A Tale of Two Schools:

Roma Parents' Interpretation of Education Segregation

By

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Submitted to:

Central European University

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Sociology and Social Anthropology

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Vienna, Austria

2022

Abstract

This thesis is exploring the interpretations of Roma parents affected by education segregation in a Gramscian hegemony framework through the investigation of how education segregation is embedded in wider social structures reproducing the marginality of Roma children. The paper is seeking to understand the local manifestations of the deficit ideology which is placing the blame on individual families instead of marginality or an underfunded public sector of education. The resulting massive shortage of teachers produces the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student locally, driving the selective outmigration of non-Roma. This thesis is presenting a case study consisting of expert interviews and analysis of strategic documents about the closure of one of the highly segregated schools, and ethnographic fieldwork in the eastern Roma settlement in Akácos. Through these methods, the thesis shows that the hegemonic idea of deficit positionings is constantly resisted in various ways by Roma parents. However, state power manifesting locally, demarcates which forms of resistance are available for subaltern people: ones reproducing their marginality. Nevertheless, less visible, everyday forms of resistance, such as demanding accessibility, high-quality state services, and acknowledgment of marginalization do have counter-hegemonic potential.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisors, Prem Kumar Rajaram and Violetta Zentai. Without their patience, support, immense knowledge, and constructive guidance, I could not have written this thesis. I am incredibly grateful to them for always taking the time to provide thorough feedback on my work and to have lengthy consultations about my ideas. I never felt that I am abandoned with the daunting task of writing a thesis from scratch. I am also grateful for the suggestions of Eszter Neumann and Cecília Kovai, helping me conceptualize my field.

I am incredibly grateful for the time of my informants who made my research possible. Sharing their thoughts and often painful experiences with me was not easy; many thanks to them for trusting me with their stories and opinions. I am also grateful to them for transforming my site in Akácos into a familiar, warm place for me through their encouragement and help.

I would also like to thank the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology for equipping me with the theoretical founding and relevant skills to carry out research. I am especially grateful for my peers, whose invaluable thoughts and participation in discussions made my time at CEU a rich learning experience. I am incredibly grateful for Arjin, Ákos, Dima, Klára, Lilla, and Vita, whose friendship and kindness helped me through the hard times of my studies by giving me a sense of community in Vienna.

Lastly, I am grateful for my parents, who always supported me in my studies and made my time at CEU possible by believing in me, encouraging me to pursue my dreams, and providing emotional and material support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"You know it was all me. They [the majority municipality] screwed me over with the benefits, and this was my revenge. I set the gypsy children upon them."

Ferenc, Roma Self-Government Representative

This quote refers to the primary school desegregation program conducted in Akácos[1], a mid-size town in the Great Hungarian Plain, which resulted in the closure of one of the two highly segregated schools, momentarily disturbing the local schooling status quo. In reality, the Roma self-government representative[2] had very little to do with the primary school desegregation program in Akácos. The segregated school's closure resulted from a strategic litigation process carried out by a human rights NGO that picked severely segregated schools based on the ethnic data submitted by school principals in the Hungarian National Assessment of Basic Competencies[3] survey. The litigation aimed to sue the Hungarian Education Ministry for neglecting to respond to institutional racism and the persistence of educational segregation. The ten-year-long lawsuit resulted in the closure of several highly segregated schools[4], among them, Nárcisz Primary School in Akácos.

[1] This is a pseudonym for my field. All names of persons, schools and streets are pseudanyms in this thesis. More on this matter in the methodology section.

[2] According to the 1993 Act on the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities, "MSGs [Minority Self-Governments] are thus elected bodies, functioning parallel to mainstream institutions, and have certain rights regarding decision-making in the areas of local education, language use in public institutions, media, and the protection of minority culture and traditions; minority self-government representatives have the right to provide input on public policy matters through access to the local councils' committee meetings." (Pap, 2015:39)

[3] The National Assessment of Basic Competencies (NABC) measures the abilities of every student in Hungary in reading and mathematical literacy in grades 6, 8 and 10 in every school. It also involves a short Student Background Questionnaire and a School Questionnaire to map the background characteristics of students and schools. (IAEA website)

[4] Literature calls segregated schools educational institutions where more than 50% of the students are Roma.

How Ferenc frames his agency on the matter of educational inequalities affecting the local Roma community tells a great deal about the way the view of the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student became a commonsensical concept, even a threat, a weapon used to punish the municipality for withholding benefits from local Roma. In this thesis, I am examining the conditions under which the view of the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student can contribute to a local hegemony (often contested) that generates the consent "protected by the armour of coercion" (Gramsci 1971:263) of some Roma and non-Roma to the confinement and civilizing missions targeting Roma children through the politics of "benevolent" segregation. Education segregation literature calls this ideology the deficit view (Smit, 2012; Ercse, 2020; Claveria & Alonso, 2003; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Kende, 2000; Szalai, 2010:18), depicting marginalized children as backward due to their socioeconomic background, culture or political, economic marginalization.

However, it is important to note that a local hegemony generating the consent of Roma parents to enroll their children in a segregated school is often not the case in my field or other localities affected by educational segregation. In the case of educational segregation and Roma parents in my field (a group of people diversified by different class positions, and gender relations), consent is often coerced through various forms of violence (interethnic bullying or selection mechanisms, exclusion), the "war of movement" instead of the "war of position" (Gramsci, 1992:503). However, which forms of resistance this coercion does or does not generate can be best explained through the concept of hegemony, as I will argue later. The strength of a Gramscian analysis is that it can shed light on how an idea such as the view of the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student can become such that perpetuates all forms of thinking about educational inequalities through placing the blame on individual families, cultures, habitus and divert the blame away from educational systems entangled in the reproduction of

class relations; how educational underachievement is embedded in structural forces creating uneven development, marginality, and the surplus population to secure the uninterrupted accumulation of capital.

Apart from the Romani Self-Governance Representative, Ferenc, everyone I talked to in Akácos was unanimously against closing the severely segregated Nárcisz Primary School, which I found somewhat puzzling. Looking at the National Assessment of Basic Competences results, this school's pedagogic added value is so low that in 2017, more than 90 percent of sixth-graders in Nárcisz did not reach even the minimum competence levels in mathematics. Furthermore, according to the School District's Desegregation Action Plan and projections from my expert interviews about the new schooling behavior of affected parents, many of the parents who cannot enroll their children in Nárcisz anymore will go to the other highly segregated school, the church funded Hóvirág Primary School or the rapidly segregating Jácint.

How can this be? How can the need to educate children in segregated schools be posited as the interest of all in Akácos when it reproduces Roma children's marginality? Why do some Roma parents go to Hóvirág instead of the integrated ones? Why do others not? How are the two segregated schools different? What does the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student have to do with all of this? To explore this local hegemonic thought, I wanted to find out how affected Roma parents interpret the persistence of education segregation and arguments for it through the story of the two segregated schools within Akácos, representing two eras of education policy affecting Roma, strongly tied to two competing elite fractions: the antipopulist-westernist and the nationalist-populist bloc (Neumann & Mészáros, 2019).

The structure of this thesis is the following. After situating the research in the existing literature on education and reproduction and presenting my methodology section in the Introduction, I am going to discuss my site, Akácos, through demographic and labor market statistics and

situate it in different geographic scales, the state, and global capitalism and see how these structures conducted from a bird's eye view seem like from the ground in Chapter 2. In the following chapter, I will present the different schools in Akácos and see how my informants evaluated the closure of Nárcisz. In Chapter 4, I am trying to trace the emergence of the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student in the educational context and examine how it affects Roma parents' schooling behavior. Finally, I am going to summarize my findings and conclude my thesis.

1.1 . Situating the Research in Existing Literature on Education and Reproduction

There persists a rich theoretical canon on education and reproduction mainly situated in the neo-Marxist school of thought that seeks to explain how education systems are operating as institutions safeguarding capital-labor relations through allowing class positions to be passed down from generation to generation while maintaining the myth of meritocracy. In this way, schools function as gatekeepers of individual social mobility but are not agents of collective mobility (Willis, 2017), the creation of organic intellectuals who can challenge hegemonic thoughts (Gramsci, 1992:8-12). School as an ideological state apparatus explored by Althusser sheds light on how schools not only reproduce labor relations through giving skills to workers but also through the "reproduction of its subjection to the ruling ideology or of the 'practice' of that ideology." (Althusser, 2006:4).

As conceptualized by Bowles and Gintis, schools mostly have an active role in creating a docile workforce through the hidden curriculum and schools' correspondence to the workplace by accepting hierarchy, motivation by external rewards, and the fragmentation of subjects (1994). Paolo Freire shows that schools also operate as sites of normalizing hierarchies through the "banking concept of education", creating student subjectivities of passive recipients of

information and not active citizens engaging with critical thinking (2018). In a similar vein, Giroux and Penna (1979) problematize the hidden curriculum for fragmenting the collective consciousness of students through hierarchy, competition, and individualism, curtailing any form of collective solidarity and a humanizing education (1979).

A Bourdieuan theory of education and cultural reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) stresses the importance of class habitus and the symbolic power of school certificates issued by states that allocate class positions that inherently favor families in possession of various capital (financial, cultural, social). The debates around Bernstein's work (1981) on the linguistic track show how children with different backgrounds are socialized into speaking in different codes. A code used by a middle-class household is much closer to the abstract and objectifying language of the school, so middle-class children are doing better in education systems. However, he warns his readers not to jump to the conclusion that individual families generate these deficits; it is schools themselves that create a context in which lower-class linguistic codes are not valued. A theoretical shift from reproduction towards resistance theorized by Paul Willis (2017) sheds light on how even resistance can become the tool of cultural reproduction in the case of working-class youth school counter-culture. Focusing on resistance entails conceptualizing schools as relatively autonomous instead of purely superstructural institutions (Giroux, 1983).

These theoretical works are very good at exposing how schools and educational systems are embedded in broader social structures and global capitalism and what resistance they can produce, but they are lacking in other aspects. Firstly, they were produced in times and localities best described as "a relatively good deal struck" between labor and capital. However, decades of neoliberal restructuring, creative destruction, and accumulation by dispossession engendered new forms of class positions to be reproduced or resisted by education, namely, the surplus

population (Rajaram, 2015). Secondly, their focus is on the non-racialized working class, which ignores the processes through which racialization can operate as a tool of cheapening labor (Patel & Moore, 2017) by assigning racialized people the class position of the surplus population. Thus, translating these works into a context of the Hungarian racialized surplus population in the 21st century is a daunting task because, as a semi-peripheric country, the formal labor market has never been universal in Hungary (Czirfusz et al., 2019). For this reason, I find it necessary to situate my research in the relational class analysis of Kristóf Szombati (2018) and Júlia Szalai (2020), theorizing the conflict between the lower-middle-class (or the post-peasantry in rural areas) and the surplus population in a Wacquantian way (2012). More generally, a Polanyian-neo-Gramscian political-economic school of thought can shed light on how Hungary as a state is embedded in global accumulation regimes and what sort of class conflicts and crises of reproduction it can generate locally (Geva, 2021; Scheiring & Szombati, 2020).

Approaches looking into racial othering are also invaluable for tracing the emergence of the deficit view within education, masking structural inequalities. In the contemporary neoliberal paradigm, it entails representations of Roma as either "at risk" (in development discourses) or "risky" (in security discourses), making them visual in specific ways to transform them into governable subjects (Vermeersch & van Baar, 2017), and as such, their political and social citizenship to be contested as people who cannot fit into the neoliberal order (Kóczé & Rövid, 2017). How these historically engrained oppressions materialize within Roma communities can be traced to the socialist regime's assimilationist politics towards Roma that created the fragmentation of identities through stigmatization that forced the privilege of enacting being Roma into the private sphere of kinship (Kovai, 2017). Dunajeva (2014) shows that this

fragmentation through the production of “good Roma” and “bad gypsies” are very much operated by schools, too, as sites of (re)production of ethnic identities.

Approaches of political economy, looking into the relationship between economy and state, often say little about the role of education and do not consider it as a relatively autonomous sphere, so it is vital to see which mechanisms operate educational segregation. According to the Hungarian segregation literature, the persistence of between-school segregation is a multi-causal phenomenon upheld by various mutually constructive mechanisms. Education segregation in this school of thought is conceptualized as a Weberian closure (Weber, 1978) based on ethnicity to exclude racialized groups of people from educational resources with strategies of white flight and examine the kind of public policy that allows for such exclusion strategies of middle-class people. Shifting from global scales towards different geographies of state or micro-regions, their focus is on how segregation operates as a tool of class reproduction by the dispossession of certain households of educational resources (good and qualified teachers are rarely employed by segregated schools) and social capital (often the only way to land a formal job in some regions within Hungary).

Some authors tend to place the focus on structural causes within education, such as the over-supply of educational institutions that allow for the selective commuting of children or the pre-existing housing segregation in rural areas called poverty pockets (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2009) (Radó, 2018) though not sufficiently explaining segregation in cities or towns. Some trace it to the liberty of free school choice, which cannot be exercised by everyone. This permits the endurance of the white-flight effect, which is in the spirit of neoliberal post-socialist transition (Berényi, 2018). Some authors think that its causes lie in the teaching and teacher-training methods applied in Hungary, which emphasizes frontal teaching methods which are best applied in homogenous (in terms of social or ethnic background) classes; therefore, teachers

tend to be in favor of segregation too (Fejes, 2018). Some think that the emergence of Church-funded schools in Hungary helps the process of segregation because they can apply selection to pick and choose between children that can attend. They receive more funding and freedom to construct the curriculum (Ercse, 2018).

There are cases when state funded-schools apply soft selection methods too (mainly in their rhetoric). For instance, a school in one of Budapest's working-class areas with a ski course at its entrance which is meant to signal that children whose families cannot afford skiing are not welcome (Papp 2009), or school-tasters, a site of institutional control during which teachers give feedback on which children fit into the given school culture (Balázs & Kende, 17th February 2021). This is supported by Kertesi and Kézdi's (2010) empirical findings that suggest there is much agency of school principals to construct their school's profile to compete with other schools for students and prevent it from "Gypsyfying" [elcigányosodás] and resulting white flight. This is supported by Zolnay too (2018), looking into the effect of church-funded schools in the Mátészalka micro-region, positing the main problem of segregation is the excessive institutional autonomy schools possess. In this way, schools as institutions are relatively autonomous, they have the potential to shape the profile of the composition of the student body, the kind of pedagogic program they want to apply, and how they relate to the communities they are embedded in (Patakfalvi-Czirják et al., 2018).

1.2. Methodology, Positionality, Limitations

To find out how deficit ideologies are shaping the local hegemonic process in Akácos and its contestations normalizing the confinement of Roma children through education segregation, I decided to conduct qualitative research to shed light on the lived experience of education de/segregation and interpretations of Roma parents, as agents of school choice. I find it very

important to give voice to silenced groups (Spivak, 2003) who are often left out of top-down policymaking (Rostas & Kostka, 2014) and whose interests are often ignored or misinterpreted to legitimize the reproduction of their subordinate position normalizing education segregation through claiming it is the result of self-segregation. Targeting Roma parents in my research posed ethical dilemmas. I wanted to avoid treating this socially constructed identity as a fixed one (essentializing), committing symbolic violence by posing my projections mirroring majoritarian concepts of ethnicity on my informants. I am aware that ethnic/racial identities are historically constructed and forever changing in content and meaning. However, I decided to adopt somewhat majoritarian views about who is Roma, as experiences of racialization are likely to be present in people's lives who are considered to be Roma. Thus, I picked informants based on spatiality: people living in the Roma settlement (as I found out, this location has contested boundaries). With this, I excluded the perspectives of upwardly mobile people who managed to move out of the settlement. As DeCuir and Dixson (2004) urge, I utilized Critical Race Theory and its perseverance in education, especially its tradition of counter-story telling that they posit as the best method for countering deficit positionings (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

To explore how local actors perceived the desegregation program in Akácos, I first had to map the schooling and labor market situation. I analyzed data from statistical sources, the school district's School Desegregation Action Plan, and the municipality's Local Equal Opportunity Program. Furthermore, I conducted semi-structured expert interviews with the principals of the two ghetto schools in Akácos, Nárcisz, and Hóvirág Primary Schools. I tried to reach the principal of the two other state-funded schools (Tulip and Hyacinth) affected by the desegregation program. Still, they did not respond, even though the head of the school district center permitted me to interview them. Based on another expert interview I conducted with the

local Romani self-government representative, Ferenc, their response could signify that they were afraid of being targeted for discrimination practices. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the lead lawyer of the human rights NGO who carried out the litigation process that led to the closure of Nárcisz and a school segregation activist who analyzed the Desegregation Action Plan for Akácos after the lawsuit.

Furthermore, I conducted nine semi-structured interviews with Roma women[5] who had at least one primary-school-aged child. They were between 28 and 52 and had two to six children. I interviewed four mothers whose children were currently enrolled in Hóvirág Primary School, two whose children were all in Nárcisz, two from Jácint, and one from Tulipán. However, it is important to note that since the catchment areas had been redrawn and a school was closed, many of these parents had children in several schools throughout their primary education. The interviews I conducted fell between twenty minutes to three hours based on how busy these women were and how much they felt comfortable talking to me about their often painful experiences. Of course, I made several spontaneous interviews too, especially with family members of my interviewees, but also with people on the streets.

When I entered my field, I thought I had found my gatekeeper, the Romani self-governance representative, who could help me start rolling my snowball sampling. Still, I soon realized that he was reluctant to help me after our interview. Maybe I failed to make a good impression on him, and maybe he did not see the point of helping me with my thesis, as there was nothing in it for him. Therefore, I decided to walk around the Roma settlement and start talking to people on the street. This proved to be an uncertain recruitment strategy since the first time I went to

[5] When I asked people about who would be willing to talk to me about primary schools, they always directed me towards mothers.

Akácos at the beginning of March 2022, the weather was horrible, and no one was on the streets to talk to. The positive side of this period was that women who did agree to talk to me invited me inside of their homes where I could make observations about their daily lives, often seeing their children and family lives up close. I also spent more time at my accommodation and a local café where I could chat with local non-Roma people about the schools. Since I conducted non-participant observation, too, I ended up with 36 (small) pages of field notes.

After the last chilly days of winter passed and the air got infused with the smell of spring by mid-March, I could talk to several people in the settlement too who had been outside enjoying the first sunny days after a long winter. After a while, they got used to me being there, asking random questions about their children and their schools. They started to treat me with friendliness, asking about my research, and giving me protective warnings about which houses to avoid and which streets to not walk on after 6 pm. I took it as a sign of familiarity, but my curiosity always took me wandering to those places they warned me off of.

Familiarity or not, only three out of nine women gave me informed consent to record our interview. I can only guess why they refused to permit me to record. Maybe they were afraid of being investigated for their mothering, as some of them mentioned child protective agencies as a threat to their family. Maybe they saw me with Ferenc before, the person they associate as a distributor of resources (e.g., baby food, supplements, clothes, charities), and they did not want to end up on the wrong side of him, the only one I talked to who was a strong advocate of the school desegregation program. Maybe they thought of me as an outsider, or even more alienating, someone who considers herself a "good Roma", because of the distinctly middle-class habitus I acquired at university, walking on the streets like I did not belong. Even though I am Roma and I possess racial markers, very rarely did my most marginalized informants believe that we are similar to each other or that I am Roma. They perceived me as a young girl

talking in a metropolitan way, whose presence is legitimate in the town center, in Budapest, and even in the West. In contrast, they felt confined to the margins of this small town, immobile and precarious. “Don’t act like such a lady. Just throw the cigarette butt away. I will sweep it later.” said one of my informants. I did not throw it on the ground, making her uneasy. I knew I was disappointing her, so why did I not do as she asked me? I think it would have meant a great deal to her to see me act this way, someone who looks like her but carries out research. So why did I feel like I could not possibly force myself to litter? Habitus is a hard thing to shake off.

I often perceived the distance they felt towards me, which made me second guess the legitimacy of my fieldwork there, my never-ending questions prying into the most intimate pieces of their lives, and my gaze as an anthropologist. Thus, I feel the weight of responsibility towards my informants, whose stakes in this research are higher than mine. Therefore, I decided on three things. I would have to do my absolute best to understand their experiences in-depth, leave my field as soon as I felt like I got enough data to answer my research questions, and anonymize my findings, as per their wish. All the names of schools, people, or streets are pseudonyms in this research. After leaving my field, I coded my interview transcripts or notes (in case a recording was not available), my field notes as well and analyzed my data.

However, this thesis has several severe limitations and should be regarded as such. Firstly, it fell outside of the scope of this research to examine the perspectives and interpretations of all relevant actors in Akácos, such as the mayor, principals from all the schools, local employers, and actors in the secondary schools. Or in general, the in-depth viewpoints of the local non-Roma parents, besides chatting in the café, or less marginalized Roma locally. Suppose we conceptualize educational segregation in a relational way. In that case, their perspectives are invaluable (though other works are looking into racialization in the context of education

elucidating majoritarian racial labeling processes (Dunajeva, 2014)). Besides failing to open the black box of the experience of local non-Roma and understand how they conceptualize the either "needy" or "dangerous" Roma student, I also could not gain access to the inner mechanisms of the schools due to the enduring pandemic of Covid-19. Conducting participant observation within the two segregated schools could have shown me a contrast between what people say and do. These additions could be an excellent way to take this thesis further.

It is also important to note that I picked a strategic site where educational segregation was rather severe, usually a marker of racial and class positions colliding locally. It would be irresponsible to try and generalize these findings to all of Hungary, especially in times when due to relative economic prosperity, the mobility channels of labor market participation (Vigvári & Kovai, 2020) and middle-classification through educational mobility (Forray, 2017) have been opened to many Roma. Furthermore, several schools in Hungary are resilient (Patakfalvi-Czirják et al., 2018). Thus, they manage to improve the competence of students coming from underprivileged backgrounds in a multi-ethnic schooling context. Furthermore, Neumann (2017) suggested that many Roma children of more affluent families, or aspiring children, can gain access to non-segregated schools in shrinking towns. By focusing on the more marginalized areas in Akácos, I excluded their experiences within education.

Chapter 2: Accumulation, State Power, Labor, Roma, and Akácos

"Because here, even if you find a job, it pays 56 thousand. This is the Public Works. Children have no future here."

Magda, 32

2.1. Political Economy

How does Magda, a mother of three living just outside of the Roma settlement in a mid-size town in Hungary, come to see her children's future in such a hopeless way? To answer this question, we need to see how decades of uneven development, labor shortage created by reindustrialization, and the growing reproductive burdens of the working class can leave behind marginal spaces and positions in shrinking towns in Hungary. Whereas state socialism created structural positions for Roma in the labor market and, as such, a somewhat limited and inherently unequal social citizenship in a workfare regime (Kovai, 2017), the transition period's privatization and neoliberal restructuring caused a massive deindustrialization process. In the 1980s, the rate of Roma men in formal wage labor was more or less the same as non-Roma men, but two decades later, the employment gap widened dramatically (Kertesi & Kézdi, 2011). According to their analysis, one-third of the employment gap between Roma and non-Roma is explained by educational differences. Still, they expect this rate to be higher since they could not control to quality of education (2011: 586) caused by educational segregation. Scheiring and Szombati theorize this period as the era of neoliberal disembedding (2020), which among other things, created a post-socialist mortality crisis (Scheiring et al., 2021).

After the 2008 crisis, however, a new elite bloc emerged to fill the hegemonic gap left by the left-liberal government in Hungary (Éber, Gagyi, Gerőcs, and Jelinek, 2019). Informed by World System Theory, Éber, Gagyi, Gerőcs, and Jelinek (2019) describe how the global crisis of 2008 demarcated a new cycle of accumulation and a general crisis in the American hegemony of the neoliberal order engendered a new local, semi-peripheric hegemony in Hungary. Its contradictions lie in the fact that it is directed at ensuring the accumulation of national and transnational bourgeoise through disembedding the market through low wages, declining welfare creating reproductive burdens for women, and treating the effect of disembedding at the same time. They identified four processes through which the Orbán regime manages this inherent contradiction of neoliberal production (2019:58): 1. ensuring market stabilization by reindustrialization 2. ensuring the capital accumulation of national oligarchy 3. strengthening the middle class 4. repressing the subaltern classes.

As argued by Geva (2021), Jessop's ordoliberalism concept, the return of the strong state to ensure national protection, has shifted into the notion of ordonationalism in the case of Hungary. Ordonationalism is a regime that shows some level of continuity with neoliberal tendencies, or the Schumpeterian Workfare State (Jessop, 1993) (flexibilization of labor, financialized social reproduction), but at the same time, is post-neoliberal too, since the state is taking an active role in the national accumulation and becomes a "key arbiter in domestic marketization, class reproduction, and capital accumulation" (Geva, 2021) through the emergence of the national state and a charismatic leader.

Similarly, Scheiring and Szombati (2020) describe how pre-2010 politics of neoliberal disembedding led to an authoritarian re-embedding (conceptualized as a neoliberal countermovement) through focusing on the often-neglected side of culture in political economy, namely, illiberal hegemony. They argue that culture is a lived experience of relations

produced by economic structures that create dynamically changing symbolic meanings. A double polarization of the socialist working class after transition along with vertical (class) and horizontal (cultural differences) and neoliberal austerity endangering the reproduction of the lower-middle class engendered mobilizations against the cosmopolitan elites and the "lazy" surplus population. Both are conceptualized in racist ways (Szombati 2018). This entailed the rise of the accumulative state (Scheiring, 2020), which has clear losers, including labor and subaltern classes. Why is there no systemic mobilization against it? Institutional authoritarianism curtails mechanisms of protest through the erosion of checks and balances, limiting free speech and the media, and the re-feudalization of the public sphere. Also, authoritarian populism stresses national unity for society's deserving, productive members (Scheiring and Szombati 2020). This is very apparent in the paradigmatic, ideology-driven social policy that benefits the upper and middle classes and punishes the poor, often visible in racialized discourses (Szikra, 2018a).

This ordonational (Geva 2021) or semi-peripheral (Éber, Gagyi, Gerőcs and Jelinek 2019), perhaps illiberal (Scheiring and Szombati 2020) hegemony thus hides its precise class politics resulting in mass out-migration and structural dependencies (to EU, China or Russia) through employing nationalist sentiments unifying the nation (through excluding minorities) dissolving the lines of class, all the while rewarding the productive middle class through buying their consent through allowing access to consumption (Geva, 2021), flexibilizing labor to the extent of endangered reproduction and repressing the subaltern population through workfare and political clientelism (Szőke, 2015). One of the most pressing contradictions of this hegemony, though, is actively endangering the reproduction of the workforce through low wages and the erosion and systematic underfunding of public healthcare, social benefits, and the educational

system. This contradiction is to be managed through hegemonic processes of incorporation and repression (Geva 2021, Scheiring and Szombati 2020).

Another approach of Szalai (2020) which examines the relationship between the Hungarian middle-class and Roma people, puts the focus on the fact that the embourgeoisement of the middle-class in Hungary has yet failed to take place. For this reason, this so-called lower-middle-class (quite similar to the Kádár-era middle-class) is rather state-dependent. According to Szalai (2010), the transition period's uncertainty, the loss of status, and the threat of poverty on every corner for the lower-middle-class in Hungary created the need to draw the line between the worthy and the unworthy poor to justify a dual welfare regime which favors them. One way limiting access to education for Roma plays its part in this differentiation is that of statuses. Suppose both the lower-middle-class and the extremely poor are state-dependent for their survival, and their labor relations do not define their classness. In that case, the lower-middle-class needs justification for its state-assisted higher living circumstances.

Thus, the creation of the binary of the unworthy poor and good middle-class serves to help fulfill the promise of the transition period of a good life (Crăciun & Lipan, 2020) that can be achieved by anyone who "worked hard" for it and achieved high educational attainments. This translates into what Savu et al. (2020) describes in the context of post-socialist Romania and the emergence of costly extracurricular activities targeting middle-class parents who experience fragile futures. In the Hungarian context, Kovai and Szőke argue (27th January 2021) that creating a free market of schools where parents offer their children's "abilities" to get into good schools creates parental entrepreneurship patterns. The dual welfare regime translates into education by providing more access to quality education for the "worthy" and restricting access to the "unworthy" by constructing a very selective (Fejes & Szűcs 2018) rather privatized (Ercse & Radó, 2019), underfunded (Civil Közoktatási Platform, 2017) education system that

posits different tracks for people with different "abilities" from a rather young age. Abilities in this context of low pedagogic added value due to a massive shortage of teachers get easily interchangeable with middle-class values, habitus, and the ability to partake in shadow education, or education financialized (Geva 2021) for those who can afford it or churchified (Fodor, 2022) for those who cannot but are deemed worthy by local power holders. Szalai's dual welfare regime resonates with Wacquant's (2012) concept of the *Centaur state*, one which is humanizing and liberating for the upper strata of the society but repressive and dehumanizing for the bottom of society can be seen in the case of welfare provisions, which depicts a will for upwards redistribution of public goods. This upwards redistribution is supported by the flat-rate tax system, the CSOK housing subsidy program, the decrease in universal benefits, and an increase in tax reduction (Szikra, 2018b).

Thus, decades of uneven development accompanied by the reorganization of social welfare created surplus places in the Hungarian class structure, to be filled by Roma, as the reserve army of labor to be quickly mobilized in times of labor shortage but easily disposable during periods of recession (Vigvári & Kovai, 2020). These structural processes, however, have spatial aspects too. The drastic deindustrialization and FDI dependent development (Bohle & Greskovits, 2019) following the transition period favored some geographic localities above others, creating an abyss between different regions, developing western Hungary and the capital city with its agglomeration but leaving behind rural areas best characterized by shrinking and emptying due to selective outmigration (Jelinek & Virág, 2020). Shrinking can create feelings of loss operating ethnic othering (Feischmidt, 2020), or the deepening of patron-client relations, reproducing inequality and hierarchies in precarious and shrinking labor markets (Brković, 2022) as well as through political clientelism (Szombati, 2021). Furthermore, it can cause an even tighter control over the local elite and middle-class positions, safeguarding them from

racialized Roma people locally. These sites of control can be council housing or educational institutions, as municipalities otherwise have little control over housing and labor market trends, producing the symbolic divide between "worthy" and "unworthy" (Virág, 2020). Similarly, according to Kovai and Szőke (2021), the growing rate of Roma in shrinking towns due to the outmigration of middle-class non-Roma might positively affect social mobility and the growing political agency of Roma, but also the emergence of new exclusion mechanisms. My focus is on these exclusion mechanisms and how Roma parents interpret them.

2.2. Akácos

Akácos, a mid-size town in Hungary, is located in one of the country's regions that has not reaped the benefits of FDI or the significant reindustrialization period resulting in labor shortage since 2010. Whereas during socialism, the market-town became somewhat industrialized to accommodate a portion of the agricultural workers whose labor was no longer needed, many industry jobs became obsolete. Akácos is experiencing a stable and constant population decline, mainly due to low birth rates, high mortality, and out-migration. According to the Local Equal Opportunity Program (LEOP, 2020), the whole region is suffering from a shortage of capital investment due to low levels of infrastructural development. Thus, agricultural production is significantly higher than the national average in the region. Due to the low rate of capital investment, Akácos is struggling with high levels of unemployment and low wages, signaled by the relatively high rate of participants in Public Works (many participants in the program are Roma, according to the LEOP). However, the number of public workers in Akácos has declined since 2016. According to the LEOP, the reason for this is that after the 2008 financial crisis, many people found jobs in the formal labor market. On a side note, though, the document (LEOP, 2020) mentions that only "uneducated people with bad work ethics" stayed in the Public Works Programme due to the expansion of formal wage labor. This sentence sheds light

on how the individualization of poverty can show up in local discourses and simultaneously how education is embedded in the local relations: demarcating people with good and bad work ethics.

The principal of Hóvirág Primary School, when talking about the situation of local Roma, said about the transition period: "Then [after the full employment period] came a time when Roma people could not get many jobs or had very little wages. Of course, not because of their Roma origins, but because they were uneducated." The principal of Nárcisz, reflecting on today's situation, said, "I assume that if they want to, they can get jobs. I have to add though, that in the case of Roma children, even if they have vocational training, maybe it is much harder to get employed in a company or with an entrepreneur, exactly because of their ethnicity." She later admitted that her students often end up in low-quality vocational training programs. An employer of one of my informants, a local construction business owner, expressed it through education as well. When I asked him why a worker's dormitory is being built there when labor oversupply persists locally, he said, "These are for skilled people. It is only temporarily until the road is being built. Afterwards, it can become a hotel for tourists.", again, showing education's normalizing role in demarcating the boundaries between worthy of being employed locally and unworthy.

However, according to my Roma informants, local job opportunities are safeguarded from Roma people in the eastern settlement through the engines of racial discrimination and not education. A young woman who was a trained nurse and managed to go to one of the elite schools in Akácos struggled to find a job in the local hospital, even though a shortage of medical professionals persists locally and nationally. Based on local experiences, the way education is entangled in the reproduction of social class (the ability to find a stable and well-paying job in Akácos) is somewhat ambiguous then. The persistence of discriminatory practices in the local

labor market in Roma people's experiences is more prevailing than the limited ability to get a good education. Nevertheless, Ferenc referred to the benefits of integration: the social capital needed to land jobs and the ability to escape the stigma of the "gypsy school" and, thus, the resulting presumptions about work ethics and bad behavior. In the eyes of the outsider (LEOP, employer, principals), levels of education become a legitimizing tool to explain away why these specific individuals were left without stable employment and not others.

Akácos has three historical Roma settlements in the margins of town. In this thesis, I am only discussing the two major zones, the eastern and the western ones, located on the opposite sides of town. I only did research in the eastern Roma settlement in Akácos, but my informants and statistics gave some insights into how these two spaces differ. Both settlements are historically constructed spaces. Their origin goes back to the 18th century when Roma people were not allowed to settle in the central parts of town or acquire their land to farm, so their marginal position today is very much embedded in historically inherited oppression. However, there are differences between the two settlements, as one is doing significantly better according to the LEOP document regarding employment, education, and housing.

My informants also perceived these differences. They said that the western one is nicer and safer: "Parents there don't have to worry about their children playing outside in the streets.", said Ida, an 18-year-old soon-to-be mother from the eastern settlement. The principal of Hóvirág expressed this in terms of the children's behavior: "So, how should I put it? The children who have a harder time fitting in and are louder it's maybe more typical of the eastern settlement. We usually work with children from the western settlement, their character is very different.". She also expressed that drug abuse is also more typical in the eastern settlement, even though, the way she sees it, it is present all over the two localities.

However, asking about the western settlement proved a sensitive topic for my informants. As the principal of Hóvirág said, there is a sort of "rivalry" between the two localities. A rivalry with a clear winner in terms of all relevant indicators and perceived well-being. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these differences between the two settlements seem from the perspective of schools, one of them being closed, the other radically reformed.

Chapter 3: Education Segregation Politics in Hungary and Akácos

3.1. Education Segregation in Hungary

The case of Gyöngyöspata – a town with a long history of anti-Gypsyist mobilizations (Szombati, 2018) – had recently brought educational segregation of Romani children to the public discourse again when the Orbán government, despite the court ruling, refused to pay compensation to students who were unconstitutionally segregated in the town's school. (Cseke, 12th May 2020), pointing to the "apparent" injustice of the compensation as "they did not work for this money". In 2013, Zoltán Balog, the former Minister of Human Resources[6], claimed that benevolent segregation of Romani children is the best way to help them catch up (index, 16th April 2013). This rhetoric from leading ruling-party members and the dynamically growing rate of ghetto schools in Hungary (Ercse, 2018:179) demarcate the beginning of the post-2010 era of Hungarian education policies that some authors (Tóth et al., 2018) might call a hybrid politics of neoconservatism and neoliberalism or the neoconservative turn in education policy with étatist and neoliberal elements (Neumann & Mészáros, 2019). According to them, the shift in educational policy is strongly tied to the two competing elite fractions' (the antipopulist-westernist and the nationalist-populist) hegemony-building processes I presented in the previous chapter.

The Hungarian public educational system has undergone substantial changes since its inception in 1777, under the rule of Maria Theresa until today. However, the one thing relatively constant

[6] In the Hungarian administration system, the Minister of Human Resources is responsible for education.

throughout the different education policy eras is the phenomenon of Roma and non-Roma children being educated separately; the former receives a significantly worse education service. The dual monarchy's criminalization of Roma and Roma children's forceful separation from their families into boarding schools, the socialist era's catch-up classes for Roma (Dunajeva, 2014) that rendered them to the low added value labor positions, and the post-2010 era's segregationist education policy all limited Roma people's access to education. Even during the criticized top-down (Ryder et al., 2014) desegregation period of the 2000s, with political discourses, EU support, and policymaking behind integration, many school microregions developed dominant commuting strategies to enforce white flight (Zolnay, 2018). They had a minimal effect on education segregation (Fejes, 2013). The different strategies to keep the local ghetto schools serving their purposes throughout the two eras of segregation policies vary from refusal to close, shifting towards intra-school segregation (Vidra & Feischmidt, 2010), opening a private school for non-Roma children (Kegye, 2018), giving the ghetto school to the churches (Neumann, 2017; Zolnay, 2018), turning the ghetto school into a Roma minority school (Orsós, 2020) to the PM of Hungary rhetorically refusing a court ruling.

The most dominant educational trend of the post-2010 period affecting Roma students was the religious privatization of the education system, part of the churchification process of the welfare state reengineering more generally (Fodor 2022). Even though political discourse focuses on the central state ownership of the previously council-owned schools when it comes to school funding, the Hungarian primary educational system has the second-largest ratio of private schools in Europe, right after the UK (Ercse & Radó, 2019)[7]. The growth of the number of

[7] They excluded Belgium, The Netherlands, Spain and Denmark because these countries have had historically private educational systems, it is not a result of education policy.

private schools in Hungary can be placed between 2010 and 2015 when their ratio almost doubled. By 2016, out of all primary schools in Hungary, 15.8% of them were church-funded, and 17.4% of all students attended a church-funded school (Ercse and Radó 2019). The three biggest congregations in Hungary have a significantly higher FBI[8] in their schools than the average in their regions (Ercse, 2018). This suggests that they can attract more affluent parents, but they also perform selection amongst them to get the better-performing students. Zolnay (2018) looked into the Mátészalka regions' schooling trends he named caste-ification and found that the establishment of religious schools can happen for several reasons: for legitimate religious reasons, to preserve the status of a school, as part of a commuting game between two towns, or to preserve council power in a centralized schooling system. Still, they can tilt the balance in school regions by attracting affluent people, and without their presence, the extent of segregation would be significantly less (Zolnay 2018: 222).

However, church-funded schools are not only targeting affluent parents, but there are also cases when usually smaller denominations take over severely segregated schools, such as the case of Hóvirág Primary school in Akácos. As shown by Kegye's case study (Kegye, 2018), the precedent for this practice could be traced to the 2015 Supreme Court decision in the case of Nyíregyháza resegregation. The decision concerned reopening a previously closed ghetto school under the Greek Catholic church (the process of resegregation), so it could serve its purpose in the city to keep Roma children far from the "good" schools. Previous court decisions condemned this practice because local Roma parents did not choose the school for its religious education but because they were coerced (through bullying and lacking the infrastructure to travel to different schools) into enrolling their children there. However, the Supreme Court

[8] Family Background Index, measured in the Hungarian National Assessement of Basic Competences

overruled the decision, and the school can operate, even though it directly contributes to Roma children's segregation (Kegye 2018).

This approach to segregation operated by the processes of churchification can be directly linked to the infamous interview with Zoltán Balázs, where he embraced the separation of Roma and non-Roma children by labeling it "benevolent" segregation, or segregation with the purpose of catching up or "civilizing" (Virág, 2020:43), as is apparent in my site, Akácos too. In this way, by employing the church sector to maintain the possibility of segregated schools, the state is utilizing its left "benevolent" hand to manage poverty. Another policy approach focusing on education segregation within the state sector entails the institution of school guards starting in September 2020 (Fődi, 25th October 2020). These guards are employed and trained by the police and are placed within 491 primary and secondary (primarily vocational) schools mainly attended by marginalized children to provide safety. In this way, marginalized students are posited as a security threat, to be repressed by the state's right hand.

3.2. Desegregation in Akácos

The mid-size town of Akácos has a severe case of school segregation, which accumulated to a point where one of the town's state-funded schools – which I have called Nárcisz Primary School – was ruled by the Budapest-Capital Regional Court to be closed in ascending order due to its disproportionately high Roma ratio in 2018. The lawsuit that resulted in the school closure was pursued by a human rights NGO specializing in these cases. According to the School District Center of Akácos' Desegregation Action Plan (DAP), the town's primary school-aged Roma ratio is 30 percent compared to the town's estimated overall 20 percent Roma ratio. Compared to the overall 30 percent of Roma students in town, 98 percent of Nárcisz's students were Roma in 2019, pointing toward the severe levels of educational segregation.

Table 1. Introducing the Relevant schools in Akácos

Name of School	Funding	Roma Ratio in 2019 (%)[9]	Number of Students 2022[10] (rounded)	"Objective" Ranking [11]	Distance from the Settlement (km)
Nefelejcs Primary School	church	0*	420	1	2.3
Tulipán Primary School	state	less than 20*	210	2	3.2
Százszorszép Primary School	church	less than 20*	370	3	2
Jácint Primary School	state	between 30 and 50*	220	4	2.1
Hóvirág Primary School	church	more than 95	270	5	2.6
Nárcisz Primary School	state	more than 95	80	6	1

Source: LEOP, DAP, Work Plans, NABC. Made by: Fanni Puskás

Out of the six primary schools that I found relevant for this thesis in Akácos, three are church-funded, and the other three are state-funded (one of them closed). Two out of the three church-funded schools are elite institutions. One of them, Nefelejcs, is infamous for not accepting any Roma as Roma in Akácos have different religious denominations belonging. From my

[9] As ethnic data is rather scarce in the DAP document, data marked with a star is the number of severely diadvantaged (HHH) children, which in Akácos correlates strongly with ethnic background, though the actual number of Roma might be higher.
[10] Based on data from the schools' Work Plan 2021/22
[11] Based on the data of the National Assessement of Basic Competences, 8th grade values of the mean of math and literacy skills, calculated by the author accessed from the FIT reports of 2019. More on how 'objective' measuring systems called standardized testing can drive education segregation can be read in Knoester and Au (2017).

conversations with non-Roma parents, it became apparent that they find it an appealing aspect of Nefelejcs. They think this is one of the reasons why the school can rank as the top school even in regional comparison. According to my Roma informants, Nefelejcs is openly discriminating against them. “My son was declined from Nefelejcs because his name is [traditional Roma surname], but he is not stupid.”. Said one of my informants. The case is different with the other church-funded school, Százszorszép, as Roma people locally share the institution’s religious denomination. However, according to my informants, they only accept exceptionally talented and more affluent Roma students, screening them through their admission procedures.

Starting in the 2020/21 school year, Nárcisz Primary School is not licensed to accept any new students in the first grade, and children are distributed between the other two state-funded schools. According to an official announcement on the website of Jácint and Tulipán, though, the catchment areas of the two schools in 2020/21, surprisingly, are almost the same. As they are the only two state schools locally, their catchment area is the whole of Akácos. The announcement asks parents to give a letter of intent to which schools they prefer to be accepted or rejected by the institution. This gives the schools the ability to construct student composition and parents to choose between the two state schools regardless of where they live. Officially, the students of Nárcisz are to be equally distributed between Jácint and Tulipán. However, the parents of Tulipán, the town’s second-best school located in the middle-class inhabited suburbs, openly contested the redirection of Roma students from Nárcisz in a petition, discouraging many Roma parents. One more affluent Roma parent I talked to shortly who decided to enroll her son there suggested that because of their socioeconomic situation, the petition was not about them, so it deters marginalized Roma mostly.

According to the DAP document, launching parallel classes for the two state-funded institutions, Jácint and Tulipán, are unnecessary. “We ought to count on the fact that parents might move towards the church-run institutions [Hóvirág most likely], thus, we do not plan to launch new parallel classes for the children from Nárcisz’s catchment area.” (DAP, 2019). Contrary to projections in 2019, both institutions launched parallel classes starting from 2020/21, as the number of students enrolling exceeded the number of students that can be taught in one class. Upon analyzing their 2021/22 work plan, the number of disadvantaged children is equally distributed within the parallel classes. However, Jácint has received more disadvantaged children significantly. Jácint is in the process of segregation (their Roma ratio is between 30 and 50 percent) and according to the DAP, in 2019 had a considerable disparity in the underprivileged ratios and standardized test results between its two parallel classes (6th and 8th grade), which suggests that intra-school segregation used to be present. However, whether it is present in the new 1st and 2nd grades remains a mystery as they refused to talk to me.

One of the town’s church-funded schools, Hóvirág, is also a ghetto school with 96 percent of its students being Roma. In contrast, the other two church-funded schools have disproportionately low underprivileged student ratios. However, Hóvirág is considered the town’s “elite Gypsy school”, similar to Kovai and Szőke’s (2021:180) case, as it has a high pedagogic added value in literacy skills compared to the family background of its students. The number of their students has been dynamically growing since the desegregation program, though not as dynamically as Jácint’s.

These figures suggest huge disparities between schools in the Akácos school district and that the desegregation plan is likely not to realize its goals. There are high chances that the most marginalized Roma students who would have attended Nárcisz might end up in the similarly segregated church-run Hóvirág or the ghettoizing state-funded Jácint. Nefelejcs and

Százszorszép can perform selection as church-run institutions. Tulipán's parent community uses soft selection mechanisms to deter at least the most marginalized Roma parents apart from residing the furthest from the settlement. Therefore, the options of enrollment from Nárcisz (attended by the most marginalized, the ones left behind) are either Hóvirág or Jácint. Jácint, in the process of segregation, already has the reputation of being the "next Nárcisz", as non-Roma parents are already enrolling their children elsewhere. If they are not accepted into the local church-run schools, they are even willing to commute to other towns and villages.

According to my interviews with experts and the analysis of the LEOP and the DAP, the closure of Nárcisz was inevitable with or without the strategic litigation procedure. As far as the principal of Nárcisz knows, the municipality and the school district already have plans for the school building. Thus, the interests of the human rights approach of closure collided with the local realities of shrinking and the interests of powerholders. Parallel to the town's declining population, just between 2013 and 2019, the number of students in Nárcisz, the ghetto school, decreased by almost 40 percent due to selective outmigration of even Roma parents more affluent, similarly to Neumann's (2017) Bird Town. This is signaled by the fact that the number of students in 2019 before the desegregation (a little more than a hundred, surprisingly low compared to demographic data of the settlement) attending Nárcisz is the same as the number of school-aged children in the catchment area (LEOP, 2020:51). Thus, anyone who could before 2019 had already changed addresses to get into the better state schools, and children left in the eastern settlement (at least in bureaucratic ways) did not get accepted to any of the church-funded schools, not even Hóvirág. The principal of Hóvirág said that they had about forty students from the eastern settlement by 2022.

3.3. Hóvirág and Nárcisz Through Binaries

Hóvirág and Nárcisz are the schools locally that have Roma ratios higher than 95 percent. Even though segregation is one of the most apparent and talked-about mechanisms limiting access to education for Roma children, integration is only a half solution on the path to emancipation, as the education system has to become more inclusive, too (Kende, 2018). Two policy intervention models demarcate this shift in the policy paradigm, the *liberal egalitarian* promoting equal opportunity, as apparent in the school closure of Nárcisz, and *equality of conditions* striving for systematic restructuring (Baker et al., 2004) apparent in the case of Hóvirág in a micro level. As legal approaches and strategic litigation might have the ability to give equal access to existing welfare provisions through unveiling discrimination as is educational segregation, it had limited means to address more nuanced issues that lie behind the selective commuting of middle-class families as local powerholders have much agency to construct the schooling status quo. In other words, litigation resulting in a desegregation program has limited means to address the shortage of teachers with two elite church-funded schools present locally. However, it successfully created a precedent for other sectors, such as child protective services, an institution infamous for discriminating against marginalized Roma families.

As the lead lawyer of the litigation put it: "We just wanted to hold the government responsible for nonaction. […] the point of the lawsuit was whether the ministry does anything [about segregation]." The litigation was trying to make systemic changes in education. However, as sadly admitted by her, locally, the school closure failed to make a difference due to a lack of local support and sufficient resources. In contrast, the principal of Hóvirág said "… so that we not only teach [Roma students] but in reality give them a fair and equal education based on their needs.", trying to reengineer the welfare state by allocating more resources towards the needy, but involuntarily contributing to segregation.

These two approaches locally are described by Fejes and Szűcs (Fejes & Szűcs Norbert, 2018) as the primary tools of school desegregation programs: *closing* and *opening*. Closing a school and rearranging the catchment areas to distribute Roma children more equally takes up significantly less time and resources than making a ghetto school desirable for middle-class parents. For this reason, closing is the more dominant approach. Nárcisz has been closed due to its high Roma ratio and significantly lower quality of education it provided to its students. In contrast, Hóvirág had been given to the churches around 2010 with the support of the local elites, when public policy made it significantly easier to do so to avoid its closure, possibly unsettling the schooling status quo of segregation in Akácos, but also, to attract more resources towards the school to create a better teaching environment for disadvantaged children. As its principal narrated it, they are aware that the school's existence is contributing to educational segregation locally. Still, they are doing everything in their power to attract non-Roma parents too. They advertise the school in the non-Roma kindergarten, they are trying to strike deals with whole non-Roma parent communities to get them to enroll their children there, they give tours, but they could only attract a minimal number of non-Roma whose children have learning difficulties or have low-class positions. One thing they refused to engage in is the shift toward intra-school segregation.

As Vidra and Feischmidt (2010) identified, the binary of *difference-conscious* and *difference-blind* approaches can shed light on how not addressing ethnicity or marginality explicitly in integrated school settings can produce assimilation where being Roma inherently gets articulated as a deficit. In contrast, difference-conscious schools can challenge ethnic prejudices by naming the disadvantaged group and giving targeted support by not separating them from the majority. Hóvirág, churchified, has undergone significant changes to provide for its students. They are the only school in Akácos that accepts Roma students and has a full teaching

body to provide a high quality of education. According to the parents I interviewed, these teachers are motivated and qualified and go beyond their depths to help underprivileged children. They have innovative pedagogic programs, fully equipped classrooms, and significant material resources to give away to families of their students who might be in need. Parents in Hóvirág do not have to worry about money for school trips or communal costs as they would otherwise have to in other schools.

In contrast, in schools such as Jácint or Tulipán, integrated education works in difference-blind ways. Roma children and parents often feel the need to conform to expectations tailored to the middle-class (without any help or guidance) or leave. However, as Jácint is becoming the "new Nárcisz", the principal of Nárcisz projected that their days of difference-blind operation are numbered as the Roma ratio in the school is dynamically growing, and Jácint is in denial. Having gone through the same process of "Gypsyfying" in the 2000s, she remembered that the leadership of Nárcisz realized very early on that they have to adapt to the challenges posed by the new ethnic ratio "We sure had to adapt with our lives to bring us closer to them [Roma]. And they feel it in the case of our school. We accepted these processes [white flight]." She mentioned that otherwise, Jácint might expect significant levels of conflicts with students and parents who might feel alienated from a too distant institution. In a different reading, though, bringing the school closer to Roma through introducing a Roma minority program in 1998 could have been a direct contributor to the segregation of the school, as she recalled that selective migration processes started in the 2000s, and in 2010 they still had ethnically somewhat heterogeneous classes.

Hóvirág, the church-run ghetto school, also has a Roma minority program where children can positively learn about their own culture in school, promoting the *different but equal* approach toward producing a "good Roma" identity (Dunajeva, 2014). As identities are processes of both

self-identification and external validation too (Nagel, 1994), they make significant efforts to show their students in a positive light in the eye of the non-Roma in Akácos by often bringing their students into central spaces showing how well-behaved they are and their abilities to win competitions. However, equality is limited in the case of Hóvirág, as the school failed to shake off the stigma of the "Gypsy school". No middle-class person in Akácos would enroll their children there, only to avoid the special needs school and even worse stigma than a segregated school. In contrast, Nárcisz, the state-run one, is considered the container of the "bad children" locally in the eyes of the outsider, Roma or non-Roma. Even with efforts to link Roma culture to positive qualities and difference-consciousness, they are bound to the *different and unequal* way of thinking about their students and unwillingly produce the "bad Gypsy" identity (Dunajeva 2014) in a segregated setup.

Hóvirág, a church-funded school, makes significant efforts toward having a good relationship with the parent community, most apparent during the Covid pandemic and resulting lockdowns where parents and teachers had daily communication. This way, "school is not an island" (Patakfalvi-Czirják et al., 2018). It is actively building the community through kindness and immense effort to make parents feel less alienated from the school, a social institution they often associate with the transfusion of majoritarian norms. The school's leadership occasionally has meals together with parents to talk about children, and they maintain regular communication through various channels such as Facebook messenger or telephone. As they told me, parents genuinely liked going to the school to discuss their children (or ever since Covid, in phone or online spaces), not necessarily only when they had problems. As state-funded schools, Jácint or Tulipán have fewer teaching capacities, so they had significantly fewer means to build community. As Irén narrated her sense of agency in Tulipán, "Parents cannot change anything

in the school anyways. The only option is to transfer to somewhere else." These schools often made my informants feel alienated and distrustful.

3.4. Why Were Some Roma Families Against the Closure of Nárcisz Elementary?

As Ferenc told me about how he closed Nárcisz by himself partly to revenge on the municipality but primarily to further the integration of Roma people in Akácos, he pointed out that it caused him some hardship, as the Roma parents whose children attended Nárcisz were against the closure of the school. "So should I say there is the kindergarten in Tölgy street, just across from here. It has 101-102 children, all of them gypsy. Should I take that apart as well? Should I break it up? Because I will. But how much better will it be if the teachers turn the parents against me too?" Referring to the fact that parents in the eastern settlement were not exactly pleased with the closure of Nárcisz, it cost him some supporters to take the school's closure upon himself. He referred to the fact that Roma parents like the segregated school because of kinship, as the children there are amongst their relatives.

When I was walking in the eastern settlement and asking about the closure of Nárcisz, my informants always defiantly corrected me: "It's not closed yet." as if the complete closure of the school represented something feared. As I came to realize it, the school had a much deeper meaning amongst the people in the settlement than I imagined. When I asked about Nárcisz, everyone older than thirty had a lovely story about the good old days when everything was simpler, and all they had to do was go to school in Nárcisz. Before the 2000s, Nárcisz was still an integrated school, as there were no schools around that could perform selection openly. To many in the settlement, Nárcisz represented an era that was before the extreme poverty of the neighborhood, when it was still a decent school, signaled by the presence of non-Roma. An older lady said apologetically, "It wasn't always like this, you know. It used to be a good school.

Many Hungarians also went here.", trying to convince me it was not their fault that Nárcisz had to be closed, but that they were left behind. They also brought up successful people who graduated from Nárcisz to prove to me that it is not a horrible school. Meritocracy exists there, too, to some extent. A mother of three said, "Children nowadays are so bad. They are smoking and talking back to you. In our times, we were good kids, really. Before all of this drugs and everything." Others also had things to add. "What is going to happen with all our pictures on the walls? And what about our memories? I feel like they want to erase us.". "Why do they have to close *our* school? We were happy with it. They should close one of the Hungarian schools.".

Most of my informants thought that the school building would be transformed into an elder-care institution, whereas according to the principal of Nárcisz, the building's fate is not decided yet. She seemed to hope that it would remain an educational institution. Upon reading my fieldnotes, I realized that this gossip directly reflected the fears of emptying, as the more affluent people from the eastern settlement had already moved out into the town and put their children into one of the better schools. The ones left behind linked the closure of Nárcisz to the image of deterioration, decay, and no future, as the processes of emptying, left their mark on their neighborhood. As with the case of Virág (2020:43), public investments have been directed locally towards the more "deserving" in the center of town, as perceived by my informants. In the context of schools, they voiced the feeling of deteriorating Nárcisz, perceiving frustratedly that other schools get significantly more development and resources. The reason for this is the reengineering of welfare through the churchification process (Fodor 2022) of central schools, even Hóvirág. In their perspective, local powerholders had more to do with this than state policies or schools, as they referred to the outside of Nárcisz: crumbling plaster on an old-style building.

Thus, as Nárcisz is getting closed, they could not ignore the dissolution of the eastern settlement any longer, as this is openly directing even that few resources away from the settlement that Nárcisz as a state school could offer. In this way, the school symbolizes the "good old times" before deindustrialization and resulting segregation, but also the vitality of the neighborhood and the fact that resources have been unequally distributed between the neighborhoods in Akácos. With the prosperity signaled by the growing number of students in Hóvirág, the ghetto school of the western settlement, they felt that local powerholders gave up on them in the eastern settlement, and with this, putting the "bad gypsy" label on their whole neighborhood, demarcating the worthy and the unworthy. With Nárcisz operating, immobile people who could not move out could still feel as if they were not left lagging by other Roma who used to share their marginalization. For these reasons, they held onto the fact that Nárcisz is not a bad school and that famous researchers also graduated from there, a view transferred by the institution, as expressed by the principal.

My informants told me that their children and even themselves and their parents used to go to Nárcisz for generations. This helped them create continuity across generations and strengthened their kinship ties because many relatives of their children also went there. For these reasons, in Nárcisz, some parents felt like they did not have to worry about bullying or their children being beaten up by others, as "They are amongst gypsies, they won't hurt one of their own." I met one parent whose children had been bullied in Nárcisz. According to her, her children were "too civilized for the animals", as she called the other children who went to Nárcisz. However, for many of them, Nárcisz was operating as a space of their own, familiar and reasonable compared to the stories about how other schools treat Roma. Furthermore, they did not have to worry about the gaze of the non-Roma or the "good Roma" either, as they often find degradation and humiliation in their eyes. "I hate it how if you have brown skin, they automatically think you

are a bad gypsy. But really, I am not even a gypsy, but everyone treats me as one. Horrible. My children too." Reflecting on the fact that even though she does not identify as a Roma person, everyone treats her as they would treat a Roma because of her skin color and poverty. Adél said: "My children are not that bad. They are just different. They [teachers] don't understand it." "The teachers in Tulipán were so demeaning to us like we are animals [so they went back to Nárcisz]." said my informants.

This feeling of safety from the gaze of the non-Roma was broken by the events of last year when due to the renovation of Jácint, students were placed temporarily into Nárcisz's building. Parents from Nárcisz and Jácint both narrated this time as catastrophic, using the language of war between their children. "They looked down on us." said the daughter of Ágnes, attending Nárcisz at the time. As I listened to their stories about this period, it became apparent that by allowing the inner-town students into their school, it lost its appeal as a space where Roma children could just be as they would be at home, safe from the gaze of the outsider (be it "good Roma" or non-Roma) who might judge them and make them feel inferior. This was supported by a parent whose daughter was in Jácint at the time who narrated the events of last year as a significant setback for her daughter, not even wanting to go to school because of the "bad gypsies".

This fear of an integrated school setting came up many times during my interviews, as parents commented on their children's racial markers. "Well, maybe she would get along with the chameleon [lower class] Hungarians. She has a pretty white face. I don't know. But maybe they would take one good look at her and beat her up." said Ágnes. Most of them thought that their children's success in an integrated school could only be achieved if they could pass as a Hungarian, which sheds light on the fact that an integrated school for them means the threats (or for more affluent people, the prospect) of assimilation, or even worse, a failed attempt of

assimilation as these processes often rely on the reinforcement of others. A failed attempt at assimilation carries in itself the threat of interethnic bullying and the resentment of other Roma for individualistic efforts towards becoming a "good Roma" at the expense of others.

Another thing that kept parents from embracing the thought of desegregation is that the closure of Nárcisz undermined their already severely limited social citizenship rights. The bus services in Akácos are not the best, as buses are not very frequent. Furthermore, a season ticket for a student can impose significant financial burdens on marginalized families, especially if they have more than two children. Whereas Nárcisz is ten minutes away from the settlement by foot, Jácint or Tulipán can only be approached by bicycle or car from the settlement. As many parents in the settlement had no access to cars or enough bicycles, their children's commute to school became a huge problem with the closure of Nárcisz. Furthermore, in the segregated schools, school trips and communal costs for the school mean no financial burden. However, in the other schools, parents are expected to contribute more to each of their children. These material reasons transformed the closure of Nárcisz into a question of money for many and put them in a significantly worse financial situation. In these circumstances, Hóvirág, which offers free and accessible transport for children in the eastern settlement and financial support for the families, seemed like a better option as it openly acknowledged the marginal position and resulting needs of Roma families.

Thus, the inevitable closure of Nárcisz was a process of selective outmigration, leaving behind the most marginalized children, constructed to be the "bad gypsies". Immobile parents who never really had the option to choose another school for their children due to several barriers consisting of material ones (commute, money, selection mechanisms excluding them) and more symbolic ones (threats of assimilation, bullying, and the individualization of poverty) felt that the closure of Nárcisz was another way in which they were made responsible for otherwise

structural processes. Being forced into unknown institutions, they only heard stories of that posed material burdens, and bullying threats made them feel like this decision was made above their heads, similarly to directing developments away from their neighborhood. Being familiar with processes of uneven development and dispossession, they linked the closure of Nárcisz to these tendencies rather than the possibility of integrated education[12].

In this way, it was not only the parents of Nárcisz who found the school's closure a bad idea. Other parents who already managed to shake off the stigma of Nárcisz, and with it, the stigma of "bad gypsies", were also not happy with the fact that the school, as the container of the "dangerous" Roma student got closed, to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

[12] I must add though, that based on statistics and interviews, many Roma in the eastern settlement who could afford to commute already made their choice to attend other institutions.

Chapter 4: The Deficit View and Its Local Contestations

"I don't know, like I said, last time I was talking to my friend and she told me this story about the math teacher [in Százszorszép Primary School] literally calling the whole family stupid in front of the kid. […] He was explaining something in class. The teacher said come, somehow he scratched his head and like that, son, it must be your mother being this stupid. And like that. Or maybe that you learned it from your mother because all of you are stupid at home."

Mária, 28

4.1. Shortage of Teachers, a Deficit of What?

Mária, a mother of two, explains in this quote why she did not even consider enrolling her son into one of the elite schools in the center of town. When I asked most of my informants about their school choice method, they usually highlighted exclusion as the mechanism restricting their access to elite institutions. Two options remained: following the desegregation program into institutions that operate in difference-blind ways with possible intra-school segregation and declining teaching resources or going to Hóvirág, a school with significant resources and support. There were instances when they reflected on how ethnicity and lower-class position (more or less interchangeable in the segregated schools I focused on) become the signifier of ability, or in their case, always a lack of ability and discipline in the context of schools. In this way, Roma can only appear as an educational deficit, as a high ratio of Roma students is the marker of poor-performing schools locally.

However, the only school that breaks this tendency was the church-funded segregated Hóvirág. As it can make itself visible as a significantly better school than its objective measuring system would allow in the eyes of the Roma parents I interviewed. Some of them categorized it as strong in terms of attainments as the other church-funded elite schools. In many conversations about Hóvirág, my informants pointed toward the fact that Hóvirág is a good school because even some non-Roma would choose it for its good quality of teaching and loving atmosphere. They were rather proud of their school because of that. They always referred to a story about a blond-haired boy perfectly integrating into the Roma community in the seventh grade in Hóvirág. In their eyes, this meant that their children were "good" enough for the company of non-Roma, as they would freely choose to go to school with their children. According to the principal, the blond-haired boy signifies how inclusive their community is compared to all the exclusion Roma students must suffer.

Nevertheless, the number of non-Roma in Hóvirág is very low, rather similar to Nárcisz. However, one school's deficit view and its interpretations produced the stigma of the "bad gypsy". In the other, the image of the "good Roma", who is worthy of the company of non-Roma. Even though parents liked Hóvirág for entirely different reasons than the nonsignificant (four percent) presence of non-Roma, the ideology of the deficit view was so apparent in discourses about school rankings that this was one of the ways how they could make sense of the fact that Hóvirág appears to be a good school for their children.

The parents whose children chose the path of Hóvirág after the desegregation program and not Jácint or Tulipán liked Hóvirág because they felt like its teachers could compensate for the lack of resources they might have at home and do it in a safe environment. Parents in the eastern settlement usually had experiences with the state-funded Nárcisz or Tulipán before going to Hóvirág, which gave them the ability to compare the state-funded schools and the church-

funded ones. Adél, whose firstborn child went to Jácint for a half year following the desegregation program, said that teachers were impatient and condescending with her and her son. Even though she tried to communicate with them about her son's progress, they were not helpful. Irén said, "Everyone says it [Tulipán] is a good school, well, I don't think so. The headteacher [osztályfőnök] is very young. She is not so patient.". Whereas in Hóvirág, parents were very satisfied with the work of teachers.

Teachers in the state-funded schools talking down to them and not treating them as partners in educating their children seemed like a shared experience. As the principal of Nárcisz reflected, the shortage of teachers is a pressing issue in the state-funded schools in Akácos which entails a significant amount of overwork "It's not an 8 to 4 job.", also adding that the femininization of the teaching profession entails significant burdens as these are the women who are also performing the lion's share of reproductive work at home. Under these circumstances, the quality of education in these institutions can significantly suffer, producing overwhelmed and frustrated teachers who have no time left for conflict resolution and community building, let alone provide a good quality of teaching.

This became apparent when the Covid pandemic and resulting lockdowns made learning almost impossible for many of my informants' children. As internet connection and a sufficient number of IT equipment were scarce in the eastern settlement, at least for the duration of the first wave of Covid, the role of parents and teachers became even more apparent in the education system. As mothers narrated this period, "Oh, it was horrible. Studying at home, because I cannot help them properly as they need it. Mathematics, she said her brother helped her. Brr… It was criminal, of course, and the homework did not work out either. It is good for the kid to sit in class and hear the teacher explain. My daughter got a grade two [D] from history, and now she has a four [B]. Ever since there is no virus and she can go to school." Said Mária. Anna said: "I

tried to help her [in studying], but I was too stupid to do maths. I can't even write essays, no one in Jácint helped us.".

As I realized it, the notion of "young" teachers in the state schools for my informants meant that their teachers were not performing their jobs as they would expect them to. In this way, they are blaming the underfunded educational system while simultaneously reflecting on their shortage of school-relevant knowledge. In these circumstances of almost no pedagogic added value during lockdowns, they realized that schools are actively engaging in disadvantaging their children. As this became apparent, they vocalized that the needs of their children are not met by the "young" teachers, even with on-site education. In reality, teachers might be young in these schools, but there are not nearly enough of them more pressingly. Expressing this through the language of youth, they were pointing out the shortage of experience, empathy, and relevant skills to deal with marginalized children, able to equip them with the school-relevant knowledge their families might not provide.

4.2. The Emergence of the Either "Dangerous" or "Needy" Roma Student in Akácos

Parallel to state policies about benevolent segregation with the purpose of "catching up" in church-run schools and the institution of school guards in state-run ones, the shortage of teachers is producing two significant problems within education in the eyes of my informants locally. Firstly, as they reflected, a "young" teacher cannot discipline the students well and cannot supervise them all the time. For these reasons, children pose a threat to the safety of each other. As Etel recalled, her most pressing grievance with Nárcisz right before transferring to Hóvirág was to do with other children physically hurting her daughter when they were playing outside unsupervised. Her daughter needed medical attention due to an eye injury, and

teachers at Nárcisz only let her know hours after the accident. According to her, they were afraid that she might yell at them, which she found outrageous, as she never yells.

Another parent, Irén, expressed that other Roma children choked her son during a break at school, unsupervised in Tulipán. Teachers failed to mention this incident to her too, which led her to conclude that they, similarly to Etel, might expect her to lose her temper and yell at them. Ágnes referred to one conflict with Nárcisz that had to do with a nasty gossip about her daughter buying drugs in the eastern settlement and as a result, being ostracized and bullied by other children. According to her, she lost her temper in the school as her daughter was on the verge of being classified as a "bad gypsy" by her peers and the teachers, and she felt hopeless. After the accident, her daughter cried for days, and she stopped leaving their home. Ágnes did not believe for a second that her daughter was doing drugs, but she was aware of the presence of drugs in the school, a thing that teachers should do more about, in her and others' opinion. Other parents pointed out that even though teachers say so, their children are not bad. They are just misunderstood and looked down upon by them.

Unable to openly direct their grievances towards the underfunded educational system producing the shortage of teachers to supervise children, however, the same parents who were critical towards schools and their "young" teachers also sometimes reflected on other children out of frustration. As parents in Nárcisz rarely had the liberty of free school choice, and parents from Jácint or Tulipán felt it was pointless to argue with teachers, my informants seemed to believe that the reason why their children are being hurt physically or by the stigma of the "bad gypsy", is because of the "bad" Roma children, who picked this behavior up directly in their homes. These views, responsibilizing individuals at the same time as responsibilizing structures, could be interpreted as making sense of the lack of their agency towards deficit positionings within schools. Primarily since in the context of Akácos, children from Nárcisz are constructed to be

a security issue. Parents from other schools referred to the fact that "Ambulance and police, every day" are to be found parking in front of Nárcisz, often referred to as a "zoo". In their views, as these children are transferring to other schools, they will pose a security issue, agreeing with the containment of poverty through coercive means in Nárcisz.

Secondly, "young" teachers signified their inability to make progress in the curriculum, especially in the case of Nárcisz. As I showed above, my informants realized how much schools depend on knowledge and support brought from home in a context when educational resources are a scarcity. They knew that their children might have different needs due to marginalization, such as extra time spent on bits of the curriculum, more explaining, and of course, material resources too. In the state-funded Nárcisz's case of "young" teachers, these needs were met by lowering the educational expectations, giving them good grades, and being unable to address absenteeism (DAP, 2019:17). As Bella reflected, transferring her children from a different town's state-funded segregated school (similar to Nárcisz), teachers in Tulipán were demeaning toward her son. They did not believe that he had good grades in his previous school because of his abilities. They assumed that it was because they were too kind to him, as he was very much behind compared to his classmates. In Bella's opinion, the teachers did not make enough effort to help him in his studies. Others reflected on how behind children in Nárcisz were in the curriculum compared to other schools.

Addressing these different needs, the church-funded Hóvirág put significant efforts into developing their students through unique non-frontal teaching methods and a full teaching body. Constructing a school where difference-conscious education is available for people in need, however, in a segregated set-up can contribute to the representation of Roma children as "needy". By doing it in the context of Roma minority education, they contribute to the racialization of poverty. By defining the whole school's mission to direct resources towards the

disadvantaged, they are actively curtailing the possibility of people who are not identifying themselves as needy or Roma ever enrolling their children there. In this way, even though they openly acknowledge the persistence of systemic oppression and marginalization, as a church with limited material and political power locally to change the schooling status quo, their development target can only be Roma children and families, not the intertwined processes and relations of marginalization. In this way, they are inherently reinforcing the deficit positioning of Roma children as needy targets of civilizing missions. Thus, even though Hóvirág is addressing recognition and redistribution simultaneously, it is still advancing the avisuality of Roma (Vermeersch & van Baar, 2017). Consequently, the institution contributes to governing poverty by keeping these "needy" children away from majoritarian institutions.

Therefore, the two schools are actively engaging in producing the either "dangerous" or the "needy" Roma student. Or, as interpreted by my informants, the "good gypsy" and the "bad gypsy". However, these two notions, rather different in contexts and meanings, are directing the focus on these individual children and their families in securitization and development discourses apparent in state policies. Operating as segregated, openly Roma institutions, these schools are bound to reproduce the racialization of poverty by addressing the different needs these students might encounter due to marginalization. As non-Roma people rarely see local Roma in heterogeneous ways, however (this grievance was expressed many times by my informants), the representation of Roma children as either "dangerous" or "needy" can often coalesce together, for instance, in cases of labor market discrimination and school exclusion mechanisms.

4.3. Resistance, Claims of Social Citizenship, Hegemony

There is not one unified definition of the state for Gramsci (Carnoy, 1984). However, shifting the focus towards superstructural forces that emphasize the state's role, his theory sheds light

on how the interests of the ruling classes can become posited as the interests of everyone, even subaltern groups. Power is described in two ways by Gramsci. Consent ('the collective man') is produced within civil society: "The State does have and request consent, but it also 'educates' this consent, by means of the political and syndical associations; these, however, are private organisms, left to the private initiative of the ruling class." (Gramsci 1992:527). Discipline on those who do not consent is produced within the political society through coercion. However, as argued by Carnoy (1984:73), viewing the state as both political and civil society, the state becomes a synthesis of consent and coercion rather than the juxtaposition of these two, as these are often simultaneously present. Civil society, is becoming more and more critical in modern states, especially in creating consensuses or challenging existing hegemonies (counter-hegemony). His quote represents this: "The same thing happens in the art of politics as happens in military art: war of movement increasingly becomes war of position." (Gramsci 1992:503), apparent in the shift towards "benevolent", instead of coercive segregation.

One of my informants said, "We cannot do anything about it [hostile environment in a school]. We go in, we have a big row, but everything starts from the beginning the next morning. All we can do is change the schools. If we don't like it, we can go to another one. There is nothing else to do.". These two forms of agency from the parents' side seemed to be more or less accurate ways to resist deficit positionings. Parents I talked to always had the best interest of their children in mind when they chose between these two forms of agency.

Contrary to the typical stereotypes of Roma parents not valuing education, all my informants gave lots of thought to their children's education and well-being, but they were aware that in the context of schools that universalize middle-class values, operating with a shortage of teachers, following the objective ranking of the schools is not in their best interests (also, not accessible) from a marginalized position. In other words, they were very much aware of which

schools are the best performing in town: the ones their children are not allowed to attend due to selection mechanisms, material, and educational barriers. Under these circumstances, they diverged from schools' "objective" ranking that equates performance with the Roma ratio and constructed a different set of evaluation criteria when choosing schools.

The war of movement is more apparent in the case of the state-run Nárcisz, whose students are constructed to be ill-behaved and dangerous. In this institution, consent to education segregation has not been won (signaled by selective outmigration of those who could). It has been coerced by employing underdeveloped infrastructure and allowing for selection mechanisms locally, excluding the most marginalized from other schools. What forms of resistance this notion is creating can shed light on local hegemonic processes. In the case of a school closure they perceived as dispossession of already limited resources directed at the eastern settlement, their claims were having the closest school operating. The way Nárcisz could materialize as a safe space for some of the most marginalized Roma parents, away from the threats of bullying or having to internalize the middle-class norms about school performance, shows that deficit positionings are the ruling ideas locally. However, Nárcisz giving up on middle-class school performance expectations due to underfunding reproduces their marginality, the "dangerous" Roma student.

A shift towards the war of position in the case of the church-run Hóvirág, though, can be seen as parents enrolling their children there have other options too. As Hóvirág breaks the positionings of Roma children as dangerous and ill-behaved and shifts the discourses on them towards being marginalized and needy, it allows parents to enact their grievances towards the education system: the fact that it is universalizing middle-class norms all the while ignoring marginalization because of being systematically underfunded. Turning towards a difference-conscious and resource-rich institution can, in this way, become a way to counter the hegemony

of individualizing poverty without lowering educational expectations. However, as the institution is operating in a segregated way, this form of resistance, in reality, has limited means to counter the hegemony of deficit positionings.

The either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student, positing Roma students as lacking something, in this way becomes a hegemonic thought that normalizes the segregation of them. As argued by Filc (2021), hegemony is not a top-down process, it is constantly challenged and resisted, and subaltern classes are not passive victims of domination. However, in his view, not all resistance can be conceptualized as counter-hegemonic, as hegemonic processes also demarcate which forms of resistance are considered legitimate and which are not, to be enforced by the political society. In this way, the deficit view of Roma students driving segregation is not something that is accepted uncritically by my informants but constantly resisted. However, the hegemony of the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student as an ideology creating policies allowing education segregation demarcates the modes of resistance these parents can engage in. These forms of resistance, the construction of a different measuring system of schools, reproduce the dominant ideology of the deficit view and result in reinforcing their marginal positions.

Nonetheless, the second and not so visible form of challenging the deficit view was to make teachers and educational institutions responsible for the underperformance of their children in state-run institutions. However, this form of everyday resistance (Scott, 1989) could only materialize in the action of taking up open conflicts with teachers. This action very often did not lead to the desired outcome. As parents did not feel like they were treated as equal partners by institutions (except for Hóvirág, more limitedly in Nárcisz), sometimes these conflicts escalated to yelling and fighting with teachers. As this form of resistance is not acceptable in the context of schools, transferring middle-class values and norms, it reinforced the subordinate

position of Roma parents vis-a-vis institutions they already had little trust in. However, being conscious of these mechanisms, some parents decided to stay away from school on purpose to curtail any presumptions of anger. Still, in this way, they are not able to vocalize their interests and needs. Nonetheless, parents' way of acting and feeling as consumers deserving of high-quality state services such as good teachers, or an accessible school, does have counter-hegemonic potential. In case of a power shift, these everyday forms of resistance might become an open political challenge (Scott, 1989:58) employed within mainstream schools.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this thesis, I presented how the persistence of education segregation is embedded in global, national, and local relations and what are the lived realities of education segregation in Akácos, a mid-size Hungarian town in the process of shrinking. I sought the answers to how affected Roma parents interpret the persistence of education segregation and arguments for it through the story of the two segregated schools within Akácos, representing two eras of education policy. One of them closed in ascending order, and the other has been given to church funding, attracting a significant amount of extra resources. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork and analysis of several strategic documents to look at the local manifestations of deficit positionings of Roma students and how this ideology is driving educational segregation in a Gramscian hegemony framework.

Through exploring the circumstances leading to the closure of Nárcisz, the state-funded segregated school, and its possible effects on integration locally, I found that the desegregation program faced severe limitations. Due to the lack of support of local powerholders and middle-class parents, selection mechanisms locally persisted. Similarly to previous research in the field of education segregation, the number of schools funded by churches free to apply selection mechanisms and soft selection mechanisms in the state-funded elite school accompanied by poor infrastructure and a hostile environment towards Roma in reality only opened up the possibility of integrated education to a few more affluent Roma families able to commute or exceptionally talented, aspirational children. In this thesis, I wanted to look at the perspective of the ones left behind: Roma families in the eastern settlement, immobile. After the closure, they either had the option of a rapidly segregating state-funded school, Jácint, or the church-funded local "elite Gypsy school", Hóvirág, both institutions foreign and new.

Under these circumstances of severe exclusion, instead of finding claims for integrated education, I found various claims of social citizenship not to be mistaken for the practices of self-segregation. Structural forces creating a shortage of teachers and schools universalizing middle-class ideals about students, the production of the either "dangerous" or "needy" Roma student appeared locally, both to be feared for hindering the progress of middle-class students.

However, hegemony, armored with coercion, is not a static condition. It is a process contested and resisted in various ways. A hegemony of the deficit view, individualizing the effects of poverty and invisibilizing how education reproduces class relations has been rarely accepted by my informants. They deferred from the objective ranking of schools that perfectly correlated with their Roma ratios and constructed new evaluation criteria for their children. It entailed schools that acknowledge marginalization and can adapt to the needs of Roma children and their families. In the case of Nárcisz, the container of "dangerous" children, this was to focus on the institution as an accessible space safe from the demeaning gaze of the outsider, accessible, even if it can only happen in an underfunded institution, with the quality of teaching lowered. Hóvirág, on the other hand, the container of the "needy" Roma children, could offer a good quality of teaching and various forms of material resources due to its funding. It became an institution that parents happily sent their children to, knowing they would be safe from deficit positionings and looked after by motivated and plenty of teachers.

However, this way of resisting the deficit ideology is utilizing the forms of agency provided by the state's coercive half: segregated institutions that reproduce marginality by limiting these children's mobility. In other words, the containment and racialization of poverty. In this way, this form of resistance has limited means to contest the deficit view driving the mechanisms behind education segregation. The synthesis of coercive state power and hegemony is curtailing the possibility of demanding integrated schools operating in difference-conscious ways.

Another way parents resist deficit positionings was to utilize everyday forms of resistance. This materialized in taking up open conflicts with teachers in difference-blind or underfunded institutions. Parents genuinely found this form of resistance useless, as it often reinforced their subordinate position vis-à-vis these institutions. Nonetheless, their often quiet claims of social citizenship demanding good quality teaching services, accessible institutions and the acknowledgement of marginalization as deserving citizens do have counter-hegemonic potential, as these claims might resurface under changed political circumstances.

Apart from addressing the limitations that I listed in the introduction section, a way to develop this thesis further could be to conduct a multi-sited ethnography in a town not affected by shrinking due to uneven development, where local ethnic and class positions might not collide. This could shed more light on how local manifestations of structural forces shape the hegemonic processes of deficit positionings.

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