

COSMOPOLITANISM AND EXCLUSION

ON THE LIMITS TRANSNATIONAL DEMOCRACY  
IN THE LIGHT OF THE CASE OF ROMA

By

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## Statement

I hereby state that the thesis contains no materials accepted for any other degrees in any other institutions. This thesis contains no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

# Abstract

The dissertation studies the normative relevance of transnational solidarities within the broader debate on the desirability and feasibility of transnational forms of democracy. By studying the case of Roma, the normative relevance of different transnational attachments is analysed including transnational political and civic solidarities, trans-border ethnic and national attachments, as well as hybrid and diasporic identities. Such analyses lead to more fundamental questions about the relation of political action and solidarity to self-determination, citizenship, and territoriality.

The study finds that the emergence of transnational solidarities in itself is not sufficient for the emergence of transnational forms of democracy. Trans-state forms of *democratic* solidarity have to be coupled with a capacity of authoritative self-rule in order for transnational forms of democracy to take root. The dissertation refutes both state-centric and global visions of democracy, as well as ethnic-neutral and nationalist conceptions, and argues for a difference-respecting trans-state approach that recognizes we are members of overlapping and nested polities, appreciates cultural diversity, but does not seek to accommodate it within nation-states. The thesis embraces a dynamic and open conception of culture that leaves room for multiple identities, voices of dissent and experimentation, as well as voluntary assimilation.

The dissertation exposes the proliferation of citizenship regimes as citizenship, nationality, and residency are increasingly detached; however, these developments in themselves are not sufficient for the emergence of transnational forms of democracy. On the contrary, by studying the case of Roma, the thesis identifies three dimensions of exclusion: ethnic stigmatization, social exclusion, and denial of citizenship. These forms of exclusion may reinforce each other and push the racialized poor and the racialized stranger to the margins of the polis.

Concerning the case of Roma, the dissertation provides a comprehensive analysis of the genesis of 'Roma issue' in international politics; develops a normative framework for studying options of state-bounded and trans-state forms of Romani political participation embracing both electoral and non-electoral forms; and situates Romani claims amongst those advanced by other trans-state and stateless nations including diasporas, immigrant and non-territorial communities. The dissertation argues that Romani self-determination (in the form of cultural autonomy) cannot substitute for effective anti-discrimination measures and the consolidation of democratic solidarity.

The study finds that the political participation of Romani citizens on the basis of formal political equality is not adequate, therefore special political rights may be accorded to them on both national and European levels for instance in the form of quotas or reserved seats. The thesis rejects the general vision of deterritorialization of political communities, but embraces the possibility of developing supplementary forms of transnational autonomy of trans-border nations and diasporas, for instance within the framework of European Union. Nonetheless, the dissertation demonstrates that the EU as a democratic community remains underdeveloped: in its current form it can neither protect the rights of its citizens, nor counterbalance their state-level political marginalization.

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## Table of contents

Introduction	1
Field of research	1
Focus 2	
Objectives and methodology	3
Sources and perspectives	6
Structure of dissertation	7
Chapter 1    The challenge of transnational solidarities for democratic theory	10
1.1    Transnational and post-territorial forms of solidarity	10
1.2    The appraisal of transnational solidarities	12
1.3    The critiques of post-political cosmopolitanisms	14
1.4    Cosmopolitan democracy	16
1.5    Communitarian critiques	17
1.6    Solidarity, culture, nation	21
1.7    The critiques of liberal nationalist critiques	23
1.8    Democratic solidarity beyond post-political and nationalist perspectives	27
1.9    The legitimacy of non-state democracies	33
1.10   Against global democracy	36
Chapter 2    The case of Roma: context and historical overview	42
2.1    Who are the Roma?	42
2.2    Appellations	47
2.3    The origins of Romani activism	49
2.4    The World Romani Congresses	51
2.5    The emergence of the ‘Roma issue’ in the international arena	54
2.5.1   Fear of Roma immigration	55
2.5.2   The emergence of a transnational advocacy network	57
2.5.3   The inadequacy of the minority rights regime	59
2.5.4   The special role of the European Union	61
2.6    The struggle for transnational recognition and self-determination	65
2.6.1   The emergence of the notion of non-territorial nation	65
2.6.2   The role of the Roma National Congress	68
2.6.3   The ‘Declaration of Nation’	70
2.6.4   The quest for legitimacy	71
2.6.5   The European Roma and Travellers Forum	74
2.6.6   ERTF Charter on the Rights of the Roma	78
2.6.7   Participation in drafting the EU Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion	80
Chapter 3    Analysing and situating Romani claims	84
3.1    Shifting discourses	84
3.2    Options of state-bounded political participation and representation	89
3.3    Options of transnational political participation	94
3.4    Romani cosmopolitanisms	98
3.5    Situating Romani cosmopolitanisms	103

Chapter 4	From cosmopolitan claims to theories, and back again	112
4.1	Assessing Romani cosmopolitanisms	112
4.1.1	Critiques of existing pro-Roma global civil society	113
4.1.2	Critiques of existing forms of Romani self-determination	118
4.1.3	Critiques of prioritizing the self-determination of Roma	119
4.1.4	Critiques of the idea of Romani self-determination	121
4.1.5	Critiques of the idea of trans-border national self-determination	124
4.1.6	Critiques of the idea of non-territorial trans-border self-determination	125
4.2	Lessons of the case study	129
4.2.1	Lessons on transnational solidarity and global civil society	130
4.2.2	Lessons on citizenship	132
4.2.3	Lessons on transnational and European democracy	136
4.2.4	Lessons for political theory	138
Conclusion		147
	Summary of findings	147
	Contributions	153
	Perspectives	155
Appendix		156
1.	Declaration of Nation	156
2.	ERTF Charter on the Rights of the Roma	159
Bibliography		167
	Cited official documents	178

## List of figures and tables

Figure 1 World orders on a continuum ranging from the anarchy of states to global state .....	37
Figure 2 Romani populations in Europe .....	46
Figure 3 Genesis of the 'Roma issue' .....	55
Figure 4 Transnational norm socialization in the course of EU enlargement .....	62
Figure 5 Three waves of external pressure on national governments to tackle the plight of Roma.....	65
Figure 6 Romani participation in the drafting of the EU Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion .....	82
Figure 7 The hierarchy of rights.....	86
Figure 8 Romani cosmopolitanisms .....	102
Figure 9 Situating Romani cosmopolitanisms .....	103
Figure 10 Trans-state and stateless nations .....	104
Figure 11 Diasporas, trans-migrants, trans-nations, non-territorial groups.....	107
Figure 12 Levels of assessment of Romani claims .....	113
Figure 13 Democracy, citizenship, solidarity .....	129
Figure 14 Nation, state, territory .....	133
Figure 15 Example of citizenship constellations including members of a minority .....	134
Figure 16 Citizenship constellations with two residencies, two citizenships, and two nationalities .....	135
Figure 17 The boundaries of demos.....	141
Figure 18 Dimensions of exclusion.....	144
Figure 19 Dimensions of inclusion .....	145
Table 1 Options of state-bounded political participation and representation.....	94
Table 2 Options of transnational political participation for Roma .....	98
Table 3 Trans-state nationalisms.....	108
Table 4 Example of citizenship constellations .....	133
Table 5 Example of citizenship constellations including members of a minority .....	134
Table 6 Two dimensional typology of democratic theories .....	139
Table 7 Three dimensional typology of democratic theories .....	140

## List of abbreviations

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CoE	Council of Europe
CPRSI	Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
EP	European Parliament
ERIO	European Roma Information Office
ERPC	European Roma Policy Coalition
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
ERTF	European Roma and Travellers Forum
EU	European Union
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IR	International relations
IRU	International Romani Union
MG-S-ROM	Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers within the Council of Europe
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MP	Member of the Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSI	Open Society Institute
PER	Project on Ethnic Relations
RNC	Roma National Congress
UN	United Nations

# Introduction

## **Field of research**

Tying democracy to the nation state can be criticized in several ways. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the generalization of the state as the key unit of political organization is a very recent phenomenon. The principle of national sovereignty has never been a wholly accurate representation of the position of any given state, and it approximates less and less to the situation of the majority of states in contemporary world (Anderson 2002; Badie 2000; Hutchings 1999; Smith 2000).

In a similar manner, several scholars argue that ‘globalization’ undermines the legitimacy of territorially organized democracies. Individual states have little control over transnational actors and flux that exert profound influence on the lives of citizens. No citizen may hope that his or her vote cast at a national legislative election can have influence on global economic inequality or the degradation of biodiversity (Falk 1995; Held 1995; Scholte 2000). As a result, in the last approximately twenty years, a growing amount of ideas have been advanced on democratic participation and representation beyond state borders.

In the 1990s, a new field of research emerged at the borders of political theory and international relations (IR) theory that was labelled *international political theory*. Similarly to ‘traditional’ political theory, the approach of international political theory is *normative*, i.e. it does not aim at explaining phenomena – as political scientists would do – rather it evaluates them. While IR theories analyze primarily the rights and obligations of states, international political theory focuses on the *individual*. However, as opposed to ‘traditional’ political

theory that studies the fundamental questions of political philosophy in national contexts, international political theory analyses the transnational, sometimes global, forms of justice, democracy, authority, and liberty.

Certainly, philosophers investigated the transnational political and ethical standing of individuals before the 1990s: beginning with the Stoics, through Erasmus, Leibniz, and Kant, one could enumerate several authors. What has changed in the last circa twenty years is the context of cosmopolitan theories, often described with the ambiguous term of *globalization*. It appears that in the last two decades a rapidly increasing number of political and social actors have dealt with the questions of transnational justice and democracy. Breaking out from the discipline of philosophy, not only are more people interested in the questions of international political theory, but the discourse itself is increasingly taking transnational forms.

## **Focus**

Within the broad debate on the desirability and feasibility of transnational forms of democracy, the dissertation focuses on the role of transnational solidarities and attachments. Cosmopolitan theories are often criticized for downplaying the importance of national belonging and particular attachments in the functioning of democracies (Calhoun 2007; Kymlicka and Straehle 1999; Miller 1995). Other scholars, in contrast, cherish the emergence of transnational social movements, new forms of political participation, even a global civil society (Anheier, Kaldor, and Glasius 2001; Chandler 2004b; Cohen and Rai 2000; Della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 1999; Germain and Kenny 2005; Kaldor 2003; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Smith and Johnston 2002; Walzer 1995; Warkentin 2001).

By studying the concepts of solidarity, nation, and culture, the dissertation deconstructs the cosmopolitan-communitarian debate. On the basis of the case study, a more nuanced typology

of citizenship constellations is developed accommodating both state-bounded and trans-state attachments, as well as civic and non-civic (ethnic, religious, etc.) solidarities.

## **Objectives and methodology**

In order to analyse real existing forms of transnational activism and solidarity, the dissertation studies the case of Roma<sup>1</sup>. By bridging across the normative-empirical divide, the present work subscribes to *new institutionalist political theory* (Bauböck 2008). Going beyond the construction of ‘ideal theories’ often inspired by the groundbreaking work of John Rawls, the dissertation studies a non-ideal world in the form of case study by moving back and forth between ideal and real-world conditions. In other words, the case study not only underpins pre-established normative arguments, but it generates new normative insights.

By studying the case of Roma, the dissertation aims to respond to the following research questions:

1. What is the normative relevance of transnational solidarities for democratic theory, in particular for determining the boundaries of demos?
2. Under what conditions can transnational forms of democracy be justified?
3. On what normative grounds and under what conditions can claims of self-determination of Roma, and in general of trans-border nations<sup>2</sup>, be justified?

(1) My thesis is that the emergence of transnational solidarities in itself does not imply the development of transnational forms of democracy. However, under certain conditions, trans-state forms of *democratic solidarity* may take hold, which has to be coupled with the capacity of authoritative trans-state self-government in order for legitimate transnational democracies

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<sup>1</sup> I refer to the term ‘Roma’ as a category of ethnopolitical practice. The complex questions of terminology and ‘Who are the Roma?’ are addressed in the second chapter.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term ‘trans-border nation’ instead of the oxymoron ‘transnational nation’.

to develop. In the dissertation I reject both state-centric and global visions of democracy, as well as ethnic-neutral and nationalist approaches, and argue for a *trans-state difference-respecting* conception of democracy that recognizes overlapping and nested polities, appreciates cultural diversity, but does not necessarily seek to accommodate it within nation-states.

(2) Transnational forms of democracy can be justified if they are rooted in democratic solidarity and have the capacity of authoritative self-rule. Democratic solidarity implies a desire to collective self-rule, being aware of the rights and duties our membership implies, the fundamental norms and procedures of the community, as well as its boundaries and criteria for membership. These boundaries must be significant to its members as they have to be willing to cooperate; make decisions together; share power and resources with each other. An institutional framework for deliberation, decision-making and governance is also required. Furthermore, democratic solidarity implies the recognition of the equality of each citizen under the rule of law, i.e. the elimination of all forms of racial, religious, and gender-based discrimination. Other preconditions include shared discursive spaces, a culture of equality and diversity, democratic skills and knowledge, and minimal physical and economic security.

(3) As for the self-determination of Roma, my thesis is that the struggle for the recognition of Roma nation should not be dismissed altogether, rather a dynamic and open conception of Roma nation shall be embraced that allows for multiple identities, experimentation, and voluntary assimilation. Romani citizens should have the opportunity to recollect, negotiate, develop, and reaffirm their own identity and culture. However, Romani self-determination cannot substitute for effective anti-discrimination measures and the consolidation of democratic solidarity. Given the prejudice and discrimination Romani citizens face in various spheres of life, the Romani recognition struggle aims for *both* (legal, political and social) equality *and* the *freedom* to identify oneself and live as Roma.

Why the case of Roma? Roma are increasingly perceived as an avant-garde, non-territorial, trans-border nation challenging the so-called Westphalian international order. This vision poses a challenge for international political theory, and can be assessed in the framework of contemporary debates on the boundaries and nature of political communities. As long as non-Romani citizens can overwrite one's choice of identity, the struggles for democratic equality and recognition cannot and should not be disentangled.

By studying the case of Roma the normative relevance of different transnational attachments can be analyzed including transnational political and civic solidarities, trans-border ethnic and national attachments, as well as hybrid and diasporic identities. Such analyses lead to more fundamental questions about the relation of political action and solidarity to self-determination, citizenship and territoriality.

Assessing the political participation and representation of Roma is a real challenge for political theorists. A great diversity of transnational actors has emerged in the last three decades that claim to represent Roma, speak or advocate on their behalf. Such actors include expert bodies under the auspices of international organizations, various NGOs, worldwide or European Roma congresses, forums, platform, as well as self-appointed Gypsy Kings.

In the case of Roma, these theoretical issues are raised not only by scholars, but also activists, policy-makers, opinion leaders, politicians, as well as common people. How can we integrate 'them' into mainstream society? What does it mean 'to integrate them'? What is the role of local and national governments, and what role should the European Union and other international bodies play? Who speaks for Roma? Who are their legitimate representatives and on what grounds?

The preoccupation with Roma has deep historical roots, having taken both romantic and malevolent forms ranging from the adoration of pure and free *sauvages* to their expulsion<sup>3</sup>, forced assimilation<sup>4</sup>, enslavement<sup>5</sup>, or extermination<sup>6</sup> (Achim 2004; Clark 2004; Crowe 1995; Liégeois 2007; Mayall 2004). The scientific study of Roma has similarly deep roots (Acton 2006; Dupcsik 2009; Willems 1998) in disciplines such as linguistics, art history, sociology, anthropology, history, and more recently political science.

However, very few scholars reflected systematically on the questions of the social integration and political participation of Roma in the framework of normative political theory. The dissertation thus aims to contribute not only to political theory, but also a broader political and social dialogue.

### **Sources and perspectives**

The case study is primarily based on an extensive review of official reports, statements and other documents pertaining to the transnational political participation of Roma. I also reviewed the secondary literature and often refer to the pioneering works of political scientists who in the recent years have begun researching Romani political activism, namely Zoltán Bárány (2002a; 2002b), Ilona Klímová-Alexander (2005, 2007; 2002), Martin Kovats (2001a, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d, 2001e, 2003), Aidan McGarry (2009, 2010), Eva Sobotka (2001-2002, 2007), Nidhi Trehan (2009; 2009), and Peter Vermeersch (2001, 2003, 2005, 2006). I also reviewed and build on the works of anthropologists and sociologists, all of whom I cannot name here, but whose references can be found in the bibliography.

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<sup>3</sup> Roma have been banished from almost every European cities and states in late 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> For instance under Maria Theresa in the Hapsburg empire and in several Eastern European soviet satellite states

<sup>5</sup> In the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia from the 14<sup>th</sup> century until 1840

<sup>6</sup> By the Nazi regime in the Second World War

The case study is also influenced by my personal experiences. As non-Rom, I have grown up in a mixed neighbourhood of Budapest, where approximately from five to ten percent of my elementary school classmates as well as our neighbours were of Roma origin. (However, we did not make such an ethnic distinction those years.) Later, during my university years I found out more about segregated and much poorer Roma communities when I worked as a volunteer in a ghetto of Usti Nad Laben, in the Czech Republic. I also had the chance to visit and talk with members of immigrant Roma communities who live in *campi nomadi* in Italy.

In the course of my doctoral studies, I have gradually been involved in the world of international scholars and activists. I worked as an intern for the European Roma Rights Centre, a key NGO in this field; observed the 8<sup>th</sup> World Romani Congress held in Zagreb in 2008 and the 5<sup>th</sup> European Roma Platform held in Budapest in 2011; attended (and presented at) numerous conferences, workshops and summer schools focusing on the Roma. As a teacher at the Roma Access Program of Central European University, I also assisted to the emergence of an English speaking, highly educated Roma elite.

However, I am aware of the limitations of my own perspective. As a non-Roma researcher, I can only highlight and analyze the normative dilemmas of the self-determination and social integration of Roma. These dilemmas can be turned into political projects or policy options on which all concerned parties, especially grassroots Romani organizations, should be able to deliberate.

### **Structure of dissertation**

The first chapter analyses the challenges of transnational solidarities for democratic theory. By elaborating the concept of democratic solidarity, the dissertation goes beyond both the post-political appraisal of transnational solidarities as well as their nationalist critiques. On

the basis of my concept of democratic solidarity, the chapter concludes that non-state forms of democracy are real, viable and legitimate; however, global democracy is neither feasible nor desirable.

The second chapter introduces the case study. It discusses the controversial question of ‘who are the Roma’ and clarifies appellations. These are not purely ethnographic problems but have direct and profound relevance for normative analysis. Next, the origins of Romani activism are presented alongside the genesis of the ‘Roma issue’. Five developments are identified and studied that contributed to the genesis: the fear of Romani immigration, the emergence of transnational advocacy network, the inadequacy of international minority rights regimes, the changing role of the European Union, and the struggle for transnational recognition and self-determination.

The third chapter analyses and situates Romani claims. It identifies and studies three major discourses focusing on self-determination, human rights violations, and social inclusion. Next, options of state-bounded and transnational forms of political participation and representation are discussed including both electoral and non-electoral structures. The chapter identifies five interpretations of Romani cosmopolitanisms and situate them in the broader spectrum of claims advanced by other transnational and/or stateless groups including diasporas, immigrants, and religious communities.

Finally, the fourth chapter links the case study to the theoretical problems of transnational democracy. In the first part, Romani political claims and forms of political participation are assessed on five different levels including existing forms of Romani self-determination and pro-Roma solidarity, as well as the ideas of Romani self-determination, trans-border self-determination, and non-territorial self-determination. The second part draws lessons of the

case study for political theory, in particular concerning transnational solidarity, global civil society, citizenship and transnational democracy.

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