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## Roma and the politics of double discourse in contemporary Europe

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### ABSTRACT

The article analyses the politics of 'double discourse' in relation to Roma that has evolved in contemporary neoliberal Europe. On the one hand, the double discourse promotes the integration, rights and equal opportunities of Roma, on the other, it denies recognition of, and ways to address, enduring structural violence and rising social insecurity. The article argues that the politics of 'double discourse', as a neoliberal approach towards Roma, is structured by two contradictory discourses that speak to different audiences, using duplicitous approaches to create anti-Roma consensus and maintain the critical difference and subordinated position of the racialised Romani populations in Europe. By studying the representation of Roma in the cases of so-called 'child theft' in Greece and Ireland, and in the recent 'refugee crisis', the paper identifies and discusses three dimensions of contemporary neoliberal double discourse: *racialised de-Europeanisation*, *neoliberal undeservingness* and *(dis)articulation of citizenship*.

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### The politics of double discourse

This article is a part of an ongoing reflection on what might be called the contradictory representation of Roma that manifests in a double discourse. On the one hand, a pro-Roma global microcosm has emerged, promoting the, 'integration', 'participation' and 'social inclusion' of Roma. This complex network comprises non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations, various national and local bodies, activists, experts and politicians, as well as international policy frameworks, such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies<sup>1</sup> (Kóczé and Márton 2012; Voiculescu 2017; Van Baar 2011). On the other hand, these efforts could not challenge deep-rooted anti-Roma racist prejudice and unjust redistributive systems. Even honest efforts with good intentions can preserve deep-seated anti-Roma discourses and

exclusionary social, economic and political structures that racialise and relegate Roma to inferior status.

The proliferation of equality and social inclusion policies indicate a growing recognition of discrimination of, and violence against, Roma. Various (local, national, international) actors pay lip service to 'Roma inclusion', 'anti-discrimination', 'the rights of minorities', 'protecting fundamental rights' and so forth without challenging the contemporary hegemonic ideology and structural injustice that has continued to the present and constitutes 'enduring injustice' (Spinner-Halev 2007). Some scholars pointed out that 'social inclusion' discourses may reinforce paternalistic policies (Rostas, Rövid, and Szilvasi 2015) and gloss over processes of racialisation, be it 'brutal or subtle, destructive or reconstructive' (Fassin 2011, 421). The so-called Roma integration strategies promise a short-term depoliticised, technical solution for decades of mental and material subjugation, structural oppression and racial violence.

In other words, the ambiguous problematisation of the so-called Roma issue after the fall of state socialism, alongside the development of new 'European' forms of neoliberal governmentality, has rather masked, than challenged, the historic racialisation of 'Roma' (Voiculescu 2017; Van Baar 2011). Paraphrasing Goldberg's seminal book, the 'racial Europeanization' of 'Roma inclusion' has been characterised by 'avoidance as denial of, or at least failure to acknowledge, its own racist implication' (Goldberg 2009, 162). A recent empirical study shows that 'Roma inclusion' policies leave social structures that racialise and marginalise Roma intact (Szalai and Zentai 2014).

It is tempting to overlay these discourses with such umbrella terms as 'anti-gypsyism' (Hancock 1997), 'antiziganism' (End 2014),<sup>2</sup> anti-Roma (Vidra and Fox 2014) and 'Romaphobia' (McGarry 2013). Accordingly, scholars and policy-makers have a recently growing interest in 'tackling anti-gypsyism'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, engagement with racialisation cannot be detached from the economic-political transformation of the last three-four decades, which the literature commonly describes as the expansion of 'neoliberalism' (Birch and Mykhnenko 2009; Bohle and Greskovits 2012; Harvey 2005; Collier 2011; Brown 2006).

Building on the work of scholars who have studied the relation between the racial oppression of Roma and the emergence of neoliberal regimes (Templer 2006; Themelis 2015; Van Baar 2011; Voiculescu 2017), this article analyses the role of the media in the racialisation of Roma. Going beyond content analysis,<sup>4</sup> it studies the workings of 'racial neoliberalism' (Goldberg 2009), i.e. how discursive borders are created between worthy, entitled citizens and those who lack neoliberal market potential and are treated as less worthy, 'dangerous', 'criminal' subjects. In particular, by studying the representation of Roma in the cases of so-called 'child theft' in Greece and Ireland and in the recent 'refugee crisis', the paper identifies and discusses three dimensions of contemporary neoliberal double discourse: *racialised de-Europeanisation*, *neoliberal undeservingness* and *(dis)articulation of citizenship*.

## Rage against 'child theft'

The year 2013 was a conspicuous time for media talk about Roma: In the unfolding melodrama from Greece to Ireland, where scary, dark, mysterious and certainly dangerous, 'child thieves' were commonly called 'Gypsies'. The scandalous media news on two separate, but interrelated, stories about 'blonde girls' in Romani families in Greece and Ireland inspired some scholarly articles to analyse the creation of 'moral panic' (Cree, Clapton, and Smith 2015) and the demonisation and the circulation of populist stereotypes of Roma in the media (McGarry 2013; Okely 2014). This case study illustrates the discursive border policing function of the media, between worthy citizens and 'dangerous' Roma.

According to several media stories, on 18 October 2013, a blonde, fair-skinned girl was discovered in a police raid on a Roma settlement on the outskirts of the small town of Farsala in central Greece.<sup>5</sup> There were no official papers to prove that she was the child of Romani parents. Therefore, they were arrested and the little girl was taken into care, while investigations into her background were carried out. Later on, Bulgaria's Interior Ministry announced that the genetic profiling proved that the mother of the 'blonde Maria' is a Roma woman, who gave birth to the blonde, blue-eyed child while working as an olive picker in Greece but she was not able to support the baby so had given her to a family living in a nearby Roma community.<sup>6</sup> The 5-year-old 'blonde-haired, blue-eyed Maria' was taken from the Romani family by the police. A Greek court in 2014 ruled that a children's charity is to be awarded custody. Maria will be raised, until the age of 18, by the organisation, *Smile of the Child*, which has been taking care of her since she was taken away from the Roma camp. Although it was later proved that Eleftheria Dimopoulou and Christos Sali were looking after Maria with the permission of her Bulgarian birth mother, the authorities formally removed all guardianship rights from the couple in October 2013.<sup>7</sup>

A week after the Greek 'blonde girl' case, another blonde girl (aged 7) was taken from her family by social services, this time from Dublin in Ireland, after a tip-off from a neighbour, who had seen reports of a blonde girl found living with a Roma couple in Greece who were not her parents. Despite the birth certificate and passport produced by the girl's parents, the police did not accept this as conclusive proof of her identity. However, DNA tests later proved conclusively that she was the biological child of the adults with whom she was living, and she was returned home.<sup>8</sup> In this case, like the Greek authorities, the Irish police removed the child from the family into care overnight and returned her only after the DNA test. DNA testing is used for 'genetic profiling' in order to prove innocence. So, the 'racial profiling' of Roma was considered unavoidable. Accordingly, racialisation is already inherently embedded in the procedures followed by the authorities involved.

The cases of 'blonde-haired, blue-eyed' children living in Romani families in Greece and Ireland revealed several lessons about the role of the media. Primarily, how mass media can racialise Roma, who seem 'different' from white, normative European bodies, and generate an illusionary threat to the white population from the constructed image of 'dangerous Roma'. An example of how the media can visually 'racialise' Roma is as follows:

Studies show that the majority of media stories open with vivid visual representations, detailing filthy living conditions with numerous children, who are usually not in school, residing in broken down Gypsy camps or illegal settlements (Imre 2005; Richardson 2006; Schneeweis 2012). These iconic representations of their dire poverty, lack of education, unemployment or means of livelihood implied as begging and criminality. Presumably, this kind of representation informed the Greek authorities too, when they found the 'pale-skinned, blonde-haired, blue-eyed' Maria with parents who have darker skin complexions. This well-known, reimagined and reconstructed narrative about Roma was also used by the spokesman for the charity organisation, which was awarded custody of Maria. He stated to CNN that: 'The girl was found in a state of neglect, both physically and psychologically. [...] We don't have any other information, if this girl was forced to work or to beg on streets'.<sup>9</sup> His statement indicates that criminality, even though they did not find any evidence to support it, is already imagined.

In both cases, children were taken into care, based on accusations of child abduction and, by further subtle suggestions, that they misused welfare benefits and therefore implied that these 'white' children had been exploited. Some scholarly commentaries explained that the media consistently referred to the 'white/pale-skinned, blonde-haired, blue-eyed' physical appearance of the children in both countries, Greece and Ireland (Okely 2014; McGarry 2013). In the media reporting, the emphasis on 'whiteness' became an embodied foundational act of racialisation. The racial ascription of the 'white' children was supposed to differentiate from the racially 'other' Roma parents. No media reported on the possibility that a Roma child could actually be blonde.

So, when it turned out that Maria was with the Romani Greek family with the permission of her Bulgarian birth mother, the media then suggested it was an illegal adoption for money and would not drop the notion of an inherently criminal exchange. At the inception of the story, almost no media outlets questioned the blatantly racist assumptions made by the Greek authorities as to the likely 'eastern or northern (European)' origins of the girl and were quick to call parents with missing children. There was very little questioning of the hypothesis, given by the police in Greece, that Maria was likely a victim of a larger trans-European child-trafficking ring led by Roma criminals.

Richardson examines the relation between media and political discourse on Roma, Gypsies and Travellers in Britain. She succinctly points out that the 'media is not merely a reporting mechanism that reflects events and

feelings, it helps instead to create and shape events and feelings' (Richardson 2014, 58). The cases of 'blonde-haired, blue-eyed' children living with Romani families generated a media event and also created negative feelings and solidified old stereotypes to perpetuate Romaphobia. Some scholars connected the cases of the 'blonde-haired, blue-eyed' children with neoliberal austerity measures (Cree, Clapton, and Smith 2015). They argue that these cases created 'moral panic' in Europe, to draw attention away from the consequences of the economic crisis, and the negative impact of austerity programmes on the poorest and most vulnerable populations, by creating a European racialised scapegoat (Cree, Clapton, and Smith 2015). In Europe, this was not the first case when politicians and various authorities (including government, police etc.) developed a culture to capitalise on anti-Roma sentiment, to strengthen their political base or policies and redirect criticism against the government for the ills of austerity and scarcity (Vidra and Fox 2014). As a result of the media campaign about the dubious origins of the 'blonde' Maria in Greece, human rights organisations have reported a backlash against Roma in Greece and beyond.<sup>10</sup> In both cases, the inevitable result is that media portrayals of the Roma – and the language that journalists and reporters use to describe them to media consumers – serve to perpetuate the cycle of inferiorisation and dehumanisation, hence racialisation, of the Roma.

In November 2013, after one month of such actions by Greek and Irish authorities, the GlobalPost online news commented on the incidents and linked them with racist statements on Roma by politicians. They argued that rhetoric matters because 'it stigmatizes Roma people and deepens prejudice. It also fuels extremism and in some cases, incites violent attacks against Roma communities'.<sup>11</sup> There were several reactions from pro-Roma civil society actors, against Greek and Irish authorities' actions, as well as against the media framing practice demonising Roma, including Zeljko Jovanovic who attempting to mobilise Roma activists, stated 'This should not be tolerated or allowed to pass without comment' (Jovanovic 2013). Moreover, some media reports, in the following months, attempted to understand the racialisation of the 'blonde-haired' girls and the consequences for the Roma community. The online version of *Special for USA Today* even asked the opinion of Roma rights advocate Ivan Ivanov and scholar Huub van Baar.<sup>12</sup> This step might be seen as an auto-correction and a contesting of the hegemonic racialised media representation of Roma.

Going beyond earlier analyses of the case (McGarry 2013; Okely 2014; Schneeweis 2012), this study explored how the stories about 'the blonde girls' reinforced centuries of racial hierarchy and undermined the social inclusion narrative. Contrasting 'worthy white Europeans' with 'undeserving' racialised, dehumanised and de-Europeanised Roma entitled white citizenship with disarticulated racialised citizenship.

## The normalisation of racialisation: 'Roma' and 'refugees'

In the summer of 2015, during the so-called European 'refugee crisis', Romaphobia plumbed new depths. In May 2015, the Hungarian Minister of Justice asserted, 'Hungary cannot take any economic refugees since we already have 800 thousand Roma to catch up/integrate'.<sup>13</sup> This was the first instance of the Hungarian government drawing a parallel between two undeserving, burdensome, imagined populations, namely 'economic refugees' and 'Roma to include in society'. Unlike the first illustrative case, the 'blonde-haired, blue-eyed' children living with Roma families in Greece and Ireland, the media did not generate an interpretive frame but rather just silently transmitted and normalised the de-Europeanisation of Roma, who are perceived as non-whites, foreigners, alien to Europe's culture and values just like the seemingly unwanted 'economic refugees'.<sup>14</sup>

In September 2015, the Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, asserted that Hungary's historical lot is to live together with hundreds of thousands of Gypsies.

Our situation is – irrespective of whether someone likes it or not, whether someone likes *túrós csusza* (a Hungarian dish), or not – the historic situation of Hungary is that it lives together with a few hundred thousand Roma. Someone, somewhere, has decided this sometime ago. We inherited this; this is our situation. This is a given. Nobody can object to this, either way.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, however, we cannot require others – in particular, others to the west of us – to follow suit, and demand that they should also live with a substantial Roma minority. What is more, when members of our Roma minority decide to leave for Canada, we want to make it very clear that we would like them to stay, and that we want to solve the formidable problems involved in our co-existence so that they can stay.<sup>16</sup>

The Hungarian Prime Minister's consciously coded message on Roma and refugees was widely aired by both public and commercial television channels. By comparing Romani–Hungarian citizens to refugees, they became detached from the Hungarian nation and relegated to the category of disposable alien.

In Hungary, the vast majority of the population are still informed by the television. Hungarian people spend almost 4.5 hours per day watching television on average (Messing and Gábor 2016). Although there were some media discussions about, and resistance to, the calculated equation/union between Roma and refugees that characterise the pernicious de-Europeanisation and racialisation by the Hungarian government.<sup>17</sup> However, it did not trigger international outrage, instead the most influential international media outlets remained silent.

In this widely aired public announcement, the prime minister of Hungary dehumanised members of the Roma community in the country, who represent roughly 10% of the population. The Roma are depicted as a historically inherited burden, internal aliens, with whom real (i.e. white) Hungarians have to live

together. 'Muslim immigrants/refugees' and 'Roma' are both racialised strangers in a sociological understanding, perceived to be unadaptable and alien to the imagined autochthonous culture. They are embodiments of distributable and disposable population. Robert Fico, Slovakia's Prime Minister, used the same framing strategy as Orbán, suggesting that it would be 'impossible to integrate' Muslims, because they are the same type of 'compact community' as the Roma, who are 'self-isolating and dependent upon welfare'.<sup>18</sup>

In October 2015, the Hungarian government even went a step further. The Minister of Justice maintained, 'Roma could be a target for radicalization. [...] There is a risk Roma could end up in Syria as foreign fighters alongside jihadist or other radical groups'.<sup>19</sup> Based on his suggestion, 'Roma' and 'Muslims' are not only non-European aliens, they are also prone to aggression and radicalisation. The Minister of Justice was speaking at a high-level ministerial conference about the challenges and the role of the European Union (EU), entitled 'Criminal justice response to radicalization in the EU'. As the *EUobserver* reported, the Hungarian minister was among 18 justice ministers, but none of them challenged the notion of connecting Roma with potential terrorism.<sup>20</sup> When the *EUobserver* asked the Hungarian Government's spokesperson 'why a Roman Catholic Roma would choose to fight alongside radical jihadist groups in Syria?' he responded: 'It is because they are deprived people and are usually more exposed to radical views'.<sup>21</sup> This calculated framing connected entrenched poverty with radicalism. Remarkably, it was not challenged or debunked either by the *EUobserver* or by other international media outlets. Consequently, it remained unquestioned as an accepted explanation, even by EU bodies at the heart of the European Union. The silence in the international fora implicitly acknowledge and politically legitimise the dehumanisation of Roma, slotting into the well-known narrative of 'Gypsy threat' (Loveland and Popescu 2016).

Hage observes, in relation to the 'refugees', 'not only are they transgressors of national and class borders and forms of area mobility but, they are seen as culturally ungovernable: neither assimilation nor multicultural governance works on them' (Hage 2016, 7). In other words, based on his explanation, the fear of the racial others is a fear of reverse colonisation.

A feeling of being besieged by the very people whom one is actually colonizing is, paradoxically, part and parcel of the history of colonialism. [...] In such narratives what has been represented as the 'civilized' world is on the point of being overrun by 'primitive' forces. [...] In each case a fearful reversal occurs: the colonizer finds himself in the position of the colonized, the exploiter is exploited, the victimizer victimized. (Hage 2016, 2)

The discourse on 'refugees' requires a differentiation between 'fake', 'non-deserving' 'economic migrants' and 'real' 'deserving' persecuted refugees. However, 'Roma' and 'Muslim refugees' are marked as 'pre-emptive suspects', always already untrustworthy. In a similar manner, when Eastern European



Roma seek asylum in Western Europe or North America, they are often viewed as 'bogus' refugees (Holmes and Castaneda 2016, 8). Racialised groups, such as 'Roma' and 'Muslim immigrants/refugees', are always at the bottom of deservingness appraisals. They are not only seen as non-deserving poor but are also perceived as an economic and cultural threat to the white nation. Gábor Várady, the head of the Roma minority self-government in Miskolc, an industrial city in North-East Hungary noted: 'These days, you hear ever-stronger statements about Gypsies, about migrants, things you would never have heard 20 or 25 years ago'.<sup>22</sup> The TÁRKI Social Research Institute substantiated the intensified hostility against people who are seen as alien in Hungary. They found that in Hungary in 2016, the proportion of xenophobes rose to a record 53%, an all-time high since 1992, whereas xenophilia had practically disappeared (Simonovits et al. 2016).

The apparent deficiencies of resistance and opposition against the emerging framework that lump 'Roma' and 'Muslim immigrants/refugees' into the same category provide political empowerment for politicians such as Viktor Orbán and Robert Fico. Racist statements, such as the ones cited above, are uncritically reiterated and transmitted by various media outlets. The silence and lack of resistance against the dehumanisation, de-Europeanisation and racialisation of Roma in the media, and in other public fora, reinforce their position as 'unworthy' and 'harmful' second-class citizens. Pro-Roma actors, including the specialised bodies of the EU and other international organisations, should pay far more attention to such statements and react immediately, before they are relegated to the realm of the uncontested notion, of 'common sense' about Roma. Racism is not an irrational, personal attitude, its hegemony is based on the consent of the majority.

### Dimensions of double discourse

The two media cases illustrate three dimensions of double discourse: (1) racialised de-Europeanisation, (2) neoliberal deservingness and (3) (dis)articulated citizenship

- (1) There has been a growing literature on the Europeanisation of the so-called Roma issue (Kovats 2001; Ram 2010; van Baar 2015; Vermeersch 2012) which has downplayed discourses of de-Europeanisation. The cases demonstrated that the media often constructs 'Roma' as a new collective *de-Europeanised internal alien*, on the basis of some historically recycled stereotypes that are attributed to Roma by labelling them as 'lazy', 'criminals', 'dirty', 'fake refugees', 'poverty migrants', 'underserving poor' etc. This skilful framing affects public opinion and is a result of the dominant new modality of racism, as coined by Balibar, 'racism without

race' in our modern historical period (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). He outlined the transformation of the idea of race from biological, via a socially and politically constructed category, into 'cultural differences', that are more sophisticated and subtle forms of racism.

Following numerous incidents in Europe, there is a traceable selective logic over which groups become racialised and de-Europeanised in the media. The racialised and de-Europeanised 'others', such as Roma, Muslims and refugees, embody disposable populations. They are exposed as an antithesis of 'Europeanness' by signifying a tacit formation of racial whiteness (new keywords Collective 2016). Subsequently, 'Roma', 'Muslims' and 'refugees' have been discursively constructed in a public domain as racialised, corporeal, objectified 'infrahumans' whose subordination is maintained by the superiority of the white European. The media is using a variety of strategies – including reiteration and an uncritical transmission of a distorted representation of Roma – to strengthen the superiority of the white majority vis-à-vis racialised Roma (Kóczé and Trehan 2009). Both media events provided ample illustration of the de-Europeanisation of Roma, i.e. their construction as aliens to European civilization and prosperity. 'The reproductive logic of Euro-racism ensures that those "racially non-European" are never, nor can ever be, European, or at least European enough' (Goldberg 2009, 183).

- (2) Two cases amply illustrate how Roma are portrayed as an *undeserving* population in the media. Through the neoliberal lens of workfare regimes, Roma are seen as non-deserving poor (Van Baar 2011). The media narrative about undeserving Roma legitimises the abandoning of their social rights and social protection.

In general, neoliberalising race entails the 'the increasing stress on individualized merit and ability in the name of racelessness' [alongside] 'structural shifts in state formation away from welfarism and caretaker state' (Goldberg 2009, 331). The neoliberal 'became increasingly troubled with securing privatized interests from the projected contamination and threat of those deemed for various reasons not to belong' (332).

Going beyond Goldberg's note on the importance of 'individualised merit' and 'threat of those deemed for various reasons not to belong', Kymlicka offers three factors of perceived deservingness: (1) *voluntariness*, i.e. whether someone's misfortune or disadvantage is under their voluntary control; (2) *identity*, i.e. to what extent the person is seen as belonging to a shared society; (3) *attitude*, i.e. the extent to which recipients are seen as accepting benefits in the spirit of civic friendship; and *reciprocity*, i.e. the extent to which recipients are seen as likely to help others when it is their turn to do so (Kymlicka 2015, 10).

Relying on these three factors, one can study how the two media events contribute to positioning 'Roma' at the bottom of deservingness judgments (Kymlicka 2015, 10). First, the disadvantage of Roma is perceived to be under their voluntary control, since they are portrayed as workshy, lazy, parasitic etc. Second, Roma are portrayed as internal aliens who do not belong to a shared society. They could be allocated to other countries just like refugees. Third, Roma are portrayed as thankless strangers who would never reciprocate benefits in the spirit of civic friendship. Based on Kymlicka's scheme, Roma can easily be constructed as scapegoats.

Neoliberal states remain silent about the racialisation of Roma and promote exclusionary social and political structures through economic restructuring, which punish, securitise, criminalise and disproportionately disadvantage Roma (Themelis 2015; Van Baar 2011). When Roma inclusion initiatives are depicted in the media, the stories do not explain the enduring injustice to Roma, but rather it is coded and mis-conceptualised by non-Roma as yet more targeted support for 'undeserving' and 'over-supported' Roma (Bernáth and Messing 2013; Marushiakova-Popova and Popov 2015).

Themelis draws attention to the striking parallel between the racialisation of Roma in the current crisis of late capitalism (neoliberalism) and the Holocaust of the Jews in the late 1930s and early 1940s (Themelis 2015). He argues that the Nazi leadership constructed the Jews as the 'evil within Germany society' to create a collective scapegoat. Nowadays, the Romani population has become a new collective scapegoat to mask structural inequality and injustice created by late capitalism (Themelis 2015, 16). Subsequently, the false biopolitical border between the racialised *undeserving* Roma and the white *deserving* poor prevents class solidarity among subordinated precarious populations in Europe. Instead of solidarity, defending public institutions and demos, the system covertly promotes, with the assistance of the media, the racialisation and collective scapegoating of Roma to polarise revolt against neoliberal structural oppression.

- (3) Lastly, both media events illustrate how the politics of double discourse (*dis*)articulate citizenship. Ong succinctly argues that 'the concept of citizenship has been based on a binary opposition between the rights of citizenship rooted in a national territory and a stateless condition outside the nation state' (Ong 2006, 15). The case of Roma refutes this conceptualisation of citizenship. As in the statements by Orbán and Fico, not only does race becomes coded but the political citizenship of Roma also became (*dis*)articulated. Roma, who were born and have lived for many centuries in European countries, possess legal citizenship but, by being racialised and less worthy from a neoliberal perspective, their political citizenship is not recognised, it is questioned and (*dis*)articulated.

Citizenship is the 'the right to claim rights' (Isin 2013, 25). The cases illustrate that citizenship in general, and EU citizenship in particular, is hierarchical and uneven which result in differential inclusion and differentiated systems of bordering. The media plays a key role in creating such discursive borders and – consequently – it has a prime responsibility to deconstruct and contest this racist and exclusionary rhetoric. The double discourse thus entails narratives about the protection and social inclusion of citizens of Romani origin, which are in sharp contrast with the above analysed media narratives.

Media consumers who encounter the usual stereotypical anti-Roma and exclusionary narrative are left to draw their own conclusions: the Roma prefer to live as outsiders, it is their choice, it is their 'culture' therefore that they are responsible for their situation. Such hegemonic narratives become 'common sense' – in a Gramscian sense – that obfuscate structural injustice and justify the exclusion of Roma.

These narratives resemble Hancock's explanation that Romani culture is depicted by some non-Roma as an essentialist, exclusivist and separatist culture to justify anti-Romani prejudice (Hancock 1997). Similarly to the story of 'blonde-haired' children, readers are given the option to select from a false dichotomy, like the one presented by *The New York Times* writer Dan Bilefsky, who is a regular reporter on Roma-related stories for *The New York Times*. In his piece, *Are the Roma Primitive, or Just Poor?*,<sup>23</sup> he creates a false dichotomy to depict the Roma as either culturally unable or unwilling to integrate into European society, as an 'inferior' racialised group.

## Conclusion

Studying the media representation of Roma has gained prominence in the last years; however, it has mostly been restricted to quantitative content analyses. This article investigated how specific media events contribute to the ideology of racial oppression of Roma by reproducing hegemonic neoliberal discourses relegating 'Gypsies' to inferior positions. In particular, the paper exposes 'the politics of double discourse' in relation to Roma. In limited fora, the integration, human rights and equal opportunities of Roma are promoted, whereas mainstream media tend to portray Roma as internal, subordinated others. This article argues that the politics of 'double discourse' is itself a neoliberal approach towards Roma.

The coexistence of pro-Roma networks, policies and enduring structures of anti-gypsyism/antiziganism/Romaphobia can only be understood by analysing the mechanisms of neoliberal structural racism. By studying the representation of Roma in the case of the so-called child theft in Greece and Ireland and the recent 'refugee crisis', the paper identified and discussed three dimensions of contemporary neoliberal double discourses: *racialised de-Europeanisation*, *neoliberal undeservingness* and *(dis)articulation of citizenship*.

Along these dimensions, the literatures on the Europeanisation of 'Roma issue', on racial neoliberalism and on 'anti-gypsyism' are related. Through case studies, this paper demonstrates that these approaches cannot, and should not, be separated from each other. For instance, the role of the EU in promoting the 'social inclusion' of Roma can only be understood in the context of racial neoliberalism in Europe.

Media events, such as the above-illustrative examples, are still largely tolerated, with silence or minor reactions in the mainstream press. Think for a moment, about the reaction such comments would garner if the speakers were talking about African Americans or Latinos in the United States. The backlash would lead to resignations. In this respect, Roma are truly racialised and perceived as 'inferior other'. They have not been treated with the respect and fairness that the media affords to other marginalised or minority groups. The negative perception of Roma is reinforced when the media portrays them primarily as handcuffed criminals who sell their children and force them to steal money or beg. This viewpoint gives support to, and fuels explicitly racist, Romaphobic political discourse, which is currently mobilising people in Europe around recycled and repetitive claims that the Roma are 'socially inadaptible' and incapable of integrating into Europe. In such a context, the apolitical 'social inclusion', 'equal opportunity' rhetoric disguises the structural oppression Roma face.

As Bilefsky notes: 'At a time of fiscal austerity, policy makers are raising a thorny question: after centuries of persecution and living on the fringes of society, can the Roma ever integrate into Western Europe?'. The author assumes that 'Roma integration' lies solely in the hands of the Roma. It does not. Such questions lead the dominant, white majority to wonder, 'What's wrong with the Roma? Why are they involved in all these illegal activities?'. Broadly speaking, in recent reporting, difficult questions about social exclusion, racial discrimination, structural violence and social and political oppression are simply and obviously dismissed. Instead, society comes to a very familiar, easily understandable, socially palatable and politically translatable conclusion that the Roma do all of these things because they have preserved their centuries'-old traditions, implying that Roma culture is inherently criminal and antithetical to the European social fabric.

Moreover, these stories generate a perception among white European and North American readers that 'throwing money at the Roma is futile, unless they fully commit to integration' (Bilefsky 2013). Even when the media is not overtly biased and twisted, they still rely on tired stereotypes of Roma difference, and descriptions of the 'exotic' and undoubtedly non-European Roma 'culture' as a way to invoke reader's subliminal fears and anxiety. What could compensate for these narrative devices? Accounts of

Roma as leaders in their communities; Roma as caring parents; Roma as intelligent children; Roma as banal citizens, other than exotic others or wandering musicians and thieves. The media should work closely with anti-racist and social inclusion policies that combat structural discrimination, as well as against a neoliberal ideology, which sustains and reproduces racial hierarchy. The media must construct a new narrative about Roma as ordinary citizens, allowing us to imagine them as neighbours, friends, workmates, lovers and even family members.

## Notes

1. Working together for Roma inclusion. The EU Framework explained, European Union, 2011 [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/working\\_together\\_for\\_roma\\_inclusion\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/working_together_for_roma_inclusion_en.pdf).
2. The German term 'antiziganism' recently appeared in English texts see (see for instance Van Baar 2014).
3. For academic contributions, see Selling et al. (2015) and Van Baar (2014). Concerning policy response, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on 15 April 2015 on the occasion of International Roma Day – anti-gypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II (2015/2615(RSP)).
4. See, for instance, these two recently published articles (Yuval-Davis et al. 2017; Varjú and Plaut 2017).
5. As of 21 October 2013, the CNN listed on its website <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/21/world/europe/greece-mystery-girl>.
6. As of 25 October 2013, *The Guardian* listed on its website <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/25/greece-child-trafficking-maria-bulgaria-roma-dna>.
7. As of 4 June 2014, *The Daily Mail* listed its website <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2647029/Court-rules-blonde-girl-taken-Roma-family-Greece-year-raised-childrens-charity.html#ixzz4747VDBwv>.
8. As of 23 October 2013, *The Telegraph* listed on its website <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/ireland/10400876/Irish-court-orders-blonde-haired-girl-taken-from-Roma-family-to-be-returned.html>.
9. As of 20 October 2013, the CNN listed on its website <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/20/world/europe/greece-mystery-girl>.
10. As of 28 October 2014, *The Spiegel* listed on its website <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/stereotypes-fed-fears-that-roma-had-kidnapped-blond-blue-eyed-girl-a-930355.html>.
11. As of 21 November 2013 the GlobalPost listed on its website: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/131118/14-unbelievably-racist-things-politicians-said-about-roma>.
12. As of 4 November 2013 Special for *USA Today* listed on its website <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2013/11/02/gypsies-greece-maria-roma/3189467/>.
13. See in Hungarian [http://inforadio.hu/belfold/2015/05/22/trocsanyi\\_a\\_balkanrol\\_erkezo\\_menekultaradat\\_a\\_prioritasunk-728248/](http://inforadio.hu/belfold/2015/05/22/trocsanyi_a_balkanrol_erkezo_menekultaradat_a_prioritasunk-728248/) See an English summary and the main reactions <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2015/05/22/hungarian-justice-minister-says-no-to-immigrants-because-gypsies-already-pose-huge-burden>.

14. The term of 'economic refugees' is introduced by Orbán Viktor, who simply merged 'refugees' and 'economic migrants' into one unambiguous term. 'Refugee' is legal term by the 1951 Geneva convention. It refers to a person fleeing persecution and seeking protection and asylum in a different country. 'Economic migrant' is a person who migrates from one country to another to seek better living conditions or job opportunities than in the migrant's own country.
15. Please note that official English translation of the first four sentences do not fully correspond to the demeaning Hungarian original so we replaced it with our own translation.
16. <http://www.kormany.hu/en/the-prime-minister/the-prime-minister-s-speeches/viktor-orban-s-speech-at-a-meeting-of-the-heads-of-hungary-s-diplomatic-missions-abroad>.
17. See for example the following articles on various media's sites in Hungary and Slovakia: <http://parameter.sk/ciganyok-migransok> <http://nol.hu/belfold/orban-elvitatta-a-ciganyok-hazafisagat-1562025> <http://gepnarancs.hu/2015/09/merkel-es-orban-ciganyok-es-menekultek-integraciok-es> [http://index.hu/belfold/2015/05/22/a\\_ciganyok\\_miatt\\_nem\\_kerunk\\_a\\_menekultekbol](http://index.hu/belfold/2015/05/22/a_ciganyok_miatt_nem_kerunk_a_menekultekbol).
18. 'Migrants are Central Europe's new Roma: The region's nationalists reuse old attacks on new targets'. By Benjamin Cunningham, <http://www.politico.eu/article/migrants-are-central-europes-new-roma-refugees-viktor-orban-robert-fico/>.
19. <https://euobserver.com/justice/130740>.
20. The plenary morning session is on the European Commission website: <http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I110613>.
21. <https://euobserver.com/justice/130740>.
22. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-europe-migrants-hungary-roma-idUSKCN0RV43E20151001>.
23. 19 October 2013. *The New York Times* Sunday Review See [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/sunday-review/are-the-roma-primitive-or-just-poor.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/20/sunday-review/are-the-roma-primitive-or-just-poor.html?_r=0).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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