”* (Annual Report 2015, p. 92) in order to secure equitable representation of all minorities. Therefore, Roma political parties still face the challenge of lobbying for better representation of Roma not only in the formal bodies such as the Parliament but also on the administrative and local level.

Basically, Roma political parties are weak “actors” in the highly competitive political system led by two powerful ethnic blocks. As a result, the interests of the Roma community are not salient enough compared to the Albanians’ interests. Still, the origin of such weak salience is not produced only by the Roma political parties as actors, but also from the formal and informal rules which exist inside the system.

### 3.2. SLOVAKIA AND THE CASE OF ROMA REPRESENTATION

In terms of political representation of minorities in Slovakia, a clear and general framework which would regulate the relations between the minority and majority it is not identified. Therefore, under conditions of not having a minority law, the political actors involved in the process have the freedom to interpret the rights provided in the Constitution by themselves (Regelmann, 2009). Instead, several single laws and institutional structures define the political participation of minorities at local, regional or national level.

Regarding Roma, in 2003 the Slovakian government has established the Office of the Plenipotentiary Body for Roma Communities, as part of the Ministry of Interior of Slovakia (IRB, 2016). The Plenipotentiary Body is in charge of the National Strategy for Roma Integration up to 2020 (Interview with V.T.) which is a national document created on the base of EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 (European Commission, 2011) fostered by the EU. The aim of the National Strategy for Roma Integration in Slovakia primarily addresses the question of exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. However, besides social, economic and symbolic, the political exclusion is also an important part of the Strategy (National Strategy for Roma Integration Slovakia, 2011). The same as in the case of Macedonia, the political representation of Roma is not included as a special area of focus in the strategy.

In terms of Roma representation in numbers, Tomas Hrustic (2012) analyzes the trends of participation of Roma candidates in local, regional and national elections in 2005 and 2009. Hence, on a regional level, the author identifies the trend of increased number of Roma candidates (39 Roma candidates in 2005 and 80 in 2009). The candidates used three channels for participation- as independent candidates, as part of the Roma parties (Roma Coalition Party-SRK, Roma Initiative in Slovakia-RIS) and as members of mainstream parties. However, none of the candidates received enough votes in order to be selected as representative of the region, although it was noticeable the changed pattern of campaigning. On the parliamentary level, in 2006 the number of Roma candidates as part of mainstream parties, increased from 5 to 12. However, once again, none of the candidates was elected. In contrast, Roma in Macedonia managed to have at least one candidate elected in every election.

Hrustic (2012) argues that the parliamentary elections in 2010 demonstrate that voters behavior and parties strategies are different compared to the elections at the regional level. The only successful outcome happened in 2012 when Peter Pollak was placed at number eight on the list of Ordinary People-Independent Candidates Party (OLaNO”), which once again shows the necessity mainstream parties to place Roma candidate high on their lists in order to have the chance to be elected. In the last 2016 elections, neither Peter Pollak nor any other Roma candidate was elected.

On a local level, the statistical data by the National Democratic Institute shows a constant increase of Roma candidates for local mayors and councilors by every local election. Hence, in 2010 elections a total number of 29 Roma mayors were elected as candidates of the Roma Coalition Party (SRK), many mainstream parties and independent candidates (Hrustic, 2012). Nevertheless, most of the mayors were elected in municipalities where the highest proportion of the inhabitants are Roma. Degro (2015) in his study “Engaging the Roma community in the political party process

in Slovakia” shows results for the 2014 local elections- in which 33 Roma mayors and 390 deputies were elected. Table 1 displays the number of Roma mayors for the period 1998-2014.

Table 2. Number of Roma Mayors and electoral system 1998-2014

Year	1998	2002	2006	2010	2014
<b>Number of Roma Mayors</b>	6	11	19	29	33
<b>Electoral System</b>	M	M	M	M	M

Source (Degro, 2015)

### *3.2.1. Slovakian electoral system and its implications for Roma parliamentary representation*

The data presents that only one Roma managed to enter in the parliament until the last national elections. One of the most relevant point for analysis in terms of such outcome is the electoral design. In 1998 Slovakia, like Macedonia has changed its system from majoritarian- one mandate districts to proportional representation with one electoral unit for 150 seats (Friedman, 2005; Mikus and Gurnak, 2014). While in general, the change to PR has been promoted as in favor of minorities and smaller political parties, actually particular institutional features of the design discourage more Roma candidates to be elected.

One of these features is the threshold of 5 % for single parties, 7 % for two-three party coalitions and 10 % for four party collations” (Mikus and Gurnak, 2014, p.85). The constellation of such electoral system especially influences Roma representation. From a theoretical perspective, one possible solution would be a unification of Roma candidates in one single party. In this way, Roma candidate would mobilize the whole Roma electorate and would have higher chances of overcoming the threshold. The lack of collaboration among Roma political parties has been addressed as one of the key reasons why this strategy is not used (Friedman, 2005).

This suggestion was address as a question in the conducted interviews. The former member of the parliament, Mr. PP considers that there is no need Roma parties to be united in one platform/coalition in order to overcome the high 5 % threshold, or as he puts it out:

*Why do we have to have only one Roma party or why do all Roma candidate should go with one mainstream party? Do Slovakian candidates do the same? No right, we also have different Roma candidates with different ideologies, so I do not see why there is a need for unification. I would rather say, we have to have Roma in all mainstream parties based on their opinions and ideologies (Interview with P.P).*

Basically, as Mr. P.P argues, it is not reasonable to expect neither unification of political ideologies among Roma actors nor unified approach. The design of the electoral system already assists in the presence of a diversity of ideologies for the Slovakian parties. Therefore, it only does not serve the same purpose for Roma.

Hence in the history of Slovakia as an independent country, the only Roma who managed to enter the parliament is Peter Pollak who has run several times and finally was elected in 2012, as part of the proposed list of the OĽaNO party. Mr. Pollak recognizes the challenge that Roma politicians have under the Slovakian electoral system and confirms the raised theoretical issues by Spirova (2003) Reynolds (2006); and Bochsler (2011) that the 5 % threshold as one element of the electoral design disable Roma parties to gain enough number of the votes and ensure seats in the parliament. His experience demonstrates that currently, the only mechanism through which Roma candidate can enter in the parliament is the participation in the mainstream parties. In his interview, Mr. P.P shares his opinion:

*From half million of Roma living in Slovakia, even half of that number to be eligible to vote, it would be necessary all of them to vote for a single list in order to reach the 5%. But it is not realistic to expect 100 % turnout by Roma voters and all of Roma to vote for only one party. Hence, practically it is impossible Roma party to enter in the parliament (Interview with P.P.).*

Given these points, the current design of the electoral system of Slovakia creates more barriers than opportunities for Roma representation. As a result, opposite to Macedonian case where Roma candidates mostly run as part of Roma political parties, Slovakian Roma candidates have to adjust their ideologies and programs in order to fit the agenda of the mainstream parties.

### *3.2.2. Regional and local politics*

Besides the national elections, the Slovakia also has self-territorial units (STU) or regional elections where a candidate can run for deputy of the Council and for president of the STU. The electoral formula is based on the majoritarian rule (Kazaz, 2014). Looking for the institutional perspective, the decision to create regional districts assist in balancing the power relations between majority and minority groups, depending on the territorial dispersion. For Regelman (2009, p.192) the reform has not been successful in managing power-sharing between minority and majority due to the ambiguous behavior of the government- initiating incomplete changes. Moreover, the author argues that Slovak politicians were not willing to real redistribution of power and resources (Regelman, 2009). Hence, although the institutional design may serve as an appropriate tool for the inclusion of minorities in the political sphere, theoretically providing more power and autonomy, the “will” of the directly involved actors is crucial in the process of implementation. It is evident that the existence of informal rules and practices among political actors cannot be separated from the formal institutional design as such when its impact is evaluated.

In terms of Roma representation at the regional level, such electoral design has proved to be discouraging taking into account that only one Roma candidate managed to be elected in 2009 and in 2013 (Degro, 2015). Except for the institutional barriers present in all levels of elections, one of

the informants shared his experience, as a candidate on a regional level, who was not able to mobilize enough voters for the elections. According to him *“at the local level, you try to persuade your neighbors, people that you know, at the regional or national level you try to mobilize different profiles of voters, which is more difficult, taking into account that you are Roma. In addition, at the local level, it is not expensive to do a campaign, while it is not the case with the national politics”* (Interview with V.I.). The example illustrates that Roma candidate faces difficulties in mobilizing non-Roma voters, especially in the context of high levels of discrimination towards Roma community (Roma Inclusion Index, 2015) and the existence of extreme right party mainly using narratives against Roma (Pytlas, 2013).

All the obstacles which inhibit the process of participation of Roma candidates at the national level are also relevant at the regional level. However, as Hristic (2012) points out, the strategies used by mainstream parties are different on the regional and national level. Therefore, Roma candidates/parties have to adapt their strategies to fit both types of elections. For V.T., Roma parties often do not have ambitions for participation in higher levels of governance due to the double efforts which are needed in order to overcome the institutional barriers. Such observation was made by Degro (2015, p.36) as well, who defines these double efforts as a “rule” in the Slovakian politics.

Institutional rules and informal practices by political actors also have influence at the local level. In the case of Slovakia, the first feature of the local organizational system is its fragmentation. Hence, Slovakia is divided into 2 924 municipalities, cities and districts, although some municipalities have around 500-1000 eligible voters. (Mukus and Gurnak, 2014). Such fragmentation of the system assists local authorities to be elected even without participation in political parties. Some of the 33 Roma mayors have been elected on this ground as well.

As mentioned above, one of the recent trends in Roma representation in Slovakia is the increased number of Roma mayors (Hrustic, 2012). In the literature, this trend has been labeled as improvement of the Roma representation and participation in the political system of the country. However, there is almost no evaluation of the real impact that this change has brought, or as one of the interviewees says:

*It's a positive change that we have more local mayors in several villages, but it is not a surprising fact taking into account that in most of these villages 80-90 % of the inhabitants are Roma. It is a normal process, Roma to vote for Roma candidate. However, all these mayors have limited power, none of them participate in important central decision-making processes, and none of them is connected to higher levels of governance (Interview with V.T.).*

Thus, the question is whether small municipality and its leader have a “real power” to “play the game” together with other more powerful actors. The experience of one of the Roma mayors shows a different outcome. Hence, he states during the interview:

*It is very difficult and complicated, there is no direct transfer of the taxes in the municipality from the inhabitants that pay taxes, so the municipality cannot depend on taxes collection, but the city municipality divides the total budget to all 26 municipalities which are part of the city. The allocation of the budget is based on three levels- small, large and specific municipalities. Lunik 9 is in the category of specific. Hence, additional funding is always needed (Interview, M.S.).*

Besides having financial problems, municipalities with Roma mayors are territorially small villages far from the cities where central institutions operate. Basically, mayors' power is limited on a local level, without any possibilities for collaboration or contact with more developed parts of the country. Nevertheless, the increased number of Roma mayors and councilors have contributed to better descriptive representation at the local level, although substantive changes in the Roma community have not been observed, at least not to the satisfactory levels.

### 3.2.3. *Political Parties as key political actors*

Political parties as political actors play an important role in the Slovakian politics. Therefore, any analysis of the role of the political institutions in the process of Roma representation without exploration of the parties' behavior, would be incomplete. Moreover, as Thomson (2017) points out, the resistance of certain formal and informal norms inside institutions is due to the political actors who keep their practice.

The political system of Slovakia is fragmented and polarized (Kimakova, 2016). In terms of ethnic lines, the most influential example is the Hungarian minority with 9.7 % of the total population (Regelmann, 2009 Kimakova, 2016). The fragmented party system is not divided as typical left-right scale (2016), which opens space for the involvement of parties with different ideologies from very extreme right to so-called “one-hit-wonder parties” (Kimakova, 2016, p. 72).

However, even in the context of a very fragmented political system, the presence of parties that represent the Hungarian minority is stable over the years (Fredman, 2005, Regelmann, 2009). Thus, the identified obstacles faced by the Roma political parties apparently do not influence the participation of Most-Hid (the Bridge party) at the national level. Another interesting aspect regarding Most-Hid is the trend of inclusion of Roma candidates as part of their membership. One of the interviewees, Mr. I.V., shared his experience as a member of the Hungarian party:

*I am part of the Most-Hid from 2012, they are the first party which open opportunity for Hungarian-Roma from Slovakia, and until now the collaboration is great. I think only through such mixed parties Roma can participate in national elections (Interview with I.V.).*

The interview with Mr. I.V. reveals another hidden aspect of the dynamics of the political system. Hence, the part of the Roma community that lives close to the Hungarian border has a history of identifying themselves as Hungarian-Slovak Roma. This identity serves as “common

characteristic” with the ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia, for political purposes. As a result, many Roma politicians who have aspirations for political involvement whether at the local or national level, join the Most-Hid party. In contrast, Roma politicians from Macedonia have never attempted to be part of Albanian political parties, besides some common characteristics like the religious identity.

Still, the inclusion of Roma candidates in the Most-Hid party list for elections did not bring the hoped outcomes for the Roma minority. Hence, none of the Roma candidates was placed in a “winning” position in the list in order to ensure victory. For example, in the parliamentary elections in 2010, four Roma candidates were nominated by Most-Hid, but all of them were placed after the 30<sup>th</sup> place. During the interview, Mr. P.P. highlighted that not all mainstream parties are willing to include Roma in their party lists for elections or if they do so, their inclusion is only for mobilization of Roma voters instead of a real “will.”

The question of political will appears in the discussion of woman representation as well. Hence, feminist scholars have shown that besides institutional changes in party regulations or in the electoral system, a necessary condition is political actors to demonstrate a real commitment to the implementation of such reforms (Celis et al., 2008). However, additional challenge rises, even when parties are willing to include Roma candidates as part of their proposed list because the election of those candidates is determinant whether they will be placed on “winning” places on the list. Basically, the informal rule of “putting Roma candidates in lower places in the list” is being practiced by all mainstream parties in Slovakia. This is another barrier that shapes the dynamic of the representation as a process.

In terms of political parties as key political actors, except their approach to Roma candidates and the informal rules that impose on them, from the institutional aspect, another feature also limit the

Roma representation as a process. Taking into account the Slovakian law on political parties and political movements, parties also depends financially on their success in the national elections. Thus, the state finance the parties based on the proportion of gained seats/votes (Article 25 from the law on political parties and political movements 85/2005). With such provisions, the weak financial and institutional background of the Romani political parties can subscribe to the fact that they never managed to enter the parliament and get funds from the state.

More importantly, under the article of requirements that parties need to fulfill in order to participate in elections, the rule states “*a political party or coalition must submit a list of candidates (no more than 150) and pay the deposit (EUR 17 000) by its proxy to the Secretary of the State Commission no later than 90 days before the day of the election*” (Kazaz, 2014, p.10). Hence, the deposit is returnable if the party manages to enter the parliament exceeding the 5 % threshold. Basically, such a rule reinforces the barriers of Roma parties to participate in elections. This is an example of how those who “rule the game” exclude unwilling actors through an indirect mechanism (Kenny, 2007). For Roma political parties, besides the weak institutional and organizational structures, this high deposit is by far the pivotal obstacle for participation in national elections. A minority with 75 % risk of poverty (Roma Inclusion Index, 2015) by any means cannot have a political party able to pay 17 000 Euro deposit. As a result, Roma candidates supported by Roma parties participate mainly at the local level of politics. Taking into account that the political actors from national level have an influence on the politics on a local level, the lack of participation of Roma parties at the national level affect power distribution and power relations (Mackay, 2008).

All things considered, Roma political parties in Slovakia cannot be seen as key political actors even in the case of Roma representation. In fact, mainstream parties by and large are the only channels which need to be targeted in any attempts for improvement of the current stage of

representation of Roma interests. Such position of the Roma parties in the mainstream politics is maintained by the design of the political institutions such as the law on political parties and movement and the existing informal rules in the party system.

## CONCLUSION

The question of minority representation in modern democracies has become one of the dominant priorities. Roma representation as a topic has gained attention by some scholars but mostly practitioners, policy-makers, and activists. While in the existing literature on Roma representation the role of the Roma actors and how they position themselves in the system is examined, a broader understanding of the role of the political institutions and the formal and informal rules posed by the institutions is lacking. Hence, tracing two cases of Roma representation, in Macedonia and Slovakia, the thesis aimed to open space for theoretical discussion on how political institutions through their formal and informal rules shape the dynamics of the process of Roma representation. In addition, in order to answer the question, the role of the political actors who use such rules have been explored as well.

Regarding Macedonia, several patterns can be drawn from the analysis of the most important legal documents in terms of minority representation, from the conducted interviews with national and local representatives and from the analysis of the secondary sources. First, in legal terms, the political rights of Roma have changed with the OFA, although in political terms the Agreement as such did not improve the representation of Roma. Formally, the agreement has opened space for the creation of political institutions with an aim to protect minority rights and equitable representation. However, except for the Albanian community, visible changes are not observed for the rest of the minority groups. This is mainly due to the informal rules used by the Macedonian and Albanian block in party negotiations. Hence, the formation of a political institution is not enough to guarantee that it would benefit equality all targeted sides. Second, political institutions may enforce already established power-relations with accommodation of informal rules posed by more powerful actors. Thus, looking Roma representation as it is in the existing scholarship, would

only show the discussion over descriptive vs. substantive notions of representation. Such limited scope would hide the role of the institutions and their mechanisms not only in changing the status quo in the discussion but also their role in the question why substantive changes are not taking place.

In the case of Slovakia, similar patterns to Macedonia were observed in terms of Roma representation. Hence, although the recent years brought an increase in the number of Roma candidates for local, regional and national elections, successful examples are present only at the local level. The weak participation of Roma at the national level still can be subscribed to the institutional design of the electoral system (Friedman, 2005), although it is not the only institutional barrier. Another relevant point is how informal rules dominate in a context where the general framework for minority rights is missing. Hence, political parties include Roma candidates in their party lists, but only in the lower positions, which inhibits any chance for election. In addition, taking into account that the Law on Parties and Political Movements indirectly discourage the participation of Roma political parties, requiring a high amount of deposit, there are no many available channels for Roma candidates, except being part of the mainstream parties. Furthermore, even in the case of the increasing number of Roma representatives at the local level, the high fragmentation of the territorial units and the limited decentralization process, limit the power that these representatives would have. Basically, the trend of increased number of mayors contributes more to the descriptive understanding of representation but does not overcome it. Substantive changes are lacking in any level of Roma politics.

Finally, looking the two cases in comparative perspective, it is noticeable that if the political representation is measured in numbers, Macedonia has better outcomes in terms of parliamentary representation, while Slovakia slowly becomes an example of an increased local representation of

Roma. However, this is a limited conclusion, which does not reveal whether “numbers” are translated into “power.” The analysis based on the collected data, suggest that political institutions and their formal and informal rules have a role in keeping the power-relations between non-Roma majority and Roma minority in favor of another more salient minority group, while Roma are not seen as agency.

The gained insights from the two cases can contribute to the identification of possible future strategies for overcoming the institutional barriers that Roma candidates/parties face in their attempts to participate in local and national elections. In the case of Slovakia, the first possible mechanism that needs to be taken into consideration is to reduce the threshold for small ethnic based political parties. This would create an opportunity for Roma political parties to enter the parliament and position themselves as actors in the political arena. Another change is required by the law of political parties and political movements regarding the value of the deposit for participation in elections. Finally, as the literature on women representation discusses in details, electoral quotas or quotas on party lists and reserved seats at a national and local level for ethnic minorities are an option as well. In the case of party quotas and reserved seats, the feminist literature suggests that such mechanisms need to be regulated with additional sanctions in order to substitute for the lack of political will by the critical actors who do not respect the requirements of the law (Freidenvall and Krook, 2011). This strategy is also relevant for the Macedonian case, especially if we take into account other small ethnic groups besides Roma, such as the Turkish and Serbian minority. In addition, except changes in the electoral formula, the party system and its formal and informal rules also need to be adjusted in order to assist the participation of candidates from small ethnic groups in mainstream politics. Nevertheless, both countries like the rest of the European countries, first should deal with the issue of gap between the official and unofficial

number of Roma population. If numbers mean power for political representation, than the role of the states is to solve the issue.

Roma political representation and factors that have an impact on is a topic that requires further examination beyond the case of Macedonia and Slovakia. Hence, while exploring the role of the political institutions and political actors through institutionalist analysis is a step beyond the current debate on descriptive vs. substantive notions of representation, still it is also important to highlight the limitations of the study. First, taking into account the limited number of case studies and the number of conducted interviews, it is reasonable to expect different patterns of behavior by the political actors and different ways of influence by the political institutions in some of the European countries. Second, the analysis does not address the connection between political and administrative power which may highlight other important insights. In spite of that, this thesis has shown that a broader theoretical framework is indeed needed when the question of Roma representation is examined. The feminist-institutionalism already provides a solid base on which scholars of Roma studies can build their work in future.

## APPENDIX NO. 1 General topic guide

### QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. Introduction of the purpose of the interview + asking for permission for recording

2. Profile questions

-Could you tell me more about yourself? When did you start to be involved in politics? What is your current position? What are the responsibilities of being mayor/council member/something else?

-Can you tell me more about the election period in the year when you were elected and your campaign? How did you run for the election (independent, as part of a political party, etc.) – what were the reasons behind your decision?

3. Questions for members of the Council

- What are your current activities?

-Can you tell me more about the composition of the council? The numbers of members, from which parties and how many Roma council members.

-How would you describe the communication with other members of the council?

-How would you describe the communication with the mayor?

-How would you describe the communication with the Roma community? Are members of the council recognized in the community?

-most recent activities about Roma undertook by the council?

-Taking from your experience, could you tell me how important it is a Roma to be part of the local/regional council?

-Considering the current situation, how would you evaluate the potential of having Roma majors/council members based on the size of the Roma electorate? Is there a potential for having more? If yes, what are the barriers for not accomplishing that?

- What are the most common mechanisms (channels) for a Roma to enter in the council? Is there a difference if the nomination comes from mainstream or Roma political party? Is there a possibility for independent lists?

- Could you tell me more about the connection between the local and national level of governance?

-What do you think about the current election system in Macedonia/Slovakia? What about the previous systems? What was different? What is your opinion, why has the system changed?

4. Questions if they are Roma mayors

-Could you tell me more about your campaign as a candidate for mayor?

-Could you tell me more about your work as a mayor?

-Could you tell me more about the previous mayors of the municipality? Were all of them Roma? If not, can you tell me what contributed the change to happen?

-Id there any collaboration with other mayors from other municipalities? Is there any collaboration among the Roma mayors? How would you evaluate this collaboration?

- Taking from your experience, could you tell me how important it is a Roma to be a major?

-In your opinion, is there a potential for more Roma to be mayors and council members of local municipalities? From which factors depend on this potential to happen? What about the regional and national level?

-In terms of being a Roma candidate for a local/regional counselor, how would you evaluate the campaigning process? Is it difficult to be elected? If yes, where do you see the main obstacles?

#### 5. - Questions if they are part of Roma political party

-When was the party formed?

-How would you describe the communication with the mainstream parties?

- Could you tell me more how does the process of making collation happen? Which factors contributes to the final decision?

-What are the major barriers that the Roma political parties face?

#### 6. Questions if they are former/current Roma MPs

- Can you tell me more about the period when you were elected as a member of the Parliament?

-Can you tell me more about your campaigning program? Were Roma issues addressed? Which exactly?

-Can you tell me more about your experience as Roma MP in Slovakia/Macedonia? How would you evaluate the collaboration with other non-Roma MPs?

-Can you tell me more about your responsibilities and activities during that period? In which ways did you communicate with your constituency?

- have you encountered any kinds of obstacles during your mandate? Which ones? How did you overcome them?

- Taking from your experience, could you tell me how important it is a Roma to be part of the parliament?

-Considering the current situation, how would you evaluate the potential of having Roma MPs based on the size of the Roma electorate? Is there a potential for having more? If yes, what are the barriers for not accomplishing that?

- What are the most common mechanisms (channels) for a Roma to enter in the parliament? Is there a difference if the nomination comes from mainstream or Roma political party? Is there a possibility for independent lists?

## **APPENDIX NO 2. Profile of people with whom the interviews were conducted**

### **Macedonia 24 April -1 May 2017**

1. Seat Ismail - current president of the council of the municipality of Shuto Orizari and also one of the most active members of the “Union of Roma of Macedonia”-URM Roma party Mr. Ismail is on his second mandate as president of the council. The municipality of Shuro orizari is a unique example because it is the only municipality with the majority of the population being of Roma origin. In addition, Mr. Ismal has experience in working with Roma NGOs before starting his political career.

2. Fari Sali - President of the elections’ commission for the municipality of Shuto Orizari. He is also a former member of two Roma political parties and as such has taken participation in the negotiations for coalitions with the mainstream Macedonian parties. In addition, Mr. Sali provided detailed conversation on the specification of the Macedonian electoral system and the legal framework, due to his formal education as a lawyer.

3. Zuriya Sait - council member in the municipality of Skopje. She is one of the 4 Roma councilors who was elected to the council of the capital. Additionally, as part of the PCER political party, she took participation in the negotiation process for coalitions with the Macedonian parties before the previous two series of elections. Ms. Zuriya is also very active in the promotion of Roma woman rights and has experience in working in the civil sector.

4. Idaver Redzeposki- a member of the Council in the municipality of Kicevo- a town in Macedonia. He is the only Roma member of the council holding his second mandate. Mr. Rezpeoski has been active in the NGO sector for many years and has experience from both formal and informal channels of political participation. Currently is part of DFR Roma political party.

5. Shaban Saliu – current leader of the DFR Roma party and former Roma MP for the period of 2006-2008. He was elected as a candidate from the collation led by the Macedonian VMRO-DPMNE party. After his mandate, Mr. Saliu was selected for the position of director of the Protection and Rescue Directorate. He also has long experience as a lawyer, specifically working on Roma issues.

6. Erol Ademov - current officer for Roma issues in the municipality of Shtip- a town in Macedonia. Additionally, Mr. Ademov is an activist working with several Roma NGOs on projects and initiatives related to the Roma community in Shtip.

### **Slovakia 11-17 May 2017**

1. Peter Pollak – Former member of the Slovakian parliament. Previously, was a candidate at the regional level but did not succeed to be elected. Part of the OlaNO political party. In 2016 elections, he was nominated but did not manage to gain the necessary votes. Besides that, Mr. Pollak has long experience in working in the NGO sector and as part of the Plenipotentiary Body for Roma Communities.

2. Marcel Sana- The current mayor of Lunik 9- a Roma settlement part of Kosice town. His father was more than 10 years mayor of the municipality. He runs as an independent candidate, and he is not part of any political party.
3. Ramon Viola- Current mayor of Paskova for almost 7 years. He is part of the Slovak-Hungarian Roma community. Previously he was part of one Roma party, which is not active anymore. He is the first Roma mayor in the municipality.
4. Istvan Vavrek – He was the first elected Roma mayor also supported from the Hungarian inhabitants. Member of the Most-Hind political party. Currently, is working for the Roma NGO named “PURT.”
5. Vojtech Kokeny – Currently is the vise-director of the “Romani Koalicia- political party. He has long experience as mayor and politician. In 2016 he attempted to form a coalition from 16 Roma mayors in order to collect the deposit for participation in elections.
6. Viktor Teru – is a Roma activist and country facilitator for Roma Education Fund. As a social worker, he has experience in working with Roma communities in Slovakia, but also with Roma mayors and councilors.

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