

**„THE WAY THEY LOOK AT YOU. IF YOU ARE SEEN
AS A ROMA, THE ANSWER IS NO.”**

DISCRIMINATION OF TENANTS OF ROMANI ORIGIN IN THE
HUNGARIAN RENTAL HOUSING MARKET

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Abstract

People of Romani origin are discriminated against in the Hungarian rental housing market. This study looks at power relations within it, how tenants of Romani origin are excluded, how and why the discrimination is legitimized. In addition, the thesis introduces how tenants of Romani origin deal with discrimination, how aware they are of their exclusion in the market and what are the specific strategies they use when looking for a place of residence. The research includes focus group discussions with landlords and real estate agents as well as semi-structured interviews with tenants of Romani origin. During the research, the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis and Housing Career of Minorities was applied. The findings show that (1) landlords and agents identify tenants as persons of Romani origin through their stereotypical beliefs and that tenants of Romani origin are aware of how they are seen; (2) while landlords and agents acknowledge the existence of discriminatory practices, they tend to shift the responsibility to other actors and factors; (3) because of their double consciousness, tenants of Romani origin see themselves through the eyes of non-Roma and develop strategies to either face or avoid discrimination, while searching for a place to live.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1. Introduction

“I took a taxi to make sure I got there on time. And the request was that I would meet [the landlord] at the corner of the two streets, and if I was there, I would call him, and he would show me the apartment. And I even called from the taxi, that I'll be there in a few minutes, he said it's okay. I got out. I called him and he said, I'm sorry, but it's rented out already. Actually, I don't think you can rent an apartment in two minutes. Anyway, you have to be prepared for that. Or [...] for example, there were several cases where real estate agents told us that they didn't have any apartments. So, I don't know, how you can run a real estate agency successfully if you don't have any place to rent. There was also a situation where they asked me specifically on the phone, whether I am a Roma or a Transylvanian. And then there are those who specifically say that it is not available for Roma. Obviously, these are not pleasant feelings. But you must be prepared for that when looking for a rented apartment.” (Dénes, male, tenant)

These experiences were reported by one of my research participants. But he was not the only one who faced discrimination as a person of Romani origin¹ when looking for an apartment. During my interviews, all the participants of Romani origin spoke of anxiety and fear when we talked about what it is like for them to look for a home in Hungary today. Most of them had direct experience of discrimination, and for those who had not, it was their close relatives and acquaintances who had run into situations similar to Dénes’.

Discrimination is forbidden both by international decrees and national regulations. According to Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, one should not be discriminated against (*Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2012/C 326/02)* 2012). In addition Act CXXV of 2003 states the ban of discrimination in Hungary (*Act CXXV of*

¹ In the thesis I choose to use the terms “people of Romani origin” and “Roma” based on the self-definition of people of Romani origin, decided on the First World Romani Congress in 1971 (Kenrick 1971). The meaning of the term in Romanes is “people”. While I realize that not all people of Roma and Sinti origin self-identify as Roma, I found these terms less harmful. In some of the quotations, the term “Gypsy” is used. I use this term only as a translation in cases when research participants used the Hungarian term “cigány” to describe people of Romani origin or themselves.

2003. *on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities* 2003). When the topic of discrimination arose in my discussions with non-Roma landlords and real estate agents, participants commonly agreed that discrimination is morally bad. In contrast, the same landlords and agents introduced the exclusion of tenants of Romani origin as a common and acceptable practice. Although the right to housing and an adequate standard of living is a fundamental right (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 1948), it seems like a common experience among tenants of Romani origin in Hungary to face exclusion and unequal treatment because of their ethnic background.

My research takes place in this hostile environment towards people of Romani origin. Nevertheless, facing rejection does not mean that people of Romani origin are passive actors in the rental housing market. Tenants of Romani origin have social and economic capital, knowledge, and agency, they can use to handle discrimination.

I focus on the sphere of the rental housing market because it is a growing and competitive market, which provides home to many people of Romani origin (Balogi and Papadopulosz 2020; Bernát 2014; Csizmady and Kőszeghy 2022). By looking at the discrimination of tenants of Romani origin in the rental housing market, I aim to find out how power dynamics and racialization of tenants of Romani origin work and why is it easy to legitimize discrimination in Hungary. Moreover, I intend to show why tenants of Romani origin choose specific strategies to look for accommodation and how they see their own situation and opportunities in this specific field of housing.

In the research, two theories guide my work. Firstly, the book of Berger and Luckman (1966), the *Social Construction of Reality* provides me with a multilayered perspective that enables me to analyze both the responsibility of the individuals and the institution itself – the rental market. Secondly, Du Bois's (1903) theory of double consciousness helps me understand the perspective and experiences of tenants of Romani origin. By using this framework, on the one hand, I am able

to explain how people of Romani origin react to negative experiences. On the other hand, Du Bois's work allows me to give agency to my informants and to understand how and why they use specific strategies when facing discrimination.

My research focuses on the micro and meso levels of society. By organizing focus group discussions and interviews, I access information from individuals who are influenced by and creators of the unspoken regulations of the market. To gain insight into the views of non-Roma power holders and experts, five focus group discussions were carried out with landlords and real estate agents. Alongside group discussions, I interviewed eight tenants of Romani origin, who shared their experiences about looking for a residence in Budapest. With the help of my interviewees, I gained knowledge about what tenants of Romani origin believe and know about how non-Roma perceive them. Moreover, I was able to learn some of the reactions to discrimination and strategies to cope with it. In the following part, I introduce my motivations and position related to my research.

1.2. Positionality

My interest in the topic of Hungarian Roma groups started when I entered university. Throughout the first year of my Bachelor, I started volunteering at a Non-Governmental Organization – Bagázs Public Beneficiary Association – in Hungary, not far from Budapest. I volunteered and then worked at the NGO for five years altogether. Throughout this period of my life, I learned a lot about the Vlach Roma community I worked with and even more from the people who lived there. When I started my master's program at Central European University, I joined the Advanced Certificate of Romani Studies. This program broadened my horizon. I learned to be critical about my first impressions and my position. While writing my thesis I kept in mind that I see the participants in my research through the lenses of being a white, middle-class Hungarian woman. In this study, I

aim not only to look at the rental market but also provide space to some people of Romani origin to tell their experiences.

As I mentioned above, the study is intended to look at two angles of the rental market: the view of the power holders and the view of the discriminated. The first aspect of the study is part of a larger study led by Professor Luca Váradi. In her research, we use qualitative and quantitative methods to find out if and how people of Romani origin are discriminated in the Hungarian rental market. As the first part of this ongoing study, we conducted focus-group discussions with landlords and real estate agents to see how they think about the market and people of Romani origin within it. As a research assistant, my job was to organize and help throughout the discussions. Since the focus groups were fruitful and yet only the beginning of a larger study, I decided to continue working on the topic and develop it into my research project. In May 2023, our research group submitted a study based on the focus-group discussions to the multidisciplinary journal, *Frontiers in Sociology*².

The second part of the thesis is based on interviews with people of Romani origin. As someone, who does not belong to any Romani group, I found it fundamental to include how people of Romani origin think about the topic and experience the dynamics of the rental market. When analyzing my interviews and highlighting the main arguments, I aim to capture the experiences of my interviewees in a way that is utmost accurate.

² Members of the KeyToHome Project and authors of the article (Váradi et al. 2023) are Luca Váradi, Bori Simonovits, Blanka Szilasi, Anna Kende, Jeremy Braveman, and Gábor Simonovits.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

In the following chapter, I introduce a theoretical framework that fits the how legitimization of discrimination works in the Hungarian rental market. The housing rental market in Hungary is poorly regulated. To rent an apartment, tenants are not required to show any proof of their trustworthiness such as monthly income or letters from the previous landlords. While discrimination of ethnic minorities is present in strictly regulated rental markets as well (Ahmed and Hammarstedt 2008; Auspurg, Schneck, and Hinz 2019; Combes, Decreuse, and Trannoy 2018), the informality of the Hungarian rental market gives the opportunity for landlords to justify their discriminatory behavior. To understand how discrimination on the rental market works, we need to look at how landlords and agents legitimize their decision and how powerful they are on the market. As theoretical background, I use Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory about the social construction of reality and Du Bois's (1903) theory about double consciousness. The work of Berger and Luckman gives me opportunity to connect the relations in the rental housing market with power relations between actors in the market. The theory of double consciousness provides me insights about the perspectives of oppressed ethnic groups, their limitations, and agencies.

2.1. Power and legitimization

The housing rental market is driven by interactions and power dynamics between actors. Tenants try to introduce the best version of themselves and convince landlords and agents that they pass all the requirements asked of them. Landlords hire real estate agents, who look for the perfect candidate for becoming a tenant. Real estate agents – who have the most experience in the field – try to filter out anyone who could be risky in hope of good recommendations and income. Moreover, they try to keep the assumed or openly stated preferences of the landlords in mind, when looking for potential tenants. Tenants, who do not know or do not play by the unwritten rules of

the rental housing market find themselves without accommodation. Power dynamics are wired in the rental housing market and discrimination is often legitimized. To be able to understand how power is embedded in the field of rental market, I introduce the theoretical framework of Berger and Luckman and how they explain the institutionalization and legitimization of power (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Dreher 2016).

In their book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Berger and Luckmann (1966) combine the viewpoint of Weber and Durkheim. The authors differentiate between objective and subjective reality. By following Durkheim's idea of thinking about 'social things as facts', the authors claim that social acts and thoughts have real consequences on people's lives. In other words, society frames reality. It creates opportunities for some and restrictions for others. On the other hand, Berger and Luckman (1966) also take the Weberian approach into account. According to which, everyone in society has their own subjective position and experience which influences their own subjective reality.

However, the authors do not separate the two approaches, they argue that there is a dialectical relationship between objective and subjective reality. Three statements guide us to understand the relationship between the two approaches. Firstly, "society is a human product" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 79). In other words, society is made up of and created by individuals. Everyone influences society, it is a common project to which all of us contribute. Hence, subjective individuals impact the world. Secondly, "society is an objective reality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 79). Institutions, political systems, and states are all abstract, imagined concepts, however, their consequences on people's lives are real. Institutions are external to the individual. They guide but they also regulate individuals without asking their permission to do so. Institutions allow, restrict, include, and exclude some individuals and since they are accepted by the members of society, they have real power to do so. Thirdly, "man is a social product" (Berger and Luckmann

1966, 79). Individuals are born into society and are shaped by it from the moment they are born. They internalize the objective rules of institutions and social facilities by learning and accepting social norms and rules. Thus, society is shaped by individuals; individuals are guided and controlled by institutions; and individuals are shaped by society (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 79). Moreover, power is embedded in the objective reality of society and institutions' ability to influence and control individuals (Dreher 2016, 56).

Dreher (2016, 56) argues that in order to understand how power is created and maintained, we need to take a deeper look at how Berger and Luckmann describe legitimization. Legitimization is necessary, when institutions want to internalize a "secondary order" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 110) of a meaning that has already been widely accepted. The process of legitimization is made up of four levels. The first level includes self-evident information, that does not need to be explained, such as the formation of words (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 112). The second level of legitimization starts when sayings, social norms, and proverbs are created and accepted. Information embedded in these sayings is approved by using them repeatedly and unquestioned (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 112; Dreher 2016, 56). On the third level, an institutional area is legitimized by creating differentiated bodies of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 112; Dreher 2016, 57). Experts create knowledge and decide which knowledge is relevant and which is not. On this level, experts gain power over others, because they are allowed to select specific pieces of information that will be accessible to larger audience. They select and legitimize knowledge. The fourth level is the most relevant when we want to understand the power dynamics embedded in social systems. This level is established on symbolic universes that are "bodies of theoretical tradition that integrate different provinces of meaning and encompass the institutional order in symbolic totality" (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 113). In other words, symbolic universes entail different areas of meaning and the regulation of institutional expertise.

Dreher (2016) examines how power is (re)created in the symbolic universes. Drawing on Berger and Luckmann, he argues that symbolic universes are maintained by those who have the power to operate the conceptual machinery, those who are members of the power holders (Dreher 2016, 57). Dreher combines the argument of Berger and Luckman (Berger and Luckmann 1966) and Marx (1976) when stating that since “the leading class has the means of material production at its disposal” (Dreher 2016, 57), they are in power to control mental production as well. The subjective reality of the power holders, therefore, becomes the objective reality of the members of society through the internalization of the symbolic universe of the leading social group.

As Dreher states, to challenge and alter the ruling symbolic universe, one needs power because new views need to be introduced and legitimized (Dreher 2016, 58). Those in power are the ones who decide on the accepted symbols and have the “possibility to punish and gratify” (Dreher 2016, 58) people based on how they fit into the symbolic universes. Dreher furthermore points out the power that expert has in legitimizing power (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 138–1339; Dreher 2016, 59–61). As I mentioned above, experts maintain power by controlling knowledge production (Dreher 2016, 59). The subjective reality of the leading social group is externalized through the legitimization of a symbolic universe, that is accepted and strengthened by the experts themselves (Dreher 2016, 59). By legitimization, their subjective reality becomes the objective reality to other members of the society, who internalize the symbolic universe through socialization (Berger and Luckmann 1966, 137–338; Dreher 2016, 59).

In this subchapter, I explained how Berger and Luckmann (1996) explain the dynamic relationship between subjective and objective reality. Furthermore, they theorize how society and individuals are connected to each other and influence one another as well. In addition, I explained how Dreher (2016) draws on Berger and Luckmann when he explains power relations in society and the role of experts in the legitimization of symbolic universes. In the following subchapter, I

introduce the second framework of the thesis, which provides me insights on the perspective of people of color.

2.2. Double consciousness

Scholars have been writing about the effects of discrimination and how people cope with it. W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) introduced the term double consciousness to explain the experience of the Black minority in the United States³. He argues that Black people are constantly aware of the prejudice towards them. Therefore, they see themselves through a double lens. Firstly, they see themselves as they are. Secondly, they are also aware of the stereotypes about and prejudice towards them, therefore they see themselves through the prejudiced view as well. Members of ethnic minority groups are most often aware of prejudices towards their group by the time they reach adolescence (Brown 2010b).

Du Bois (1903, 3) argues that Black people see the world as they would wear a veil. There is a boundary between those within and without the veil. It creates barrier between the groups and gives people of color an essentially different view of the world. It also separates the groups in the sense of experiences and therefore communication (Blau and Brown 2001, 221). In other words, the veil symbolizes how the people of color are separated from white people and explains the inability of white people to fully understand the experiences of those within the veil.

³ Many research focuses on the experiences of Black people with discrimination and oppression (Auspurg, Schneck, and Hinz 2019; Du Bois 1903; Lauré al-Samarai and Lennox 2004; Massey and Lundy 2001). The experiences of Roma, the largest minority in Europe (European Commission, Accessed May 31, 2023) are similar to Black people (Lauré al-Samarai and Lennox 2004) since both groups are heterogenous and face prejudice and discrimination in many areas of life. The two cases are not identical and depend on many factors how similar they are. However, starting a dialogue “about commonalities and differences in their history and present-day experiences of racist exclusion” (Lauré al-Samarai and Lennox 2004, 178) is crucial in order to cooperate against oppression.

Another important concept that should be highlighted is the ‘second sight’. Du Bois (1903, 7) identifies two kinds of viewpoints of Black people. The first viewpoint is how people of color see themselves as they are (Cammarota 2015, 233). However, members of stigmatized group are perfectly aware of the prejudice towards them, and they are also aware of when they are discriminated against (Brown 2010b, 220). By seeing themselves from the eyes of the discriminator, people of color gain a second perspective (Cammarota 2015, 233). The second sight is useful and unpleasant at the same time (Du Bois 1903). It is a burden, because one sees the stigma of the ingroup and feels the consequences of stigmatization (Du Bois 1903). In contrast, only members of oppressed groups possess the second sight and therefore it can be seen as an advantage. White people cannot know how it is to be seen as a person of color.

In the case of people of Romani origin, the same can be said. Non-Roma in Hungary know less not just about the feelings and concerns of Roma but also about their everyday life, their world view, and the different groups and subgroups of people of Romani origin (Karsai et al. 1994). Since people of color are aware how they are seen, it empowers them and gives them agency to act upon prejudice forwarded to them (Cammarota 2015, 234). This concept is proved by Brown (2010a, 227), who argues that members of stigmatized groups often have the same or even higher level of self-esteem as members of non-stigmatized groups. Furthermore, people with both national and ethnic identity have complex relation to their self-esteem. Ferrari et al. (2015) found that people with different national and ethnic identity has a high level of self-esteem if they are supported by their close circles to be proud of their ethnic culture (Ferrari et al. 2015). Moreover, strong national identity also increased the level of self-esteem (Ferrari et al. 2015). According to this, people of Romani origin who are culturally aware both of their Roma and Hungarian heritage are more likely to have high self-esteem. In relation to this, Johnson et al. (2021) found that Roma youth have high level of positive self-esteem despite of their experience with exclusion.

In Chapter 2, I introduced the theoretical framework of the thesis. Berger and Luckman's (1966) theory can be applied to all the actors (landlords, agents and tenants of Romani origin). In my research, I apply their theory to the meso and micro level of the rental housing market. The institutional level is represented by the experts – the real estate agents –, while on the individual level we can find the non-Roma landlords and tenants of Romani origin. Non-Roma landlords are the power holders, whose symbolic universe is legitimized by experts. The three statements – society is a human product; society is an objective reality; man is a social product – guides me in my research to find out how power dynamics and relationships within the actors work in the rental housing market.

DuBois's (1903) theory about double consciousness is specifically important when looking at the perspective of tenants of Romani origin. Tenants of Romani origin are under the veil, while non-Roma landlords and real estate agents are without it. In my research, if tenants of Romani origin are aware of the stereotypes and prejudice towards them, it is due to the double consciousness and more specifically the second sight.

In the Chapter 3, I define discrimination and look at the types of and reasons behind it. Moreover, I take a deeper look on discrimination in the rental housing market in previous studies.

Chapter 3: Discrimination in the rental housing market: previous studies on the topic

3.1. What is discrimination?

To understand how discrimination works in the rental housing market, it is necessary to study what it is. Altman (2011, 1) defined discrimination as “acts, practices, or policies that impose a relative disadvantage on persons based on their membership in a salient social group”. In other words, discrimination is being treated as less deserving and denied a service to which one should have access. Moreover, discrimination is always comparative, it includes the relationship between at least two groups that exist under the same legal system (Altman 2011). The relationship between these groups is not indifferent. As I mentioned, discrimination is based on disadvantage, which means that one group is treated better than the other. Discrimination starts not when people are differentiated but when real or perceived members of a group face worse behavior or are denied access to a service open for the members of the other groups. Just like prejudice, it is based on the perceived or real membership of a group that is socially salient (Lippert-Rasmussen 2006, 169).

Altman (2011, 1) argues that discrimination has “double wrong” effects. First, it causes differentiation between members of different groups, which has consequences on society and the individual as well. Secondly, denying access to services such as education, housing, or entering a community place influences the individual’s chances in distinct areas of life (Altman 2011).

International documents and laws differentiate between direct and indirect forms of discrimination. Direct discrimination happens when an individual or an organization explicitly creates and acts on policies that deny access to their services to members of a particular group (Altman 2011). The offender does not necessarily state the undesirability of a group explicitly.

Furthermore, direct discrimination can be unintentional and come from indifference (Altman 2011). Actors also take part in unconscious discrimination (Payne and Cameron 2010).

Indirect discrimination is also motivated by bias or the indifference of the actor. It implies acts, policies, and behaviors that exclude members of a group based on their membership to another group (Altman 2011) – i.e., when some people of color are excluded based on their economic background. In these cases, actors create another standard that is likely to be in line with racial and ethnic boundaries. Through these restrictions of access, actors implicitly discriminate against the members of a certain group (Altman 2011).

The literature distinguishes between individual, organizational, and structural discrimination (Altman 2011). Individual discrimination occurs when a person discriminates against members of certain groups. Organizational discrimination is when collective agents, such as corporations, schools, government offices, and other collectives exclude or provide worse service to members of a specific group (Altman 2011). Both organizational and individual discrimination can be direct and indirect as well. The third type is structural – or institutional – discrimination. One talks about structural discrimination when some main areas of life are regulated by rules and policies that exclude or treat certain groups as inferior. Such fields of life can include family relations, power structures, or property ownership. If these areas are restricted for members of certain groups, we talk about structural discrimination (Pogge 2008; Altman 2011). One important aspect of structural discrimination is that it is shaped and applied both by individuals and organizations (Altman 2011). Since they are regulated on a structural level and can be not only direct but indirect as well they are extremely difficult to change.

3.2. Discrimination in the rental housing market

Studies define three main kinds of discrimination in the rental housing market: statistical, taste-based, and neighbor discrimination. These three ways refer to the reason for discrimination. Statistical discrimination occurs when landlords do not give chances to members of specific groups because they believe in stereotypes about the group and generalize the members (Ahmed and Hammarstedt 2008, 371; Bosch, Carnero, and Farré 2010, 12). For example, if landlords believe that most immigrants receive less income, they will refuse to answer anyone, they believe is an immigrant (Ahmed and Hammarstedt 2008; Bosch, Carnero, and Farré 2010; Baldini and Federici 2011). Statistical discrimination is based on the belief in stereotypes. In these cases, landlords argue that there are only a few members of the outgroup who would pass their requirements, therefore statistically it does not worth the time to give a chance to them (Ahmed and Hammarstedt 2008, 371).

Another core of rental housing discrimination is strong prejudicial views against specific groups – such as ethnic groups, gender, or sexual orientation. Taste-based discrimination is when landlords or real estate agents hold such a stable prejudiced view that they prefer to avoid any kind of contact with the members of the outgroup (Altman 2011, 371; Bosch, Carnero, and Farré 2010, 12).

The third and less commonly used concept is neighbor discrimination. This reasoning occurs when landlords or agents believe that renting an apartment to members of the outgroup will be frowned upon among the neighbors (Combes, Decreuse, and Trannoy 2018, 118). That means that landlords might argue that members of a specific group do not fit into the community of the neighborhood.

However, in real life, these justifications are entangled with each other. Landlords who discriminate according to their taste could also believe that statistically the chances are low to find an outgroup member fitting their and their neighbors' requirements. Agents who argue that they exclude people based on statistics can still hold prejudiced beliefs and discriminate members of certain groups based on their negative views toward the group.

In this chapter, I introduced the existing studies on the field. Firstly, I defined discrimination as denied or being treated as less deserving for a service because of one's real or assumed membership of a group (Altman 2011). I explained how discriminatory acts can be explicit or implicit (Altman 2011). Explicit discrimination occurs when one is excluded because of one's membership in a group. In contrast, implicit discrimination occurs when someone is excluded specifically because of their group membership, but because of another characteristic that coincides with their stigmatized group membership. Furthermore, I differentiated between individual, organizational and structural discrimination (Altman 2011). Individual and organizational discrimination occurs when a person or an institution excludes members of a specific group. In addition, structural discrimination happens when members of a group are excluded in many different but core aspects of their life.

Later, I looked at former research on the rental housing market. I differentiated between three reasons of discrimination. Statistical discrimination (Ahmed and Hammarstedt 2008; Bosch, Carnero, and Farré 2010; Baldini and Federici 2011) happens, when landlords apply stereotypes to members of a specific groups and therefore believe that statistically there is low chance to find a trustworthy tenants from the outgroup. Taste-based discrimination (Altman 2011; Bosch, Carnero, and Farré 2010) occurs when landlords have strong prejudice towards the outgroup and because of their that they do not prefer members of the outgroup as tenants. Lastly, neighbor discrimination

(Combes, Decreuse, and Trannoy 2018) happens when landlords assume that the neighbors around their dwelling would not like members of a specific group.

In my research I focus specifically on the discrimination of people of Romani origin in the rental housing market in Hungary. In order to gain deeper knowledge, we need to understand who people of Romani origin are and how they are seen and treated in Hungary. In the next chapter, I provide some contextual background about people of Romani origin in Hungary. Next to that, I introduce the legal restrictions of discrimination in Hungary and the opportunities of legal remedies. In order to find my research gap, I look at studies about the housing condition of people of Romani origin with specific focus on the housing rental market.

Chapter 4: People of Romani origin in Hungary and in the rental housing market

4.1. People of Romani origin in Hungary

Roma are the most numerous ethnic minority group in Hungary (Lajtai 2020, 556), their ratio in the Hungarian population is estimated to around 5 to 10 percentage (Kende et al. 2021, 392). People of Romani origin are members of several, heterogenous groups. The Roma population in Hungary is made out of three larger groups, the Romungro/Hungarian Roma, the Vlach Roma and the Beyash. Within these three groups there are many subgroups, which differ from each other in many aspects. Therefore, while speaking or writing about *the Roma* one has to be very careful to avoid generalizations. However, the stereotypes towards people of Romani origin are united and strong in Hungarian society (Váradi 2014b, 61). The level of prejudice towards Roma in Hungary is high (Váradi 2014b, 61). Hungarian Roma are homogenized, stigmatized, and discriminated in many aspects.

One and maybe the most influential field, which creates and recreates stereotypical images of people of Romani origin is media representation. In the Hungarian media people of Romani origin are represented as one group and often connected to stereotypical images (Bernáth and Messing 2013; Kócze 2014; Tremlett, Messing, and Kócze 2017) that are usually related to poverty, crime and music (Bernáth and Messing 2013). Kócze (2014) wrote in more detail about the feminization of Roma men and the sexualization of Roma women in the media. Bernáth and Messing (2013) found that in television, people of Romani origin are shown from the back, from distance or in a crowd, so it is more difficult for the viewer to feel empathy towards them.

However, media representation is only one layer of anti-Roma racism in Hungary. People of Romani origin are discriminated in education, employment, health care and housing as well (FRA 2022). According to the Romani survey 2021, 44% of children of Romani origin study in segregated classes or schools (FRA 2022, 40). In the same survey, 26% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination when looking for a job (FRA 2022, 46) and 10% when accessing health care services (FRA 2022, 49).

Another aspect of exclusion is housing. Where we live and how we live determines our opportunities. When it comes to housing, people of Romani origin face numerous disadvantages compared to non-Roma. People of Romani origin are disadvantaged both in location opportunities for residence of living and the quality of living conditions (Bernát 2014; Bernát and Béres 2021; FRA 2016; 2022; Győri 2017; Kőszeghy 2009; HCSO 2021). Firstly, although the number of Roma residents increased in the last years in Budapest and other large cities, around 38-40% of people of Romani origin still live in small villages (Pénzes and Tátrai 2018, 12). There they face many difficulties due to weak infrastructure, less work and educational opportunities (Pénzes and Tátrai 2018; Bernát 2014). Secondly, special exclusion in towns and cities is a relevant problem in Hungary. There are around 1600 *poor/Roma settlements*⁴ in Hungary (Bernát 2014, 261). Settlements occur both in villages and in cities, when one part of the town is separated from the other parts and residents live under more difficult conditions than those living outside of the area (Bernát and Béres 2021; Szoboszlai 2019). Exclusion based on location of the residence – both in the case of small villages and settlements – creates disadvantages for those who live in segregated places.

⁴ In the common language in Hungary *poor settlement* and *Roma settlement* are used interchangeably. On the one hand, it shows the commonality of the housing exclusion of Roma in Hungary. On the other hand, it highlights the stereotype about people of Romani origin being poor.

On top of that, people of Romani origin also live in worse quality dwellings than non-Roma. In Hungary, 37% of people of Romani origin live in housing deprivation, while this number in the general population is 24% (FRA 2022, 52). An even more striking proof of the difference of living conditions between people of Romani origin and non-Roma is the overcrowding of place of residence (Bernát 2014). In 2021, 91% of people of Romani lived in a “household that does not have the minimum number of rooms according to Eurostat’s definition of overcrowding” (FRA 2022, 54). The same data among the whole population was 20% (FRA 2022, 54). In the same vein, Bernát (2014, 61) argues that people of Romani origin live in smaller and more overcrowded apartments than their non-Roma neighbors.

While in Hungary 91,7% of the whole population lives in their own dwellings (Eurostat 2021), only 78% of Romani people own the property they live in (Bernát 2014, 261). This means that people of Romani origin rely highly on social housing and the private rental housing market. However, discrimination against ethnic minorities in the rental housing market is a common practice all over the world (Auspurg, Schneck, and Hinz 2019) and in Hungary as well (Balogi and Papadopoulos 2020). As relevant as the situation of Roma in the rental market is, there are only few research that focus on the chances of people of Romani origin in the rental housing market.

4.2. Equal Treatment – prohibition of discrimination

According to the Act on Equal Treatment and Promotion of Equal Opportunities one should not be treated differently among others based on one’s skin color or ethnic background (*Act CXXV of 2003. on Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities* 2003). In other words, discrimination is forbidden and a criminal act in Hungary. However, only 3% of Roma who were victims of discrimination report their mistreatment to the police (FRA 2022, 30). Furthermore, the same study found that 96% of victims of Romani origin did not file a report because of their ethnic

background, even though 47% of the total respondents were aware of at least one legal body to which they could turn to (FRA 2022).

These statistics reveal how few opportunities there are for discriminated people to file complain and succeed in the legal system in Hungary. In the last decade, many legal bodies which were created to stop discrimination have closed down. The Ombudsman for National and Ethnic Minorities has been abolished in 2012 (“Good Bye” 2011). While earlier there were different ombudsman in Hungary for different cases, today there is only one, the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights. Another legal body, the Equal Treatment Authority (ETA) was also created to catch discrimination in action (Kőszeghy 2009) – and a while after, in 2020, merged into the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (Balogi and Papadopoulosz 2020; “Directorate-General for Equal Treatment” Accessed June 5, 2023.). Since these two institutions stopped working, the opportunities to seek legal justice againsts discriminated declined. Some people ask the help of NGOs such as Human Civil Liberties Union (HCLU). NGOs like HCLU provide free legal advice for those whose rights have been violated (Human Civil Liberties Union, Accessed May 27, 2023). However, the amount of work such NGOs can carry out at once is limited while their legal advisors work pro bono.

4.3. People of Romani origin in the rental housing market

The difficult living condition of people of Romani origin is a well-researched topic in Hungary. As I mentioned above, studies have shown that people of Romani origin live in worse living conditions. Most of the research focuses on segregated areas, settlements, and slums (Bernát 2014; Bernát and Béres 2021; Kőszeghy 2009). Since the percentage of Romani people compared to non-Roma is higher in the rural areas than in cities (Kőszeghy 2009, 38) many studies focus on the countryside. After the change of the socialist regime in 1989, residents of towns without a great

connection to larger cities in Hungary started moved away (Ladányi and Szelényi 2003, 38–39). The regions which were left by those who had the chance to leave, overlap with areas with a high proportion of Romani inhabitants (Pénzes and Tátrai 2018). These areas are lagging behind in economic, educational, employment, infrastructure, health and housing terms (Ladányi and Szelényi 2003).

However, segregated areas exist in cities as well (Hagan and Bedard 2004). Since 1989, real-estate prices have risen, while low-income families – among them many people of Romani origin – face difficulties finding suitable housing for their economic capacity (Hagan and Bedard 2004). After the 1990s, the shape of segregation changed over the years. While in the 1990s more prominent parts of the capital city were considered segregated, by the late 2000s, segregated areas became smaller but ethnically more homogeneous (Kőszeghy 2009, 54).

Conversely, less research has been conducted on the chances people of Romani origin have in the real estate market, specifically in the rental housing market. Discrimination against Black residents has been widely researched in the United States, Sweden, Spain, and other countries (Ahmed and Hammarstedt 2008; Auspurg, Schneck, and Hinz 2019; Baldini and Federici 2011; Massey and Lundy 2001; Özüekren and van Kempen 2002; Page 1995). Still, it is a less popular research topic in Hungary. Since in Hungary, 91,7% of people own the facility they live in (Eurostat 2021) there is not much research about the rental housing market. However, the private rental sector is becoming more relevant in Hungary. Csizmady and Kőszeghy (2022:8) argue that the amount of people who live in their own facility was 88,9% in 2022. This percentage continues to be high, however, there is a tendency for younger generations to be more present in the private rental sector. According to Csizmady and Kőszeghy (2022:8), only 66,4% of young Hungarians – people below 35 years old – live in owner-occupied households. Even though most people live in their own properties, the younger generation tends to live in rentals more often. Since the economic

crisis started in 2008, apartments and houses have become more difficult to buy. While in 1999 3,1% of the population lived in rentals, by 2015 this ratio grew up to 8,1% (Csizmady and Kőszeghy 2022, 8). Furthermore, the proportion of tenants is even higher in the cities and among adults below 35 years old. In Budapest, 12,1% of the population sublet an apartment in 2015. The same research showed that 30,3% of young adults live in rentals in the whole country, while the same data in Budapest is 37,7% (Csizmady and Kőszeghy 2022, 8). With this data, it is clear that looking at the rental market has become deeply relevant over the last decades. Because of the lack of studies in this growing field, I find it important to research the rental housing market in Hungary.

In addition, my research focuses on people of Romani origin. According to the Central Statistical Office, in 2021 60,1% of the Romani population in Hungary was at risk of poverty and social exclusion (HCSO 2021). Considering that purchasing real estate requires economic wealth and that people of Romani origin are more likely to be at risk of poverty, one can assume that people of Romani origin are more present in the rental segment than in the sales segment of the real estate market. In line with this, Bernát (2014, 261) argues that only 78% of people of Romani origin live in their own property. Still, people of Romani origin are discriminated against when it comes both to buying and renting accommodation or applying to social housing (Hagan and Bedard 2004), yet only a few studies are written on the topic.

As stated by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Human Rights, 29% of people of Romani origin were discriminated against in the housing market in the previous 5 years (FRA 2022). However, research also shows that in Hungary discrimination is hidden, and difficult to catch it in the act (FRA 2016). Other researchers address the discrimination people of Romani origin face specifically in Hungary. In the study of Király, Bernáth and Setét (2021) participants of the focus group discussions raise their concerns about their difficulties in the rental housing market. Moreover, the authors call for action in the field of housing politics (Király, Bernáth, and Setét

2021). While the report highlights numerous important issues, housing is only mentioned as one additional form of discrimination. The authors do not go into depth when it comes to this issue. Housing discrimination is mentioned along with workplace discrimination, and educational and health system segregation. While all of these topics are highly significant, there is a need to research the situation of people of Romani origin and the difficulties they face when it comes to renting an apartment.

In the report of From Street to Homes Association, Balogi and Papadopoulosz (2020) found that two third of landlords and real estate agents reject people of Romani origin in the rental housing market. In the small, qualitative study, participants called 10 landlords and 10 real estate agent and found that people of Romani origin are often discriminated implicitly (Balogi and Papadopoulosz 2020, 9).

Even though studies mention housing discrimination (Balogi and Papadopoulosz 2020; FRA 2016; 2022; Király, Bernáth, and Setét 2021), I did not find larger research that focused specifically on the discrimination of tenants of Romani origin. As Hagan and Bedard (2004, 1) put in their report : “the inability to access private accommodation contributes to the great numbers of Romani families forced to settle for substandard housing in segregated neighborhoods on the periphery of cities”. Our homes are an essential part of our lives, and we should remind ourselves that everyone’s basic human right is to have a home and not be discriminated against when choosing a place to live in.

In this chapter, I described the context of my thesis. I explained that people of Romani origin come from many different groups (Lajtai 2020). While people of Romani origin are from diverse and heterogenous groups, the non-Roma society in Hungary treats them as one homogenous group. Many stereotypes are held about people of Romani origin and the level of prejudice towards them is high in Hungary (Váradi 2014a).

Later, I introduced the living situation of people of Romani origin in Hungary. Former research shows that Roma face difficulties due to their locality and living conditions as well (Bernát 2014; Bernát and Béres 2021; FRA 2016; 2022; Györi 2017; Kőszeghy 2009; HCSO 2021).

Next, I examined former research concerning the Hungarian rental housing market and the situation of Roma in it. Csizmady and Kőszeghy (2022) found that younger generations are more present and dependent on the rental housing market than the older ones. Therefore, I argue that the field of the rental housing market requires more research in Hungary. In addition, the few research which focuses on people of Romani origin showed that the ratio of tenants are higher among people of Romani origin than among non-Roma (Bernát 2014). Next to that, Balogi and Papadopoulosz (2020) found that people of Romani origin face – mostly indirect – discrimination in the rental housing market in Hungary. Most importantly, I found out how little research focuses on the experiences of tenants of Romani origin in the growing rental housing market.

The lack of research on the chances of people of Romani origin led me to raise three questions, I answer in my thesis (Figure 1.). My first question is related to power and responsibility. Who has power on the rental market and how do they use their power? Do those in power take responsibility for their actions? My second question arises from the first ones. How, based on what believes do landlords and real estate agents discriminate against people of Romani origin? To what extent are tenants of Romani origin aware of the stereotypical images landlords and agents hold against them? My third group of questions are related to the agency of tenants of Romani origin. What strategies do tenants of Romani origin use to find accommodation? How do they prepare themselves to the possibility of discrimination?

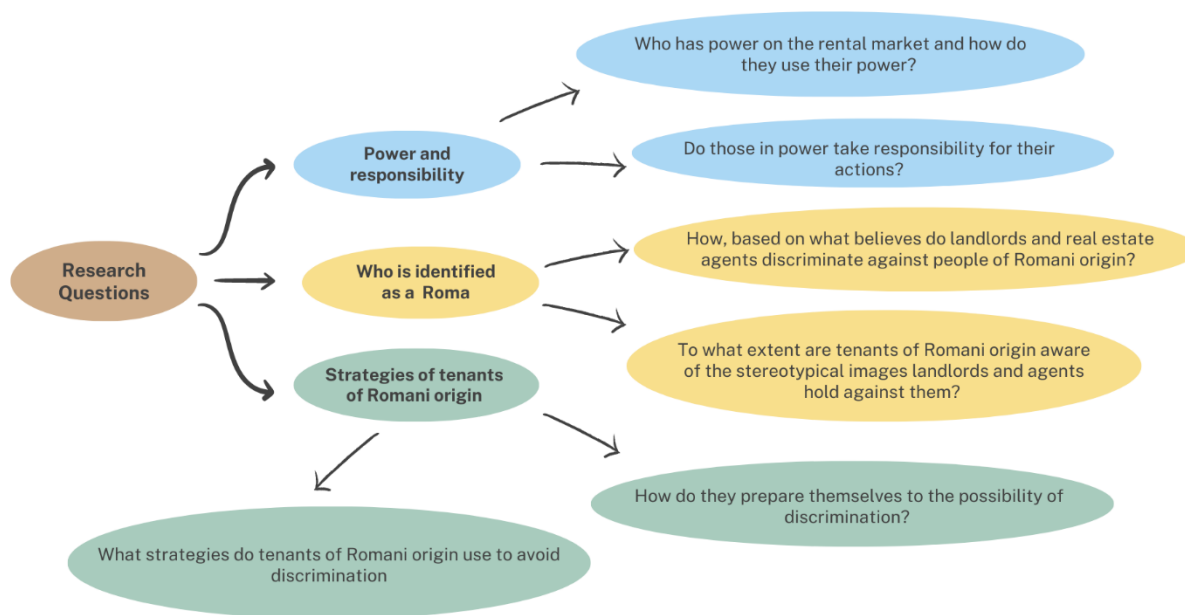


Figure 1. Research questions

In the following chapter, I explain how I aim to answer my questions. In the first part of the chapter, I introduce the two different kinds of datasets, which I used in order to gain a complex picture of the Hungarian rental housing market. In the second part of the chapter the method of my analysis is presented.

Chapter 5: Methodology

In this multi-method research, I rely on two different kinds of data. On the one hand, I analyze focus-group discussions made with non-Roma landlords and real estate agents. On the other hand, I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with people of Romani origin, who rent or tried to rent accommodations in Budapest.

With these two datasets, I answer three questions. Firstly, I will look at who is identified as a person of Romani origin in the eyes of the landlords, real estate agents, and Roma tenants. For this, I analyze the focus group discussions, that were conducted in Spring 2022 and individual interviews, that were carried out in Spring 2023 with tenants of Romani origin. Secondly, I look at who and how decides if people of Romani origin are eligible for applying to an apartment. Here, again I used the above-mentioned data. Thirdly, I look at the housing career of tenants of Romani origin and more closely on how Roma prepare themselves to the possibility of discrimination and their strategies to avoid it. For this part, I again analyze the individual interviews.

5.1. Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions I use are part of a larger research. Professor Luca Váradi, I, and our colleagues are currently working on a representative study on racial discrimination against people of Romani origin in the Hungarian rental market (Váradi et al. 2023). This research is the basis for my interest in the topic and provided preliminary knowledge about the field. In the Spring of 2022, we conducted five, online interviews with landlords and real estate agents.

We decided to organize group discussions for the following reasons. Firstly, focus groups give the opportunity to follow how participants interact with each other and which dynamics shape the acts and reactions of the participants (Roller and Lavrakas 2015, 104–5). This is especially important for my own research because the way people talk to each other implies certain power

dynamics which can mirror how participants act in real life. Moreover, the spontaneity of free discussions between the participants shed light on topics and details that might have been missed in an individual interview (Roller and Lavrakas 2015, 105). The setting of every day like conversation makes people more relaxed and therefore – if they feel comfortable and accepted in the group – they are less likely to monitor what they are about to say (Roller and Lavrakas 2015, 105).

When organizing the discussions, we decided to search for people who rent out apartments all over the country, focusing on large countries. While the large research focuses on the whole country, my thesis mainly concentrates on Budapest. Our main aim was to find out how participants think about the rental market in general; the situation and chances of people of Romani origin in the market; and their reaction to a short documentary, we used as an intervention in a later stage of the study. I choose to use these discussions for my thesis because they not only cover my research questions but also highlight the power dynamics that rule the market. By having mixed groups with both landlords and agents I was able to detect how the two groups talk to each other, how they speak about knowledge, experience, and their position in the market.

While organizing focus group discussions, we randomly selected participants from different regions of the country. We contacted landlords and real estate agents on the phone and asked them to participate in a discussion about their experiences in the rental housing market. While recruiting them, we have not specified that within other topics we will mention the chances of Roma in the market as well. We found it important not to highlight this detail in order not to influence the answers of the participants.

We invited participants from larger cities all around Hungary. Our only restriction was that we focused on larger cities because in smaller towns there are fewer vacancies for rent than in cities (HCSO 2023). According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office in the first ten months of 2022,

58% of the rentals were advertised in the capital city, and 27% appeared in cities with county status and another 13% in smaller cities (HCSO 2023).

Since landlords and real estate agents hold somewhat different but still similar positions in the market, we found it important to make mixed groups with participants from both groups. Furthermore, we had a variety in the length of experiences gained in the market. Some of the participants just started to advertise their apartments at the time of the discussions, others have been working in the field for 20-30 years. This way, our participants were able to introduce their experiences and views about the market and we could see to what extent their ideas and attitudes contradict and correspond.

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Number of participants	5	3	3	2	5
Number of real estate agents	2	0	2	0	5
Number of private owners	3	3	1	2	0
Number of male participants	3	2	2	1	4
Number of female participants	2	1	1	1	1
Region of property/office	Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, Budapest, Győr-Moson-Sopron County, Pest County	Budapest, Csongrád-Csanád County	Budapest, Fejér County, Győr-Moson-Sopron County	Fejér County, Veszprém County	Hajdú-Bihar County

Table 1. Information about focus groups

Altogether, we organized 5 group discussions. The details of the focus groups can be seen in Table

1. The groups were made up of 2-5 people and led by a researcher and an assistant. They were

organized online through the platform of Zoom and lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. During the discussion an online interactive platform, Mentimeter.com was used. By the help of Mentimeter, we were able to ask questions from our participants anonymously, which helped us to start discussions with them about specific topics. Two of the groups were mixed groups where both private house owners and real estate agents participated. In Group 5, there were only real estate agents, while in Groups 2 and 3 there were only private landlords.

5.2. Interviews

My second data set includes 8 semi-structured in-depth interviews with people of Romani origin. My aim in conducting in-depth interviews was to “gain a rich, nuanced understanding of “thinking” (i.e., motivation) that drives behavior and attitude formation” (Roller and Lavrakas 2015, 51) of tenants of Romani origin and to get to know their experience in the rental market. I choose in-depth interviews since it builds on a trusting relationship, respect, and empathy for the interviewee (Roller and Lavrakas 2015, 51). Because of the sensitivity of the topic, I find these qualities important to keep in mind when asking for and conducting an interview. I feel the importance of making participants feel comfortable in interview situations.

The interviews I conducted were semi-structured. The reasons behind choosing semi-structured interviews and focusing on the rental housing career of the participants were the following. Firstly, I wanted to give my participants the freedom to express their own ideas, impressions, and experiences about their rental careers. As a non-Roma researching people of Romani origin, I find it especially important to give the opportunity and freedom for participants to lead the conversation. By asking them to tell me about their rental housing career, interviewees shared the aspects of their experiences which they found important. Moreover, I wanted my participants to be able to present their experiences, which gives them the agency to represent

themselves. Secondly, semi-structured interviews let me keep the focus on the rental market and raise questions to gain a broader understanding of their experiences. Semi-structured interviews gave me the freedom to raise further questions to my interviewees, while still giving the participants the freedom to express their unique opinion.

In April 2023, I conducted eight in-depth interviews. When finding interviewees, I used snowballing method. As a first step, I contacted four people I knew. Two of them I knew through a previous workplace of mine. The third person I contacted was an acquaintance from my studies. The fourth person I reached out to is a friend of mine, who herself is not a person of Romani origin, but works together with Roma musicians and activists for a long time. These four people were kind enough to talk to me and connect me with their friends, family, and colleagues. When contacting my interviewees, I paid attention to asking people from different circles, since I wanted to have a diverse sample. I found this important since people of Romani origin are from many, heterogenous groups. Moreover, I aimed to avoid homogenizing the experiences of tenants of Romani origin by only focusing on one social and economic circle. Finding people from different circles gave me the opportunity to talk to people with the most diverse background. I believe that the diversity of my interviewees will help me better understand the common and unique advantages, struggles, and strategies of some Romani people living in Budapest.

Table 2. introduces some information about my participants. I talked to eight people, the youngest one was 24 while the oldest one was 50 years old. Two of my interviewees had elementary school as their highest education, two of them had high school degrees, one of them participated in practical higher education while three of them went to university.

The names of all interviewees and group discussion participants were changed at the analysis. The names used in the paper are pseudonyms created from regular Hungarian names.

	Vera	Szandi	Évi	Peti	Viola	Máté	Dénes	Marika
Age	35	30	29	28	30	24	35	50
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female
Occupation	Cleaning lady	Cleaning lady	Social Worker	Social Worker; Program Coordinator at NGO	Teacher; Program Coordinator at NGO	Mechanical technician	Program Coordinator at NGO	Social Worker
Highest level of education	Elementary School Degree	4 th Grade of Elementary School	High School Degree with Vocational Training	High School Degree with Final Exam	Master's Degree in University	Accredited Course after High School Degree with Final Exam	Master's Degree in University	Master's Degree in University
People with whom the flat is shared	Living with one child and her mother	Living with two children part time	Living with her partner	Living with his partner	Living with her partner	Living with his partner	Living with family members	Living with one child
Since how long they live in current residence	3 years	3 years	1 year	1 year	1 year	2 years	4 years	3 years

Table 2. Relevant pieces of information about interviewees

5.3. Methods of analysis

I analyze the focus group discussions and the interviews through the approach of Critical Discourse Analysis. I find Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) the most fitting for my research because one of the focus of the school on power (Wodak and Meyer 2018, 9). CDA provides insights on how to analyze the language used by those in power and how the terms and expressions they use affect inequality (Wodak and Meyer 2018, 9). Furthermore, I believe that both those in power and people suffering from discrimination could avoid addressing some important aspects of the topic directly. When looking at a such sensitive topic, it is worth not only listening to what participants say but their way of sharing their experiences, and the language they use. By analyzing my materials through the lens of CDA, I was able to focus on the power relations between actors in the field. CDA enabled me to not just analyze what has been said but also the social reality language creates. In addition, CDA allowed me to look at how power is created, accepted, and challenged through language (Wodak and Meyer 2018, 10).

Before analyzing my datasets, I transcribed both the focus groups and the interviews. Since all data was collected in Hungarian, I transcribed them in the original language and only translated the relevant quotes to English. After transcribing the data, I created a codebook for both datasets⁵. The codebook for the focus groups focused on my first and second research questions, while the codebook for the interviews focused on all three research questions. As a next step, I imported my data to the qualitative data analysis program, NVivo and I coded my data.

When analyzing the focus groups, I focused on the following topics: expressions and synonyms, used for people of Romani origin; strategies to identify people of Romani origin; who is responsible for discrimination of Roma; power dynamics between landlords and real estate

⁵ The codebooks can be found in the Appendices.

agents; power dynamics between landlords and Roma; power dynamics between agents and Roma; and who should stop discrimination. In the case of individual interviews, the focal points were how people of Romani origin know if they are identified as Roma; if they are treated worse than other applicants; their experiences with landlords and agents; how do they start to look for a place; how do they try to avoid discrimination. In addition, in both datasets, I paid attention to the topic of compliance and how the participants describe who they need to comply with and when they have the opportunity to shape and control.

In this chapter, I explained the methodology of my thesis. I explained the reasons behind the choice of my datasets. Focus groups with landlords and real estate agents give me the opportunity to track stereotypes and prejudice towards people of Romani origin and how Roma are identified through the stereotypes about them. In addition, focus groups enable me to follow how power relations work between the controllers of the rental housing market. Individual interviews with people of Romani origin gives my participants the opportunity to share their experiences in the rental housing market in a safe environment. Additionally, focusing on the rental career of the participants enables me to track the systematic nature of prejudice and how people of Romani origin tackle discrimination and find housing despite the hostility towards them.

Since, I am interested in power dynamics and the agency of people of Romani origin, I found Critical Discourse Analysis the most applicable approach for my research. In my analysis I will not only focus on what has been said but also on how actors on the housing rental market perceive and interact with each other.

Chapter 6: “You just know it” – who is seen as a person of Romani origin in the rental housing market?

In the following three chapters, I present the results of my data analysis. While answering my research questions, I introduce the relation between the actors on the rental housing market and how individuals shape their own and others’ subjective reality and how those in power – landlords and agents – create objective reality to tenants of Romani origin. To illustrate my argument, I use quotes from the discussions and interviews.

There are many stereotypes about the housing conditions and habits of people of Romani origin. Landlord and agents are aware of their generalizing processes, still they exclude inquirers based on their real or imagined ethnic background. In the following chapter, I explore what do landlords and agents base their filtering practices on. Furthermore, I introduce the perspective of my interviewees of Romani origin on the topic. Here, I present to what extent are they aware of how non-Roma see them in the rental housing market.

6.1. Who is a Roma in the eye of a non-Roma?

In the first part of this chapter, I introduce how non-Roma landlords and real estate agents identify someone as a person of Romani origin. Moreover, I am interested if stereotypes that are commonly held in the Hungarian society are present in the rental housing market as well. In more detail, I will look at what kind of stereotypes are used to underline the assumption that tenants of Romani origin “are not trustworthy” (Szabolcs, male, agent).

6.1.1. Skin color, dialect and way of communication

As the topic of ideal and non-ideal tenant was introduced in the focus group discussions, the topic of identification of tenants or Romani origin arose. Non-Roma participants mentioned look and dialect as easy ways to decide if the inquire is of Romani origin.

„I also wrote dialect, and here I am referring to our dark-skinned brothers. You can already tell from the phone and how someone speaks. So, by dialect, I mean specifically their dialect. So, it's a big filter, it's quite a big filter.” (Gyula, male, landlord)

„I don't know if we can speak out about the Roma situation. Unfortunately, this dialect is also accompanied by a way of life, which, in a typical case immediately arises.” (Gergő, male, landlord)

„So, yes, you can get a lot from the dialect itself, the way the person speaks. But, of course, just because you speak in a dialect, for example, doesn't mean you can't be absolutely trustworthy based on your answers or in your communication. So, the quality of communication. It is difficult to define what that means.” (Benedek, male, landlord)

As we can see, if one does not meet in person, dialect is the easiest way to exclude tenants of Romani origin. Non-Roma often link dialect to the way and quality of communication. The core of this view is the stereotype about Roma having poor communication skills. Furthermore, as we see in Gergő's comment and in the next section, recognizing a dialect is often linked to other prejudiced views.

6.1.2. Stereotypes about people of Romani origin

Another way for non-Roma to identify tenants of Romani origin is to apply stereotypes to people of Romani origin. The main stereotypes were Roma being poor, unemployed, having many children. Furthermore, even blunt prejudice occurred by calling Roma problematic.

„Obviously, the other side of the compass is if you don't even have a two-month deposit, let alone one and even that in instalments.” (Zsófia, female, landlord)

„Because I think that people who are intellectuals or have a good job do not advertise themselves as Roma. They go to see the apartment and people don't think they are Roma. But if someone says on the phone that I am of Roma origin, the average Hungarian immediately has an image of a poor person who proudly proclaims that he is Roma and

that he is different from the rest of society, and even proclaims it in this way.” (Barnabás, male, landlord)

„Yes, a lot can be inferred from communication. What kind of personality he has, how reliable he will be in terms of salary and all the other conditions. You can deduce what type of work he does, but of course you can ask about that, because obviously it's important that the stable salary is guaranteed.” (Benedek, male, landlord)

„You often hear [it on the phone] that they would move with 3-4 children. There is usually one person working here and there are bound to be problems in the long run. I have rented a flat to a Roma, asked for a work contract, they brought the paper of their payments. So, if they seem to be normal, then. But mostly there are problems with them.” (Pál, male, landlord)

Stereotypes were connected to lower economic status. When participants mentioned tenants of Romani origin, the stereotypes applied were often connected to the economic and intellectual background. During the discussions, participants mentioned Roma as members of the working class. Roma with intellectual background and higher education were stated as exceptions. It becomes visible in the above comment of Barnabás, that Roma with intellectual background are not seen as people of Romani origin, since they do not fit into the stereotype.

6.2. Double consciousness of people of Romani origin

As I interviewed people of Romani origin, it was striking that except one person, they all had direct experience with discrimination in the rental market. The person who did not experience rejection found all previous apartments through his partner, who happened to be non-Roma. Besides, what I found was that participants knew exactly what landlords and agents assume when they get in touch with them. In the following subchapter, I will introduce how people of Romani origin see the barriers between themselves and non-Roma landlords and agents.

6.2.1. Aspects you cannot change

Just as landlords and agents explained how they filter people of Romani origin; my interviewees were aware of criteria they are monitored through but cannot change. When sharing

their previous encounters of negative treatment, they pointed out name and skin color as the most common ways they are recognized as people of Romani origin.

“Well, obviously, if you look brown skinned, it's very, very noticeable.” (Peti, male, tenant)

„Well, the first thing I think is that when they arrive and they don't even speak, it's the external features that match the image of the Roma in their minds and the image of the Roma in the media. I think it's this. Somehow it can be the external features.” (Viola, female, tenant)

„Yes, some of us are brown, some of us are white, but the name is very strong. The name is rough, and it takes everything.” (Vera, female, tenant)

As Peti stated, skin color is a common way to recognize if the potential tenant is of Romani origin. However, as Vera pointed out having Romani origin does not specifically mean that one has darker skin. Still, landlords and agents base their knowledge on representation of Roma in the media (Bernáth and Messing 2013) and common stereotypes (Váradi 2014a). As Viola's statement shows, our participants were aware not only about the stereotypes but also about that stereotypes are projected toward individual applicants.

6.2.2. Way of communication

Another aspect of differentiation was dialect, and the way people of Romani origin are believed to speak. Once again, there was a parallel between what agents and landlords base their decision on and the way people of Romani origin see themselves.

„It's true that my speech might make you think I'm a Roma, but nobody would think I'm a Roma because of my appearance. People tell me that they don't cut me off as a Roma.” (Vera, female, tenant)

„The dialect. I think it says a lot how someone communicates.” (Éva, female, tenant)

„So, I [...] met a lot of times with people, who didn't know that I was a Gypsy. In the meantime, it turned out because I think on my appearance it is basically visible, on the outside. But maybe not on my behavior or my style of speaking.” (Pál, male, tenant)

„It happened once that at first, they only started by asking if the interesting accent was Transylvanian. And then came the other question, „Are you Roma?” And then there were

those who specifically said that it was not for Roma.” (Dénes, male, tenant)

Some participants explained that even if they do not fit the Roma stereotypes by their looks, they are treated as Roma because of the way they speak. Others experienced the opposite. Even if they have darker skin, people did not realize their Romani origin, because the way they communicate did not fit the stereotype of Roma having poor communication skills. In sum, my participants were aware that the way they speak is essential when they want to make a good impression on landlords.

6.2.3. „You could see it on their face”

Landlords believe that applicants of Romani origin, do not necessary feel when they are discriminated. In order to figure out if people of Romani origin know when they meet someone with prejudice, I paid attention how my interviewees recognize if the landlord will reject them based on their ethnic background.

„You could see it on their face. [...] Well, the way they looked, you know. Okay, I understand, how to tell you, how you talk, how you behave, that's one thing, but when you are seen as a Roma, well, the answer is going to be no.” (Szandi, female, tenant)

„It was a couple of years ago, so I was living or trying to behave more consciously in these situations, because I think you learn to do that. Not as an adult, but unfortunately it starts from childhood, that you have to know how to deal with [prejudice].” (Viola, female, tenant)

„No, but the eye doesn't lie, so. I'm a very good judge of character in that respect, so I can read it very, very well. And I have experienced it many times and I know that it was [prejudice].” (Máté, male, tenant)

„So, I can sense people's feelings. Just by looking at them, I can tell if they like me or not. And until I speak up, he will approach me as a Roma according to his negative experience or his belief system.” (Marika, female, tenant)

The feeling of being rejected does not only come from facts, such as skin color, name or communication. It is rooted in a deeper understanding of the social structure, opportunities, and oppression. As Viola stated, people of Romani origin learn how society sees them already as kids.

As part of this deeper understanding, people of Romani origin are not just aware of how non-Roma see them, but also when a prejudiced eye gazes at them. The phrases used by my interviewees testify for the fact that the feeling of being seen as a stereotype cannot be explained. It has to be felt to be able to understand. It is a feeling, which is there, which is certain and the justification of it are the actions of non-Roma.

Tenants of Romani origin are oppressed by non-Roma landlords, agents and the structure of the rental housing market. However, they will not disappear from the market, but they find strategies to deal with oppression, as it will be introduced in Chapter 8. The knowledge of facing discrimination, the double consciousness is a burden – even if it can be used as a tool to fight oppression. One is constantly aware of the negative images about people of Romani origin. With other words, there is an objective reality, which determines one's opportunities. People are born into the society and society shapes them. People of Romani origin in Hungary are born into a society which is shaped by non-Roma norms and prejudice as well. How double consciousness can be used as agency will be explained in Chapter 8 in more detail. But to be able to understand the opportunities tenants of Romani origin have, we need to understand the power dynamics within the rental housing market. The power dynamics determine how tenants of Romani origin can move within the market and what they need to pay attention when they look for residence.

Chapter 7: Power, decision making and the question of responsibility

Power dynamics between individual actors influence the rules of the rental housing market. In this chapter, I introduce who are the experts and the power holders on the field. In addition, I show how experts and those in power legitimize each other's prejudices and willingness to discriminate. Lastly, I look at to what extent do landlords and real estate agents take responsibility for discriminatory behavior and who are blamed for the exclusion of tenants of Romani origin.

7.1. Who makes decisions in the rental housing market?

In the following chapter of my analysis, I answer to my research question: Who decides if people of Romani origin are allowed to apply for apartments and how? In other words, I look at who has the opportunity and the power to decide about the accommodation of tenants of Romani origin. Furthermore, I examine what those in power think about discrimination.

In order to figure out who decides if people of Romani origin are eligible to rent an apartment, I asked not only the landlords and agents but tenants of Romani origin as well. My interviewees agreed that it is the landlord who decides about the requirements from the tenant and the future of the apartment.

„It's up to the owner, not you. If the landlord says yes, you can move in. But then he says no. No matter, you meet all the expectations, once the owner says no, then it's a no.” (Vera, female, tenant)

„Yes, yes, I remember a story about a real estate agent who specifically said that. We went to look at an apartment and at least he had the guts to tell us that the owner specifically asked him not to rent to Roma. And when we showed up and he saw that we were Roma, he told us that the owner had asked him to do so, and yes. I think there was another, an owner who made excuses and was totally embarrassed when he saw us. Even though on the phone he was really helpful. And said, „yes, come and have a look”. So, he completely disappeared after he saw us.” (Évi, female, tenant)

But it was not only tenants of Romani origin, who underlined how unequal the rental housing market is. Non-Roma landlords who had previous experience with being a tenant argued that property owners have more power than then tenants. In one of the focus groups, it was stated explicitly that this dimension lacks from conversations about the market.

„What I find a little lacking on both sides is that we often have a lot of expectations from tenants, but it should work from both sides. So that they can be monitored, I can be monitored. [...] Yet, tenants are in a more vulnerable position. And practically landlords often take advantage of this.” (Alexa, female, landlord)

Tenants agreed that landlords have the power to decide if they are welcoming people of Romani origin in their property. However, as we can see in Évi's quote above, agents discriminate against Roma as well. This was underlined by some of the landlords we talked to.

„Real estate agents immediately come and try to convince me to rent through them and they always come up with these things. Because (laughs) I always ask what the added value of a real estate agent is. And then they say, „well, I can filter out on the phone who is of that ethnic background so that they don't even come to look at the flat”. Well, I told them that it doesn't matter to me, so I don't need this service.” (Barnabás, male, landlord)

Agents rely on landlords. They are the ones who give them work, income and references. Moreover, agents can be prejudiced towards Roma as well, which makes it more likely that they will discriminate against tenants of Romani origin. In the example of Barnabás, agents offered discrimination as a possible service, something which makes agent's job seem more worthy. It was presented as something that is worth paying for.

Berger and Luckman (1966) and Dreher (2016) argue that legitimization of power happens through accepting the symbolic universe – norms and values – of the power holders. In the case of the Hungarian rental market, the symbolic universe – based on which tenants are judged – is created by landlords and legitimized by the experts, the real estate agents. Landlords rule the symbolic universe, they are the ones who decide who fits into their norms and value system, who are worthy to live in their apartment. The subjective reality of the landlords is based on their experiences as

property owners, which is a powerful position. Their decisions are legitimized by the symbolic universe they created with the support of experts, who are dependent on their payment and support. Experts – in this case agents – legitimize hearsays and beliefs of non-Roma landlords about Roma and institutionalize a market in which people of Romani origin are not welcome.

7.2. Lack of taking responsibility for discrimination

In the previous part, I argued that experts and the ruling group of the rental market are responsible for the discrimination of Roma. In the following chapter, I will explore who non-Roma landlords and real-estate agents believe are responsible for the discrimination of Roma. In other words, I examine how people in power understand their role in the legitimization of their symbolic universe and creating the objective reality for tenants within the market.

7.2.1. Searching for responsibility in another non-Roma

As landlords and agents were asked about discrimination, they justified their discriminatory actions with expectations from another non-Roma. They were aware that discrimination is morally bad, however, they rarely understood their own actions as immoral. When it came to other non-Roma, they blamed four different actors for the problem. In the following subchapter I introduce these four dimensions.

Firstly, non-Roma participants mentioned high level of prejudice towards Roma within society. Generalization and racism were both mentioned as common pillars of the Hungarian society.

"So, I think that the Hungarian people are absolutely racist. And it will be very difficult to change that. And I think that, unfortunately, I must bring politics into this discussion. Because unfortunately, our party and our government only strengthen it with this migration rhetoric." (Antal, male, agent)

„People generalize and have bad experiences, which then spreads and then extended to all those of that nationality. [...] But it's not only the Roma who can be like that, [the tenant]

doesn't have to be Roma to have the same problems. But it's stigmatized that if you're a Roma you're like that. But that's not the case, because some of them are very decent. But they are stigmatized, this is Hungarian society, and this must be said out loud.” (Júlia, female, landlord)

In these cases, society is mentioned in plural third person. This means, that our participants distanced themselves from the Hungarian society and people. They implied that other non-Roma generalize, however, they did not include their own responsibility. Participants saw society as an objective reality, as something which is separate from their own experiences and beliefs.

Secondly, landlords and agents argued that they are expected to discriminate by neighbors. They claimed that neighbors would be annoyed if the landlords let people of Romani origin or someone who *does not fit* into the community.

„[Being Roma] is a big filter, it's a pretty big filter, because I have to pay attention not only to the apartment, but also to the community. There are a lot of pensioners and a quite normal community there. So, they've been living there for 10-20 years, everyone knows everyone, and I can't let anyone in.” (Gyula, male, landlord)

„Yes, here when someone moves into a community, the owners take that into account and say they don't want confrontation with the neighbors.” (Szabolcs, male, agent)

„I also have a flat in a condominium. So, if I bring someone who is not a member of the community, I will be judged, so it's a risk for me as well.” (Gergő, male, landlord)

Just as in the previous case, people in power shift the responsibility to someone else – in this case, neighbors. It is not stated that they themselves do not want to live next to Roma, however it is implied. By saying that they are concerned about their neighbors, they present two statements. Firstly, that they believe that tenants of Roma origin would not fit in their neighborhood. Secondly, that they would not want to have neighbors of Romani origin.

In addition, people in the power of decision talked about how the Hungarian rental market is poorly regulated. They claimed that landlords in Hungary cannot ask for proof of income or reference letters from potential tenants.

„Because for example in [Western Europe] you can just rent an apartment. Because [in

Hungary] for example, if I ask for an employer's certificate, he'll either laugh at me, or if he's really serious, he might... But I have no serious opportunity to check the tenant to whom I give an apartment. Whereas in the West it is like that." (Alexa, female, landlord)

„Well, unfortunately, it's not fashionable in Hungary, but it's absolutely fashionable in Austria, you need a certificate of employment and all that.” (Antal, male, agent)

„And this is one of the reasons why more and more people are signing contracts with a notary, for example. Although, because of the eviction moratorium, this doesn't mean much. It's only in the summer months that you can act, so to speak.” (Szabolcs, male, agent)

In this case, responsibility is shifted on the lack of regulations in the rental market. Lack of requirements for documents are blamed for making landlords more vulnerable. This requirement is introduced as something unbelievable and ridiculous in the Hungarian rental market.

Furthermore, agents put the blame of discrimination on landlords. They argued that it is common requirement among landlords to reject people of Romani origin. They argued that their job is to satisfy those who pay them, hence their loyalty is directed to landlords.

„It was the same with me, I have rented it out to a Roma, I asked for the bank account statement that the owner asked for and he brought it. But indeed, we represent the owners and if the owner has the prejudice that he doesn't want a Roma, we don't take a Roma there.” (Mária, female, agent)

„The owner decides. And he decides who he wants to sign [a contract with] and who he doesn't want to sign. It's also his right if there are 6 interested parties, but he says I'm not going to rent out this property. Not just to these 6 interested parties, but to no one.” (Ambrus, male, agent)

„That the agent is the first filter. And if there's a problem, the owner will call the realtor and say, "But you're the one who recommended them". So, I must be selective to give them a tenant who is normal.” (Antal, male, agent)

These statements distance agents from being responsible for discrimination and show the hierarchy on the rental market as well. Real estate agents legitimize the common beliefs of the landlords. Landlords have prejudiced beliefs towards Roma, they do not want them as neighbors or tenants. In their symbolic universe, tenants of Romani origin are seen as *bad potential tenants*. Agents, on the one hand, share the prejudiced beliefs about people of Romani origin. On the other

hand, they even further push this belief by supporting and legitimizing prejudices towards people of Romani origin.

7.2.2. Blaming people of Romani origin

Another way for landlords and agents to explain why people of Romani origin have less opportunity, is to blame them. Participants blamed applicants of Romani origin for two reasons. Firstly, they saw people of Romani origin for deserving discrimination. Secondly, they showed lack of empathy and argued that people of Romani origin make their job more complicated.

Non-Roma participants claimed that people of Romani origin are responsible for their own discrimination. These arguments were based on negative stereotypes about Roma.

„I consider myself a pretty sensitive, socially sensitive person with high empathy. But at the same time [...] the vast majority [of Roma] meet the stereotypes. Stereotypes are not formed by accident. So that's basically why I think that this group of people is entirely responsible for the way Hungarians react towards them.” (Gyula, male, landlord)

„As Zsófia [another participant] said, over many, many years [Roma] have achieved, that this is the impression of them and that's it.” (Gáspár, male, landlord)

„Well, I feel sorry that a minority [of Roma] suffers because of the majority [of them]. So, within the Roma, there is an educated class who are now the victims of discrimination, which is practically being directed against them because of a criminal class [of Roma].” (Szabolcs, male, agent)

As we can see, non-Roma stated feeling empathy and sorry for Roma explicitly. However, these statements were followed by generalizing people of Romani origin and putting the blame on them for non-Roma holding prejudiced views toward them. In addition, it was explicitly stated that people of Romani origin are seen as responsible for their own discriminated. This argument was underlined by stereotypes such as Roma being criminals or untrustworthy. Participants claim that they would not decline tenants of Romani origin who they find trustworthy and fit their requirements. However, they are less willing to give a chance for tenants of Romani origin to introduce themselves and prove that they pass the criteria.

People of Romani origin were also blamed for applying to rentals and putting landlords into a difficult position.

„But this often forces the owner to lie, because he cannot say it. Or you can say it, it's just not polite to say „yes, because you're a Gypsy”. So, we don't want to hurt them. It's very awkward for us too, but it's the truth. And by the way, they shouldn't be offended by it, because they need to be aware that that's the case. So, it's not an unexpected thing, it's not the first time in their life they've heard that they've been rejected because they're Gypsies. In fact, they have experienced this a lot from a very young age, and I totally understand that it is bad for them. I think it would be bad for me too. So, I think it's completely a dead end or a squirrel wheel. We're all suffering side by side here.” (Gyula, male, landlord)

„So, I really like the Hungarian people, no matter if they are Roma or non-Roma, that everyone knows how to cry, but they are cowards to change their own lives. [...] So, to claim here and now that „is it because of my origin?” Yes, and?” (Antal, male, agent)

Participants were aware that discrimination is a common experience in the lives of people of Romani origin. The experience of former discrimination was used to justify that landlords and agents make ordinary decision when they decline people of Romani origin. Moreover, this argument was turned against people of Romani origin, by claiming that it makes landlord uncomfortable.

7.2.3. Lack of reflection on position

As it was introduced in this chapter, landlords and agents distance themselves and blame others for discrimination. On the one hand, by blaming the non-Roma society, they claim that the field of the rental market is an objective reality. Discrimination is claimed to be a problem, but responsibility is shifted to weak regulations. On the other hand, those in power argue that society is created by people, when they blame individuals such as non-Roma neighbors or Roma themselves. Landlords and agents argued that other individuals cause the exclusion of people of Romani origin, however power and legitimization of it is missing from their rhetoric.

Moreover, it was demonstrated how agents legitimize the power of non-Roma landlords and the symbolic universe they create. In the symbolic universe of the Hungarian rental market,

applicants of Romani origin are equated with untrustworthy tenants. This definition is created and legitimized by the power holders, since both landlords and real estate agents reassure each other about their agreement. In contrast, tenants of Romani origin are excluded from this conversation, because they are not within those who explicitly decide about accommodation.

As I introduced how legitimization of discrimination works in the rental housing market, the question arises: how do tenants of Romani origin find accommodation in a hostile market? In Chapter 6 I argued that tenants of Romani origin have double consciousness when it comes to their ethnic background. There, I showed how double consciousness can be a burden since tenants of Romani origin are constantly aware of the prejudice towards them. In contrast, double consciousness can be used as a tool to fight discrimination. Society is created by humans. Which means that people can shape reality. If people of Romani origin know how non-Roma see them, that gives them agency. It is not a systematic solution to stop discrimination, but a way for tenants of Romani origin to find an apartment. In Chapter 8, I introduce how tenants of Romani origin prepare when entering the rental housing market.

Chapter 8: Finding a place to live – strategies of people of Romani origin to find accommodation

While the objective reality of systematic racism limits the opportunities of people of Romani origin, according to Berger and Luckman (1966) society is shaped by humans and humans are born into society. Therefore, even in limited space, people who struggle from discrimination can find a way to achieve their goals. People of Romani origin have a more difficult job finding a rental, yet they will use their knowledge and agency to do so. There is a barrier between Roma and non-Roma in the rental housing market (Balogi and Papadopoulos 2020; FRA 2022) through which people of Romani origin see the Hungarian society. They have the *gift of the second sight* (Du Bois 1903), which provides people of Romani origin with a special insight. The second perspective lets them see beyond the surface. It enables them to see their oppression and therefore, able to react to it. The reaction depends on the individual actor, however, being aware of the problem itself enables people of Romani origin to find individual solutions to it.

In the following chapter, I introduce what are the strategies my interviewees used in order to find a place to live in this hostile environment. Throughout my interviews I identified formal and informal ways to search for residence. Moreover, I interpret the ways in which my interviewees deal with the mental burden of being treated as less worthy. I present how people who face discrimination prepare themselves for and react to exclusion.

8.1. Strategies to find a place to live

As I mentioned above, there are different options for people of Romani origin to find rentals. Firstly, there are the formal, traditional ways of searching on housing websites. Here, one looks at the advertisements and reaches out to the advertiser. Secondly, there are the informal ways

of searching residence such as reaching out to friends and family or writing a self-advertisement.

In the following subchapters I explain both kinds of strategies.

8.1.1. Formal ways

The formal way of looking for a place is searching on the internet. My interviewees used some bigger websites as well as thematic social media groups to find available apartments.

„When I left [from my previous apartment], I searched almost exclusively on the internet, using different websites such as ingatlan.com as my main source.” (Dénes, male, tenant)

If one decides to use the formal channels of the rental housing market, they have to prepare themselves to seem convincing and trustworthy in order to gain the sympathy of the landlord. Due to the prejudice towards them, tenants of Romani origin are required to work harder to gain trust. Therefore, some Roma develop different approaches to convince landlords to give them a chance.

„How can I say this to you, I have learned communication. And wherever I go, I communicate very well, and it's terribly easy for me to make contact with other people. What you have to know about the Roma is that they communicate nonverbally. They don't speak. They speak with body language. One look, one turn, one signal, but everybody knows what they want. And when these Roma go [to see an apartment], they find it very difficult to communicate with people, I always speak for them. I have found myself very often that I have gone instead of the client to see a sublet, because I always spoke in a way that the landlord can rent it to them, so I have brought up things... So, I could communicate with the landlord.” (Marika, female, tenant)

As in the case of Marika, some participants explained how they had to change the way they communicate to fit the expectation of non-Roma tenants. The relevance of the way applicants communicate was underlined in the previous parts of the analysis. The difference between communication is similar to parts of the theory of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that the school system is based on the communication codes of middle class, hence working-class children enter school with disadvantages. The same can be said about some people of Romani origin, who socialized with different communication than on which the rental housing market is based. In these cases, the involved people of Romani

origin need to change their usual way of communication and need to resemble the *accepted way of communication*.

Still, some of my interviewees argued that they do not want to change their communication. Instead, they found other ways to highlight how trustworthy they are.

„And then, unfortunately, what I noticed about my husband is that he had to develop a strategy. To build himself up, that is, to compensate for the fact that he could face prejudice. And then he immediately wove into his speech that he was a financial manager. So that somehow, we have to justify that we deserve (laughs) to see this house.” (Viola, female, tenant)

„But the reference letter is much simpler and easier because it feels natural to me. Here, when I talk about my own studies and my profession, I don't feel so comfortable, because I don't support a decision being made on this basis. Well, I don't know, I think a bricklayer can be just as reliable as a teacher, for example, so it doesn't depend on that. But those are the two things I usually do.” (Dénes, male, tenant)

Some other tenants try to convince landlords by providing more information about themselves as is required. They offer documents about their income or reference letters. This resembles with the wish of landlords and agents about a more regulated rental market. My participants found this solution comfortable, since it meant for them that they do not have to prove themselves, but their income or previous landlord make them reliable.

Participants also reported that their profession or their level of education was also used as proving their accountability. Profession and education were highlighted by middle class people, since their profession is supposedly in parallel with the requirements of middle- and upper-class non-Roma landlords. However, Dénes even highlighted that this strategy is exclusionary for working class Roma or those with lower levels of education, even if they have a steady income.

8.1.2. Informal ways

Some people did choose to look for residence through informal channels. I call these strategies informal, because tenants often changed the direction of the advertisement – by

promoting themselves on social media – or reached out to friends and family, who helped them find residence.

„Here too, I posted an ad, shared it in several groups, saying that we were looking for a rental. And several people wrote me privately. And where we just moved, a guy wrote me that his mother was advertising a sublet, and it was success at first.” (Éva, female, tenant)

„So, I think we both posted. And so, we contacted people that we knew, but after we saw that we were going to be looking at rentals through a friend of my girlfriend's friends.” (Peti, male, tenant)

„I didn't think I would, but I arranged the sublet in Budapest through a friend. And so, I looked at the apartment, my friend told me that it was close to my work, I came and looked at it, I liked it and so I rented it.” (Vera, female, tenant)

„And then, of course, that didn't work. But then we had a lucky opportunity because the apartment of my wife's godfather was for rent, and they rented it to us at half price, and now we've been living here for 2 and a half years.” (Máté, male, tenant)

These strategies represent the agency of tenants in two ways. Firstly, in the case of self-advertising, tenants included all the important information about themselves. Since the advertisement post often included a picture or was shared among followers on social media, it also made it clear for landlords that the applicants are possibly people of Romani origin. This helped tenants to avoid situations in which they could be discriminated against, since only landlords without prejudiced views contacted them. Secondly, both posting about oneself and reaching out to friends happens within the social circle of the tenant. Therefore, those who already believe in tenants' trustworthiness will reach out and help them. In this way, people of Romani origin do not have to prove themselves. They are not required to argue about them *being the good kind of Roma*, but they are treated as equally worthy as everyone else.

8.2. Dealing with discrimination

While we would think that members of stigmatized groups develop low self-esteem, it has been shown that there is no major difference between the self-esteem of minority and majority

group members (Crocker and Major 1989; Brown 2010a, 226). Members of stigmatized groups want to feel that they are in control over their lives (Brown 2010a, 230). They need to prepare themselves mentally for the possibility of discrimination. In the following subchapter, I introduce how tenants of Romani origin adjust to the probability of discrimination.

8.2.1. Mentally preparing for being discriminated

One of the ways to shield oneself from the negative mental effects of discrimination, is mentally preparing oneself for discrimination. Throughout my conversations, I identified three ways interviewees mentioned about reacting to discrimination: showing disagreement explicitly, avoiding in person discrimination, and distancing oneself from the person who discriminates. The first strategy occurs when tenants of Romani origin are explicitly told that they cannot rent a place because of their ethnic background.

“Well, obviously it's much easier to say something if you know what it's about. So, we said to the agent, this is outrageous and unbelievable that we're at this point of judging people by the color of their skin... So that's what we tried to tell him. And he was like, yes, yes, he can understand, but we must believe, it's not his fault, he's just a middleman.” (Éva, female, tenant)

Standing up against unfair treatment can be difficult for members of stigmatized groups (Swim and Hyers 1999). However, they do feel and see when they are treated poorly. As my interviewees described it, it is easier to raise their voice against injustice when the person seen to be responsible for discrimination – in Éva's case the landlord – is not present.

„I went to see the apartment in person. And I didn't say I was a Roma, I just went there and walked into the apartment. And then it occurred to me that this is not going to work, I'm going to tell everyone I call that I'm of Roma origin. I don't want to go there again and get a slap in the face. I rather thought I'd tell them. Don't travel up there for nothing, right?” (Szandi, female, tenant)

Szandi introduced another way of preparing for discrimination. Participants claimed that it is useful to face discrimination as soon and as distanced as possible. By presenting the ethnic

background early, one does not have to pay the additional cost of discrimination such as time and money for travel. Furthermore, participants said that it is easier to face rejection over the phone or in writing than in person.

„Or I think that I would not like to live in a place where the owner has such prejudices. If I am asked if I am a Roma, I know that I know that this is a problematic issue, so I don't really go on there either.” (Denes, male, tenant)

„Communication... In it, if I notice the prejudice, so that I don't hide in my shell. And not the wounded Roma part of me should come out. Not the part of me that immediately distances itself, but the professional, the person who knows that she is not a bad person and that because I am a Gypsy, I am not, I am not bad.” (Marika, female, tenant)

Lastly, it was useful for my participants to devalue landlords and empower themselves. Participants distanced themselves from landlords who discriminate, by arguing that they would not want to do anything with such a person. Additionally, they rebuilt their self-esteem by reminding themselves about differences between stereotypes and their own personality.

8.2.2. A rare step: taking legal actions

Some participants decided to take legal actions when they faced discrimination. These actions do not only point to individual landlords or agents but highlight and challenge systematic racism.

„We had a friend in the eighth district municipality, and we filed a complaint there, but in the end, nothing came of it. And then we moved away, but it had a big impact on us, so to speak, to decide in favor of speeding up the move.” (Viola, female, tenant)

„What else I heard, and it is a crime, is that there were sublets, landlords who rented out their properties in such a way that they wrote that Roma and Ukrainian Roma refugees should not call. It was so discriminatory that we thought we would send the [Human Civil Liberties Union] to look into it a little bit, but we didn't bother because it was such a very, very rough story.” (Marika, female, tenant)

Tenants of Romani origin can file a complaint if they are discriminated against, since the Act CXXV of 2003 explicitly forbids both for companies and private persons housing discrimination – among many other aspects – based on ethnic background (*Act CXXV of 2003. on*

Equal Treatment and the Promotion of Equal Opportunities 2003). However, since 2020, when the Equal Treatment Authority was merged into the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights (Balogi and Papadopoulos 2020, 7), people have less opportunities to report the violation of basic human rights. The Equal Treatment Authority was specifically created to monitor and reduce discrimination in Hungary (Kőszeghy 2009, 65). Since the closure of it, people mainly file complaints through human rights NGOs, such as HCLU (Human Civil Liberties Union).

„So, it occurred to me [to report it], but... But actually, what comes to mind most of the time is that on the one hand, it would obviously be good to report these things, even to an authority, so that others don't have to go through this. But on the other hand, there is also the question of whether I want to take on the responsibility of dealing with this for a relatively long period of time and proving that it is not my origin that determines how reliable I am, for example.” (Dénes, male, tenant)

Nonetheless, tenants of Romani origin not necessary want to be subjected to a lengthy and often hopeless legal procedure. Just as the rental housing market, the legal system in Hungary is also hostile towards people of Romani origin (Pap 2021). Since tenants feel that they would have more mental harm from the legal case than benefit, they decide not to take action. Since the objective reality in which the Hungarian legal system is built on is created within the symbolic universe of non-Roma, people of Romani origin feel that they would need to prove that they do not fit the stereotypes of Roma.

In the comment of Dénes, the relational system of the objective and subjective reality can be traced. He is born into society, therefore, he is shaped by it, his double consciousness is developed because of living in a society where he is treated as a minority. Something that people of Romani origin learn early in their life. The informal regulations of the rental housing market create an objective reality for him. Due to his Romani origin, he is restricted access to services that should be given to him. These services are run both by individuals and institutions.

In contrast, since society is shaped by humans, he could choose to file a lawsuit and try to change the objective reality in the long run. To do so, he would have to face the consequences of his ethnic background at another institution which creates another objective reality. Furthermore, due to double consciousness he would not only see himself as himself. He would recognize how non-Roma gaze at him through their prejudiced beliefs. Because of all the additional legal, practical, and psychological price he would have to pay for having the same rights as non-Roma, he chooses not to file a lawsuit. In this case, he decides not to feel the burden of the second sight. Instead, he uses his agency to find a place where he does not have to face discrimination.

In Chapter 6, 7 and 8 I analyzed the focus group discussions and interviews. I focused on three main aspects of the rental housing market. Firstly, I explained how non-Roma landlords and real estate agents see tenants of Romani origin in the rental market. In addition, the perspective of some people of Romani origin was introduced. Through the eye of my participants of Romani origin, I presented how they feel when they face discrimination and how they see themselves both from the perspective of those who discriminate and their own. Secondly, I introduced who the power holders on the rental housing market are and how they choose their tenants. I also looked at if the decision makers take responsibility for their discriminatory behavior and who they blame for the discrimination of people of Romani origin. Lastly, I introduced the strategies that are used by tenants of Romani origin to find a place. Both formal and informal ways of searching were explained, next to the ways how my participants prepare themselves for the possibility of discrimination.

Chapter 9: Discussion

In the last chapter of the thesis, I conclude my findings and show how these fit to the theoretical framework. In the second part of the chapter, I introduce the limitations of the study and how the thesis could be expanded in the future.

9.1. Main findings

In my thesis I looked at the micro and meso level of the rental market in Hungary. Two theoretical approaches that particularly informed this argument were *Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckman (1966) – with special focus on the topic of legitimization of power – and the theory about Double consciousness by Du Bois (1903).

Berger and Luckman (1966) describe how legitimization of power works in the social field. Experts – in my case real estate agents – legitimize the value system of the power holders – in my case the landlords. By legitimizing stereotypes and prejudice towards people of Romani origin, experts and power holders legitimize discriminatory practices themselves.

The main argument of Du Bois (1903) is that people of color see reality through a veil. The veil creates boundary between those within and without it. People within the veil gain a second sight, the sight of those without the veil. This means that people of color see themselves not only as they are but also how prejudiced people see them. The second sight is both a weight on the shoulder of these people and provide them with agency. It is a burden because people of color have to deal with prejudice and discrimination. In contrast, it gives depth of knowledge to people of color and opportunity to react on prejudice and discrimination.

In Chapter 6, I looked at who are seen as tenants of Romani origin in the rental housing market. Here, I found that landlords and agent identify tenants as Roma based on their skin color, dialect, and way of communication or when stereotypes can be applied to the tenant. Another

finding of mine is that tenants of Romani origin describe awareness of based on which traits (skin color, name, communication) and stereotypes they are identified as a person of Romani origin, showing patterns highlighted in theory of double consciousness. Because of this, I argue that tenants of Romani origin are influenced by landlords and agents. How consciously they monitor their behavior depends on who is around them and how they are perceived by those are around them. This finding is in line with how Du Bois (1903) sees double consciousness of people of color. Tenants of Romani origin do not only see themselves as they are, but also as they are perceiving by non-Roma landlords and agents along the lines of stereotypes.

Then, I looked at the question of responsibility in relation to discrimination. I found that both landlords and agents reassure each other about their prejudiced believes, thus they legitimize discriminatory behavior in the rental housing market. Still, they refrain to take responsibility for the discrimination of tenants of Romani origin. Instead, the following persons and factors were named as responsible for the discrimination: society, weak regulations, and people of Romani origin. Landlords and agents legitimize discrimination and distance themselves from the responsibility. Yet, they treat discrimination as reality, therefore they acknowledge that tenants of Romani origin face exclusion in the market.

Closer to the end, I looked at how tenants of Romani origin navigate in the rental housing market. Some tenants follow formal ways of application and try to adopt to the value system of the power holders. Others choose to escape the burden of the double consciousness and find informal ways such as advertising oneself on social media or asking around within friends and family. Moreover, I looked at how tenants of Romani origin prepare themselves to face discrimination. Here, I found three techniques of resistance: raising a voice against discriminatory behavior, stating ethnic background in phone to avoid discrimination in person and creating moral distance between discriminator and themselves. As a rare step, I found filing a complaint to legal bodies about

discrimination. Based on these, I argue that because of possession of the second sight, tenants of Romani origin have a deeper understanding about their situation on the market. According to this knowledge, they use their informal and formal agency to either face or avoid discrimination and finally find residence. Tenants of Romani origin apply multiple strategies to influence landlords and make them trust them and rent their dwellings. In addition, they are aware that their possibilities and the way they are looked at might shape their feelings and self-reflections. By realizing that they are often seen by others in a negative way, they shield themselves and remind themselves of their double consciousness. Lastly, tenants of Romani origin are also able to challenge the informal regulations of the rental housing market as well, by filing complains about the injustice they experience.

In this research, I found that discrimination of people of Romani origin is a widely accepted practice in the Hungarian rental housing market. Landlords and agent legitimize discrimination in the market and are reluctant to take responsibility for their actions. Since tenants of Romani origin have limited options to go against discrimination on the legal field, they rarely file complains. Instead, they use their personal agency to secure residence for themselves. Stories from both power holders and tenants of Romani origin highlighted the systematic nature of discrimination in the rental housing market. And if discrimination in the rental housing market is systematic, then structural solutions are needed to solve these problems. From the perspective of the individual target, tenants of Romani origin are aware of the stereotypes about and the prejudice towards them when they apply to apartments. And while discrimination is a burden, causes many unpleasant experiences and makes it difficult to find a place to live, people of Romani origin are able to turn their negative experiences into agency. Since it is a part of their everyday life, tenants of Romani origin learn how to live with and be resilient towards discrimination. They use their knowledge

about non-Roma expectations and their informal connections to find residence in the hostile environment of the rental housing market.

9.2. Limitations and future research

This subchapter is dedicated to explaining the limitations of my work. One of it is the focus on locality. While the participants of focus group discussions were from all over Hungary, the tenants I talked to live in the capital. This happened because of the lack of my connection to tenants of Romani origin from different areas of Hungary. As a person, who was born and raised in Budapest, most of my informal connections are based around the city. In order not to risk the timeline of the research, I choose not to create new connections, instead I reached out to tenants through my existing and solid connections.

Secondly, the paper lacks the perspective of the state. Due to the strict timetable, I decided not to focus on how the state influences or is inactive in the rental housing market. While my participating landlords and agents highlighted the lack of regulations, this research did not focus on the influence of the state on the rental housing market in the last decades. In future research it would be worth to include the responsibility of the state and its institutions. It would be vital to include the macro level of analysis to gain a whole picture on how power relations work in and related to the housing market.

Thirdly, this paper did not focus on how the stereotypical image of people of Romani origin are influenced by other sectors. Politics and media – just to name a few – heavily influence how non-Roma think of people of Romani origin. The prejudiced views of political campaigns and media representation of Roma is mirrored in the beliefs of non-Roma landlords and agents. Future research could focus on the connection of these fields and the influence of them on the rental housing market and the chances of tenants of Romani origin.

Finally, this research did not focus on how we can reduce prejudice. In contrast, it tried to show the difficulties people of Romani origin face and their power to fight against discrimination. In Hungary, we often talk about saviors or success stories, those who made it. In contrast, this thesis focused on the everyday life struggles of individuals. Individual people who are just like everyone else, parents, friends, partners, students, and workers. While in our ordinary conversations we often talk about exceptions, this thesis introduced everyday people, those of whom we do not hear about in the media. Those who carry the burden of discrimination on their shoulder all the time. It was difficult, if at all possible, to generalize their actions since they are all different personalities with unique stories. However, they are all strong and brave people who find a solution to the problems they face no matter the difficulties.

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Appendices

1. Consent form for tenants in Hungarian and English

Beleegyező nyilatkozat

Kutatási projektben és interjúban való részvételhez

1. A szakdolgozat azonosító adatai:

Szakdolgozat szerzője: Szilasi Blanka (szilasi_blanka@student.ceu.edu)

Szakdolgozó konzulensei:

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Váradí Luca (varadil@ceu.edu),

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Egyetem és szak neve: Közép Európai Egyetem/Central European University,

Nationalism Studies Program

Szakdolgozat témája: A magyarországi és budapesti albérletpiac és azon belüli erőviszonyok

2. Az interjú és annak felhasználása

Az interjúban való részvétel önkéntes és anonim.

A beleegyező nyilatkozat aláírásával engedélyt adok a szakdolgozónak, hogy rögzítse a beszélgetést.

Tudomásul veszem, hogy nem vagyok köteles semelyik kérdésre sem válaszolni és a beszélgetés abbahagyását bármikor kérhetem.

Tudomásul veszem, hogy a szakdolgozó az adataimat (név, kor, lakhely – legkisebb egység kerület, város –, legmagasabb iskolai végzettség, foglalkozás) bizalmasan kezeli, azokat csak a konzulenseivel osztja meg és a kutatás végeztével törli őket.

Tudomásul veszem, hogy a beszélgetésen elhangzottakat a szakdolgozó bizalmasan kezeli és anonimizálja. Az anonimizálás során a szakdolgozó minden olyan adatot, ami az interjúalany azonosítására szolgálhat bizalmasan kezeli és csak a konzulenseivel osztja meg.

Megértettem, hogy a szakdolgozatban nem leszek név szerint említve és nem leszek azonosítható.

Elolvastam és megértettem a beleegyező nyilatkozatot. A nyilatkozatot a szakdolgozó írásban és szóban is ismertette, valamint másolatot is kaptam a arról.

Hozzájárulok, hogy a szakdolgozatban a beszélgetésünkből vett idézeteket használjon a szakdolgozó.

Megértettem, hogy adott esetben a szakdolgozó publikálhatja a kutatását vagy annak egy részét.

3. Beleegyezés

Az aláírással beleegyezem a nyilatkozatban foglaltakba.

.....
Résztevő aláírása

.....
Szakdolgozó aláírása

Helyszín, dátum:
.....

Consent form

For participation in research and interview according to it

1. The information of the thesis:

Author of thesis: Blanka Szilasi (szilasi_blanka@student.ceu.edu)

Supervisors of student:

Szabolcs Pogonyi (pogonyi@ceu.edu),

Luca Váradi (varadil@ceu.edu),

Márton Rövid (rovid@ceu.edu).

Name of university and department: Central European University, Nationalism Studies Program

The topic of the research: The Hungarian and Budapest rental market and the power relations within

2. The interview and its use:

Participation in the interview is voluntary and anonym.

By signing this form, I allow the student to record our conversation.

I understand that I have the right to decline answers to any questions and stop the interview at any time.

I understand that the student will confidently treat my data (name, age, place of residence – smallest unit: district, city – highest level of education, occupation). They will be shown only to the supervisors of the project and will be deleted after the research is finished.

I understand that the student will treat what is said during the conversation with confidence and the conversations will be anonymized. During the anonymization process, the student treats data, which can identify the interviewee with confidence, and only shares those with her supervisors.

I understand that in the thesis, I will not be mentioned by name and I will not be identifiable.

I read and understand the consent form. The student presented the consent form both in writing and orally. Furthermore, I received a copy of the consent form.

I give my consent for the student to use quotations from our conversation.

I understand that the student might publish her thesis or parts of it.

4. Consent

By signing this form, I agree with the above-mentioned statements.

.....
Participant

.....
Student

Place, date:

.....

.....

2. Consent form sent via e-mail for landlords and agents in Hungarian and English

Kedves ...!

Mégegyszer köszönjük, hogy részt vett az ingatlanpiaci kutatásunkhoz kapcsolódó beszélgetésen. Reméljük, rendben megérkezett a vásárlási utalvány és fel tudta használni.

Amikor a beszélgetéseket szerveztük, reméltük, hogy azok érdekesek lesznek, de Ön és a többiek válaszai a várakozásainkon felüli mértékű kutatási értékkel bírnak. Sokat jelent nekünk, hogy megosztotta velünk és a többi résztvevővel a véleményét.

Én, Szilasi Blanka, a kutatás asszisztense idén írom a szakdolgozatomat. Mindig is érdekelt a lakhatás kérdése, ezért úgy döntöttem hogy a szakdolgozatomat is ehhez kapcsolódó témában szeretném írni. Ennek a döntésnek a meghozatalához nagyban hozzájárult a beszélgetések szervezése és az azokon szerzett tapasztalatok.

Habár eredetileg úgy terveztük, hogy a csoportos beszélgetéseket csak a nagyobb kutatás előkészítéséhez használjuk fel, a fentiek miatt és a szakdolgozatom témájából kifolyólag szeretném – többek között – a fókuszcsoportokat is elemezni a dolgozatomban. Emiatt írok most Önnek, mert szeretném hozzájárulását kérni ahhoz, hogy az Ön által mondottakat a többiek válaszaival együtt elemezzem, illetve idézzem a szakdolgozatomban.

Mindenképpen szeretném kiemelni, hogy amennyiben a résztvevőktől idéznék, azt **anonimizálva**, csak a régió és a nem említésével használnám fel. Így ez **semmilyen módon nem volna arra alkalmas, hogy Önt ennek alapján azonosítani lehessen**. A résztvevők kilétét, eddig is és továbbra is csak én, illetve a kutatás vezetője valamint a másik kutatási asszisztensünk tudja, más nem látta és nem is fogja látni a fókuszcsoportok felvételét. Szeretném kiemelni, hogy szakdolgozatomban nem az egyének gondolataira, hanem általános tendenciákra fogok fókuszálni. Fennáll annak is a lehetősége, hogyha az eredményeim sikeresek és lehetőségem adódik rá, akkor a kutatás vezetőjével, Váradi Lucával közösen jegyzett tudományos publikáció is születhet a dolgozatból.

Hatalmas segítség lenne, ha hozzájárulna, hogy felhasználhassam a beszélgetésen elhangzottakat. **Kérem, október 22-ig jelezzen vissza, amennyiben hozzájárul ahhoz, hogy név nélkül idézzem szakdolgozatomban és az esetleges tudományos publikációban az Ön által mondottakat.** Mind a szakdolgozatot, mind a tudományos publikációt angol nyelven fogom megírni, az idézeteket én fogom angolra fordítani.

Amennyiben bármi kérdése van ezzel kapcsolatosan, örömmel állok rendelkezésre én is és a kutatás vezetője, Váradi Luca is a lakaskules.kutatas@gmail.com címen.

Előre is köszönöm a válaszát.

Üdvözléssel,
Szilasi Blanka
Kutatási asszisztens

Dear ...,

Thank you again for participating in the discussion related to our real estate market research. We hope your voucher arrived safely and that you were able to use it.

When we organized the interviews, we hoped they would be interesting, but the responses from you and others exceeded our expectations in terms of research value. It means a lot to us that you shared your views with us and the other participants.

I, Blanka Szilasi, the research assistant, am writing my thesis this year. I have always been interested in housing issues, so I decided to write my thesis on a related topic. The organization of the talks and the experience gained from them contributed a lot to this decision.

Although it was originally planned to use the group discussions only for the preparation of the larger research, for the reasons mentioned above and because of the topic of my thesis, I would like to analyze the focus groups in my thesis, among other things. This is why I am writing to you now. I would like to ask for your consent to analyze and quote what you have said, together with the answers of the others, in my thesis.

In any case, I would like to emphasize that if I were to quote from the participants, I would do so anonymously, mentioning only the region and gender. This would in no way allow you to be identified on this basis. The identity of the participants has been, and will continue to be, known only to myself and the research leader, and our other research assistant. No one else has seen or will see the focus group recordings. I would like to emphasise that in my thesis I will focus on general trends rather than the thoughts of individuals. There is also the possibility that, if my results are successful and I have the opportunity to do so, the thesis may result in a co-authored academic publication with the research leader, Luca Váradi.

It would be a great help if you would contribute to making use of what was said in the discussion. Please let me know by 22 October if you agree to allow me to quote anonymously in my thesis and in a possible scientific publication. Both the thesis and the scientific publication will be written in English, and I will translate the quotations into English.

If you have any questions in this regard, I and Luca Váradi, the research leader, will be happy to answer them at lakaskulcs.kutatas@gmail.com.

Thank you in advance for your reply.

Sincerely,

Blanka Szilasi

Research Assistant

3. Codebook for focus group discussions

Decision and power
Agent does not want Roma
Based on hearsay
Based on prejudice (no previous bad experience)
Landlord tells them
Neighborhood
Previous bad experience
Agents don't discriminate
Landlord does not want Roma
Agents advise them
Based on prejudice (no previous bad experience)
Neighborhood discrimination
Previous bad experience
Landlords don't discriminate towards Roma
Identification
Name
Dialect, words Roma use
Stereotypes

Big family
Car
Criminals
Cultural difference
Loud
Poor
Worker, not intellectual
Who is responsible
Agent
Landlord
Non-Roma
Poor regulations
Roma
Systematic racism
Who is untrustworthy
Animal
Calls late or on weekend
Dialect
Family with kids

Foreigners
Late
Looks for someone else
Low economic status
Poorly dressed
Roma
Shady
Sharing problems
Wants to move in quickly
Way of communication

4. Codebook for interviews

Difficulties to find a place
Being Roma
Being Ukrainian Roma
Having an animal
Having kids
LGBTQ+
Living in the countryside
Low education
Being a man
Lack of money
Not having enough time
Not knowing people
Emotions
Negative
Being afraid
Being afraid of being discriminated
Being afraid of not finding a place
Frustrated

Undecisive
Positive
Excited
Trust in oneself
How did they look for residence
Asked around
Internet
Social media
Websites
Self-advertisement
How do landlords know if someone is Roma
Look
Name
Way of communication
How do Roma know they are discriminated
Explicitly stated
Agents tells them
Landlord tells them
Implicit signs

Being avoidant
Excuses
It's rented out already
Other people still want to see the apartment
They will call back
You just feel it
Power
Who has the power
Agent
Landlord
Non-Roma
Roma
State, lack of regulation
Protection of themselves
Psychological preparation
Bypass the possibility of discrimination
Ignoring and distancing oneself from the discriminator
Preparing oneself for the possibility of discrimination
Showing disagreement

Taking legal actions
Strategies to find a place
Formal solutions
Communication as white
Roma landlords
Informal solutions
Facebook introduction post
Friends and family
Proving trustworthiness
Being honest
Reference letter
Trying to be sympathetic
Trying to seem less Roma
With family or friends
With money
With profession