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ROMA PARTICIPATION IN MAINSTREAM SWEDISH AND GERMAN NEWSPAPER DISCOURSE

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ECMI WORKING PAPER #90
December 2015



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ECMI Working Paper # 90

European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)

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This paper is an extract of an MA Thesis written for Uppsala Universitet in August 2015.¹ It examines the prevalence of Roma voices in Swedish and German newspaper articles. The paper explores the importance of discursive self-representation for minority and marginalised groups, and evaluates the degree to which a voice is afforded to the Roma in three of the largest newspapers in each country, across a varied political spectrum. Sweden and Germany are leaders in minority protection and both profess to be seeking solutions to the widespread discrimination against Roma within their own countries and across Europe, and therefore provide interesting comparative case studies, both due to their historical relationship with Roma communities and in light of contemporary events. This paper uses quantitative analysis to determine the percentage of newspaper articles about Roma that include a Roma voice, and the findings are analysed using theories regarding European identity-building, Orientalism, and media discourse.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Roma are the EU's largest transnational minority.² As a group, Roma are subject to widespread vilification and stereotyping in media throughout Europe, particularly those living in or originating from Central and Eastern European countries. Liz Fekete, director of the Institute of Race Relations in the UK, notes the particular characteristics of this persecution:

“The Roma face the worst of all worlds – hounded from the East by a rising tide of fascism and unchecked popular racism, despised in the South as part of a foreign influx, rejected from paths to citizenship and settlement in the North. Wherever they are in Europe, they face a variation of a pan-

European, anti-Roma racism”³.

Indeed, as the EU expands and borders have opened, the high levels of migration from east to west have made the issue of media representation increasingly important in the older EU member states.⁴

Germany and Sweden both present interesting cases in the study of Roma communities and populations. Both countries have a long history of Roma minorities that have lived within the current state borders for centuries. Both countries have recently experienced an increase in migrant and refugee populations as a result of the conflicts in the Balkan regions in the 1990s, and



are currently dealing with the effects of the accession and expansion of the EU in the mid to late 2000s. The history of the Roma in Germany is underscored by particularly grievous trauma during the Nazi regime. That legacy, which is underrepresented in comparison to other groups who suffered persecution during those years, is crucial to the nation's relationship with its minority population today. This can be juxtaposed with Sweden, a country often lauded as a leader in human rights both within the EU and internationally, which has recently gone through a deeply troubling controversy regarding a police register of Roma and Travellers in the southern district of Skåne, in direct contravention of rules outlawing the processing of personal information by ethnicity. This juxtaposition between the two countries must of course acknowledge the vast disparity in the severity and scale of the stated instances of each country's mistreatment of the Roma – by no means do I wish to insinuate that an ethnic register is comparable to the wholesale execution of hundreds of thousands of people – however the comparison of historical legacy with present turmoil is a valuable and fascinating insight.

By examining the media of these two countries, this paper investigates one crucial aspect of the representation of the Roma in Western Europe, namely how often Roma are given a voice within mainstream media discourse about themselves. Both Germany and Sweden are styled as leaders in the protection of minorities and conscientious policies, and thus may provide insight not only on the problems associated with the representation of Roma in the media, but also best practices which could be of use to the wider debates and discourses on the Roma. Melanie Ram highlights the importance of media discourse in the integration of Roma populations in social and

economic state structures, and asserts that state policies of inclusion cannot be effective if they exist in an environment that is exclusionary – and the media has a significant impact on public opinion of groups such as the Roma.⁵

In this paper, I examine the prevalence of Roma voices within the dominant media discourses of Sweden and Germany over a two-year period. I analyse the results of this research through a number of theories that pertain specifically to the exclusion of minority groups, drawing on the ideas of the 'Other' in European identity-building as presented by theorists such as Edward W. Said and Gerard Delanty, media representation and race as discussed by Stuart Hall and Simon Cottle, and the importance of access to and participation in discourse about oneself as explained by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.⁶

This field of research is still relatively sparse, although some media analysis of the representation of Roma has been carried out in various European countries. Camilla Nordberg's study on claims of citizenship with relation to Finnish Roma in Finnish press media notes a shift in the percentage of Romani voices and actors from 39.1% in 1990, to as high as 42.6% and as low as 26.2% over the thirteen-year span of her studies.⁷ Other researchers, such as Heide Castañeda and Jo Richardson, have conducted discourse analysis on the prevalent narratives surrounding the Roma in German and UK newspapers, respectively, and identified key issues pertaining to prejudices, stereotypes, and unbalanced representation.⁸ While these studies contribute to the broader picture of Roma representation in the media, there is a conspicuous and telling lack of research that looks specifically at Roma voices in mainstream media discourse. Although they highlight the impact of negative



media portrayals, the existing literature does not fully investigate the Roma's lack of access to the discourse itself, and by extension to self-determination in the public eye. This paper provides a model for the quantitative analysis of rates of Roma participation in newspaper discourse, in order to address the knowledge gap and to provide a foundation for further research at a transnational, European-wide scale.

II. WHO ARE THE ROMA? THE CHALLENGES FOR TRANSNATIONAL MINORITY POLICY AND RESEARCH

The term *Roma* is somewhat misleading as a social or cultural idea, as it covers a geographically diverse and enormously heterogeneous range of people. Heide Castañeda identifies this as deeply problematic for discussion of so-called 'Roma issues,' explaining that "many analyses... portray a monolithic 'Roma culture' or a singular community exposed to discrimination... 'Roma' is in fact an umbrella term for many distinct ethnic identities and is fluid, contextual and contested."⁹ Adrian Marsh describes the term Roma as encompassing Romanichals in England; Kalé in Wales and Finland; Travellers in Ireland (who are not Roma), Scotland, Sweden, and Norway; Manouche from France; Gitano from Spain; Sinti from Germany, Poland, Austria, and Italy; Ashakli from Kosovo; Egyptians from Albania; Beyash from Croatia; Romanlar from Turkey; Domari from Palestine and Egypt; Lom from Armenia, and many others.¹⁰ Furthermore, he notes, their faiths include Catholic Manouche, Mercheros, and Sinti; Muslim Ashkali and Romanlar; Pentecostal Kalderash and Lovari; Protestant Travellers; Anglican Gypsies; and

Baptist Roma.¹¹ Even within Sweden and Germany, there is a huge amount of variation within the groups commonly identified as Roma. This complexity presents a serious problem when attempting to examine the Roma as a transnational minority within Europe. The use of the term 'transnational' here refers to the phenomenon, explored by researchers such as McGarry, of examining the manner in which the discourse around the Roma has been elevated beyond national boundaries to appeal to international bodies and structures in an effort to identify common problems and foster solidarity on a larger scale.¹² While in one sense this might be useful for combining efforts and resources, the notion of a 'transnational' minority as large and diverse as the Roma is both complicated and contested.¹³ Indeed, the unique situations of each national minority group within each national context has provided both researchers and policy makers with something of a quandary – although the Roma as a 'whole' are experiencing severe levels of discrimination across the continent, defining the cultural, social or even linguistic parameters of that 'whole' seems impossible.

McGarry, however, proposes a solution – instead of attempting to confine the definition of 'Roma' to cultural or social heritage, the Roma minority can instead be understood as a political identity. This allows for a more fluid and complex understanding of who belongs to the group. McGarry asserts that:

"...we can research Roma as an explicitly political project by exploring the relationship between identity, inclusion and policy and can set aside problematic ontological questions. There exists a separation between Roma as a group of diverse individuals and cultures in which self-determination and self-ascription are key on the one hand, and the political identity of Roma which



is constructed as more coherent, on the other. These dual processes of identity construction are not just reproduced in different political contexts but also involve numerous actors with diverse motives.”¹⁴

This might be compared to Stuart Hall’s reference to the usage of the term “black” to describe a common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain, despite the people making up that group having very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities.¹⁵ The comparison has its limits, however – both terms are complex, carrying other connotations and usages at a European and international level.

McGarry’s framing allows this study to examine the representation of Roma in Sweden and Germany with the understanding that each country has a specific and unique history and relationship with the Roma minority, while also recognising the common discrimination faced by Roma communities in both countries. It also allows us to employ a definition of transnationalism that examines the particular situations of the Roma in each country as being part of a larger picture, encompassing Europe’s nebulous borders and regional distinctions. It does, however, have the drawback of defining the parameters of ‘Roma’ according to the understanding of the majority, rather than the members of the minority themselves. This is a risk and a common pitfall of Roma representation, indicative of the Foucauldian power structures at play within academic, political and media discourse. Richardson argues that the changing portrayal of Roma identities serves the purpose of “keep[ing] identities from fixing long enough for them to be rebutted”.¹⁶

While looking at the Roma as a transnational minority across Europe allows us to identify patterns and common problems regarding

discrimination, marginalisation, impeded access to resources and infrastructure, and – as in this paper – representation, there are significant issues with framing these problems on a European political level. As McGarry points out, by designating Roma issues as pertaining to a “European minority”, the responsibility for addressing them is passed from state governments to the European Union, Council of Europe or similar transnational bodies.¹⁷ This serves to effectively dilute that responsibility, as instead of a national or local government dealing with fairly localised problems directly, a large and notoriously bureaucratic entity is tasked with addressing a hugely complicated and diverse range of problems across the continent.

Castañeda elaborates on another aspect of this issue, stating that the Roma are further marginalised by this delegation of responsibility due to the fact that “... their alleged ‘Europeanness’ (and subsequent lack of national belonging) also functions to exclude them symbolically from their own national spaces.”¹⁸ This is echoed by McGarry, as he states that rhetoric framing the Roma as European “fuels the image of Roma as not constitutive of the dominant nation and not full citizens of the states in which they reside.”¹⁹ Indeed, through McGarry’s explanation we see that the movement to classify and understand the Roma as a European group, which was begun by Roma activists in the 1970s, has in time been used by national governments for their own ends and to the detriment of the Roma populations in those nations. He goes so far as to state that while Roma activists sought new political audiences for their political concerns, state actors instead saw the movement as an opportunity to halt the westward migration of Romani populations during the EU expansion.²⁰ This deliberate shift in the intended meaning and



purpose of the movement is key to understanding the importance of Romani actors being able to contribute to discussions regarding their identity and agency at all levels.

In posing the Roma as a threat to the integrity of the nation-state, as lazy profiteers compounding the negative effects of the economic crisis, and as permanent outsiders even within their own home countries,²¹ Europe has created what is perhaps the greatest proof against the notion that ‘European Ideals’ of inclusiveness, liberal-mindedness and value for human rights have been realised through its various transnational projects. ‘Europe’s minority’ is persistently framed as Europe’s Other, and vastly unequal power structures mean that without a serious shift in wider public perceptions, this is unlikely to change.

III. THE ROMA IN SWEDEN AND GERMANY

Reports published in 2012 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRANET) for both Sweden and Germany note that since ethnicity is not recorded in either country’s census, there is a lack of accurate statistical data specifically relevant to Roma.²²

The Roma in Sweden have been recognised as a historical minority, and Romani Chib as a national minority language, since 1999.²³ According to a factsheet issued by the Swedish Ministry of Employment in October 2014, “The Roma population in Sweden is heterogeneous and consists of various groups with cultural and linguistic variation such as Kalderash, Lovari, Churani, Kalé, Travellers, Sinti, Arli and Gurbeti. There are an estimated 50,000 Roma in Sweden.”²⁴

Roma are also recognised as a national

minority in Germany, however this protection is intended for Roma and Sinti with German citizenship. Estimates from the Central Council of Sinti and Roma put the number of Roma with German citizenship at 70,000, with 60,000 of those being Sinti.²⁵ That is the most conservative estimate included in the FRANET report – another puts the number of German Roma and Sinti at around 120,000, plus 50,000 refugees and migrants.²⁶

The histories of the Roma in both Germany and Sweden are indelibly marked by systematic marginalisation and persecution of Roma groups by the respective States. The suffering of the Roma under National Socialism in Germany during the 1930s and 40s, and the execution of somewhere between 220,000 and 1.5 million Roma during the Holocaust is an often marginalised aspect of that history which is only now gaining real acknowledgement in the public consciousness. And while the conditions in Sweden may not have reached the heights of the atrocities committed in Germany during World War II, the Swedish government’s White Paper presented by Minister for Integration Erik Ullenhag in 2014 outlines the horrific living conditions, discrimination and registration of Roma by police and authorities, and forced sterilisation of Roma women and removal of children from their families throughout the decades. The report is intended as an acknowledgement and form of apology by the present day government, as part of an effort to close the persistent gap between the living conditions and situation of the Roma and the rest of the Swedish population.

While the FRANET reports cover a wide range of issues, the segments concerning education and active citizenship (including political participation) are of particular interest.



Information on the education of Roma in the respective countries gives us insight into the accessibility of the written newspaper format as a forum for discussion – a certain level of academic achievement may be required to work as a journalist for a newspaper, and even reading (and thus being able to respond to) articles requires a standard of literacy. Similarly, the level of participation in government and civic life gives us an indication of the political agency exercised by the Roma in each country, and the extent of the ‘official’ representation recognised by the government and thus media outlets. The FRANET reports reveal that levels of education among the Roma population are a serious concern in both countries, especially for girls.²⁷ In Sweden, there is a lack of centralised representation and organised political participation for Roma groups, especially from a European perspective.²⁸ Germany fares better in this field, with the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, or Zentralrat der Sinti und Roma, which is based in Heidelberg and coordinates other state- and regional-level organisations. However it is difficult to gauge the true extent of political or governmental participation by the Roma in either country due to the lack of ethnically specific information about politicians or those holding executive or judiciary offices.²⁹

IV. METHODOLOGY

This paper presents the findings of an independent research project conducted in 2015 at Uppsala University, which examines the prevalence and diversity of Roma voices in mainstream newspapers in Sweden and Germany.³⁰ For the purposes of this working paper, I am examining only the data relating to the percentage of articles about Roma individuals or groups that included Roma voices.

I took the articles for my sample from three major newspapers in each country, across a relatively diverse political spectrum – independent liberal *Dagens Nyheter*, social-democratic *Aftonbladet*, and independent moderate *Svenska Dagbladet* from Sweden, and left leaning *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, populist right-wing *Bild*, and liberal-conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* in Germany. The articles are from the time period between the 1st of January 2013 and the 31st of December 2014, with the Swedish articles coming from the print versions of the newspapers and the German articles from the online versions. I used quantitative coding methods to determine firstly the articles’ relevance to the study (i.e. that they were primarily about Roma groups or individuals, and could reasonably be expected to include a quote or other example of a Roma voice), and secondly whether or not they included a Roma voice within the text of the article.

V. RESULTS – SWEDEN

On 23rd September 2013, *Dagens Nyheter* journalist Niklas Orrenius broke the story that the police in the district of Skåne kept a register titled “Kringresande”, in which a large number of Roma families and individuals were listed, many of whom had never been convicted of a crime. The register included the names of over a thousand children, and many people who were deceased. The processing of personal information based on ethnicity or race is illegal in Sweden, and many commentators – both Roma and non-Roma – saw the register as a return to the days when Romani peoples in Sweden were tracked and registered for the purposes of racial discrimination and persecution. As the story broke, a number of accounts of antiziganism and racism in Sweden’s police force were discussed, along with the tracking of Roma peoples during the spread of



fascism in 1930s Europe.

Though *Dagens Nyheter* covered the story most extensively by virtue of its access to exclusive information, all three Swedish newspapers provided coverage of the Skåne register and the subsequent inquiry by the Swedish Commission on Security and Integrity Protection (SIN). The Skåne register scandal is perhaps the most significant news event involving Roma in Sweden in many years, and thus received a large amount of attention. It accounts for a considerable number of the articles in this study.

There were several other major news stories involving Roma over the course of the two-year period. There is an on-going discussion in Swedish media and politics around begging, charity, poverty, and the possibility of a ban on begging, and a number of articles on the subject were published at various points. A more time-specific news story focused on the Romanian and Bulgarian residents of a “shanty town” in Högdalen in the south of Stockholm, where several evictions took place in April and August of 2013, and February and September of 2014, culminating in a fire which claimed the life of a Roma man.

A smaller number of news stories focused on the achievements of Roma within Sweden. Soraya Post, a member of the political party Feminist Initiative, became the first Swedish Roma elected to the EU Parliament in May 2014. Post’s role as a politician and influential member

of the Roma community means that she is a prevalent voice throughout the two-year period in a number of news stories. The leader of the Young Roma group, Emir Selimi, received the Raoul Wallenberg prize for awareness-raising activities among children and young people in August 2014.

Several European stories also received attention from Sweden’s newspapers. The Slovakian town of Košice was widely criticised in August 2013 for its wall that separates the Roma population from the rest of the town. Notably, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* in Germany also covered the story in May and October of 2013. The August 2013 convictions of three men for the murder of six Roma in Hungary in 2009 featured in articles in all three Swedish papers. The case of the blonde girl, Maria, found in a Roma camp in Greece was also discussed in October 2013. *Dagens Nyheter* published an article on the deportation of Leonarda Dibrani from France in October 2013, a story that received extensive coverage in Germany. Finally, the 70th anniversary of the massacre of around 3000 Roma in Auschwitz-Birkenau was commemorated in August 2014.

The total percentage of articles in the Swedish sample that included a Roma voice or voices was 32.43%. Figure 1 shows the time period of this study divided into three eight-month periods, which roughly correspond to before the Skåne register scandal, the scandal itself and the aftermath, and post-scandal coverage.

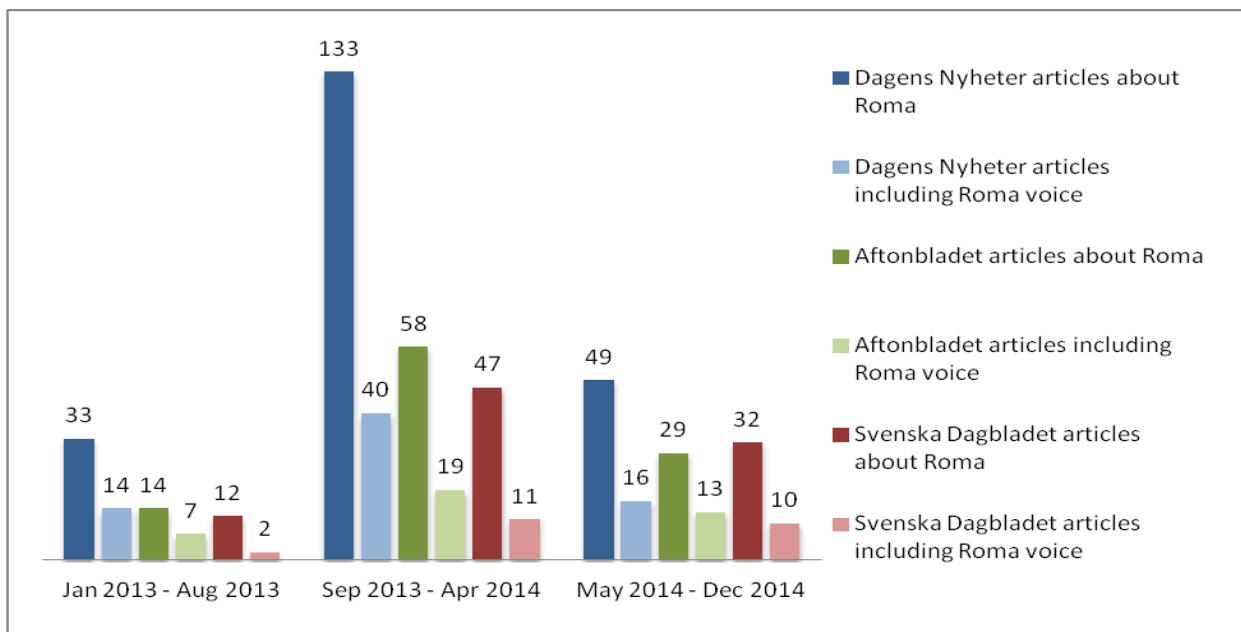


Figure 1 – Swedish newspaper articles

This figure demonstrates that although the post-scandal period contained a higher number of articles about Roma than the pre-scandal period, the percentage of those articles that contained Roma voices remained about the same during both periods.

VI. RESULTS – GERMANY

Unlike in Sweden, there was no singular story about the Roma that stood out at a specific time in Germany during 2013 and 2014. There is a noticeable spike in the number of articles in October 2013, however, and this can primarily be attributed to the stories of Maria, the blonde child found in the Greek Roma camp, and Leonarda Dibrani, a 15 year old student living in France who was taken from a school excursion to be deported with her family to Kosovo, sparking outrage and protests across France. *Dagens Nyheter* in Sweden also picked up the story of Leonarda's deportation.

Domestic media discussions about the

Roma include a persistent debate around the issue of “poverty migrants” or “economic refugees” from Romania and Bulgaria, similar to those discussions in the Swedish press. While begging, which receives an enormous amount of attention in Sweden, is relatively unmentioned, the living conditions and concentration of immigrant populations in areas such as Duisberg and Dortmund are the source of fierce debate. All three German newspapers covered the topic repeatedly over the course of the two years.

Other national news stories focused on the changing or banning of the name “Zigeunersauce” or “gypsy sauce” from the menus of cafeterias in public buildings in August and October of 2013. The Bosnian film *An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker*, centred on the story of a Bosnian Roma man and his family, won the Grand Jury Prix and Silver Bear for Best Actor at the Berlin International Film Festival in February 2013. The murder of an 8-year-old Sinto boy named Armani in Freiburg received coverage in both *Bild* and *FAZ* in July 2014. The declaration of Serbia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina as “safe”

countries of origin for refugee applicants prompted extensive political discussion in September 2014.

As in Sweden, all three German newspapers also covered the conviction of the Hungarian men in August 2013 for the murders of six Roma, including a five-year-old child. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* published two articles on the wall separating Roma in Košice, Slovakia, and *Bild* also commemorated the 70th anniversary of the massacre of Roma and Sinti in Auschwitz. The total percentage of German news articles in this

study that contained a Roma voice or voices is 22.41%. Figure 2 shows the number of articles in three eight-month periods. As in the Swedish sample, there are a higher number of articles in the middle period from September 2013 to April 2014 (despite the high number of *Bild* articles in the first period), however unlike Sweden the final period has fewer articles overall and a similar number of articles including a Roma voice.

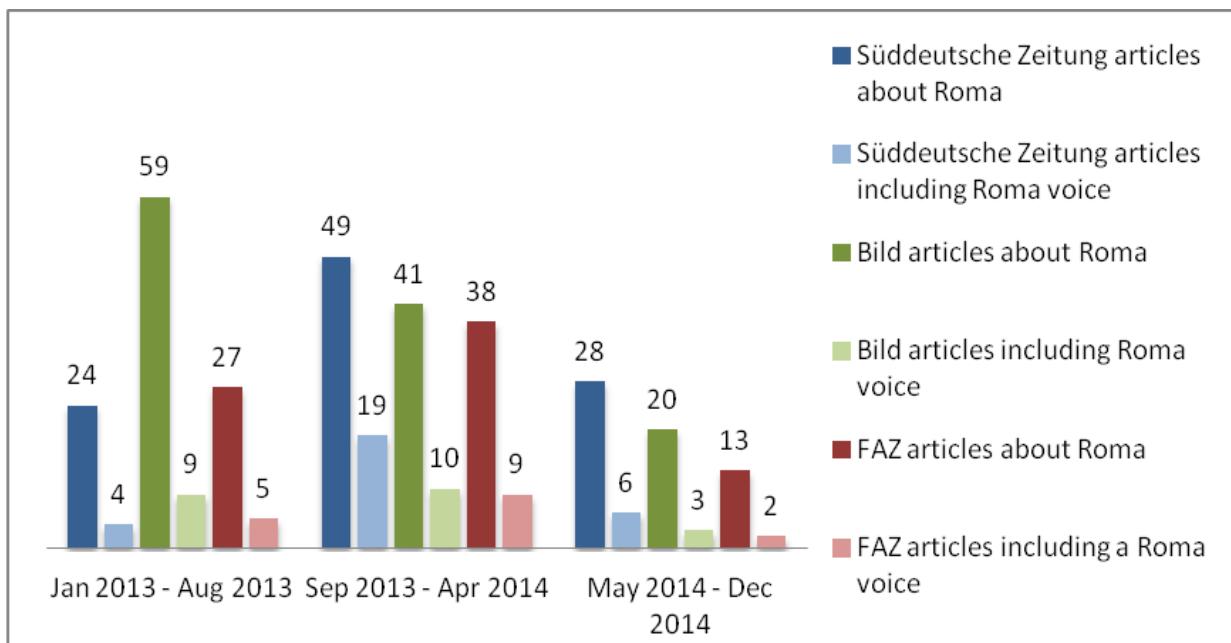


Figure 2 - German newspaper articles

VII. TRANSNATIONAL COMPARISON

In order to conduct a transnational comparison of the results of this study, I have divided the newspapers into two groups according to their

political leaning. This places the left-leaning *Süddeutsche Zeitung* with Swedish newspapers *Dagens Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet*, and conservative *Svenska Dagbladet* with *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Bild*. Figures 9 and 10 display the percentage of articles in each newspaper that include a Roma voice in six four-month periods.

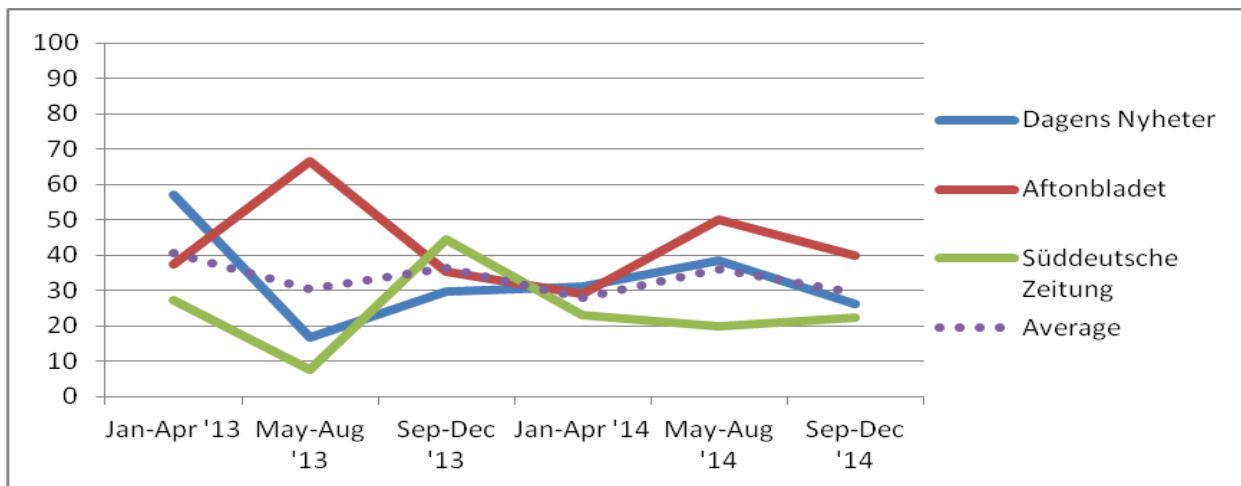


Figure 3 – Percentage of articles about Roma in left-leaning newspapers including a Roma voice over time

Figure 3 shows that although the rates vary between the three newspapers, the percentage of articles including a Roma voice sits around the 35% mark throughout the course of the two years. The combined average of articles including Roma voices in these newspapers is 33.46%.

Figure 4 shows a very interesting pattern: all three conservative newspapers closely follow the same rate of representation, except in the

period May to August 2014. There is insufficient evidence to suggest the extreme similarity in the rates of representation are anything more than a coincidence, particularly since the German news media and the Swedish news media discussed very different stories throughout the course of the two years. Nonetheless, it is notable that all three of the conservative papers had lower rates of representation overall than all three of the liberal newspapers. The combined average of articles including Roma voices in the right-leaning newspapers is 21.17%.

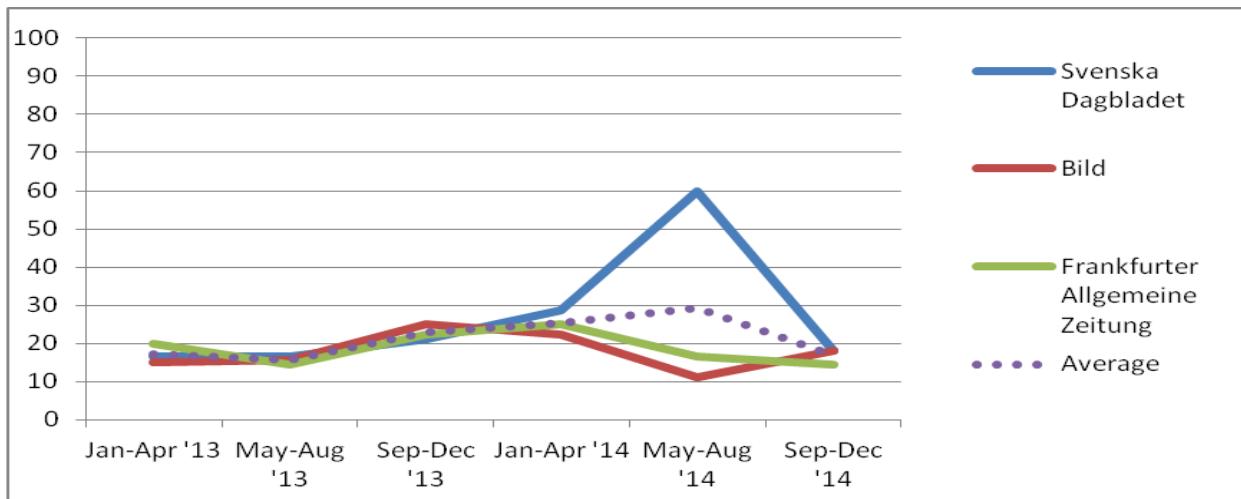


Figure 4 – Percentage of articles about Roma in right-leaning newspapers including a Roma voice over time



The Swedish sample includes nine articles written or partly written by Roma authors. While this represents only 2% of that sample, there are no articles written by Roma authors in the German sample.

VIII. INTRA-EUROPEAN ORIENTALISM? THE OTHER WITHIN

“Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.”³¹

This quote by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie could also serve as a concise summary of Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. The privileging of majority (or in Said’s case, Occidental) voices when discussing the minority’s (or the Orient’s) culture, history and identity is a result of engineered power structures that designate the majority as the site of knowledge construction, and the minority as an object to be analysed. The result, in this case, is that majority media culture in Europe is telling the story of its largest minority, without allowing that minority to tell its side of the story.

Only 32% of Swedish articles and 22% of German articles included quotes from any Roma person, when the article specifically discussed or contributed to the public conversation about the Roma. The only newspaper in which more than a third of the articles included a Roma voice was *Aftonbladet* in Sweden, at around 39%.

The privileging of the white or majority cultural voices in Europe over the knowledge or experiences of the minority itself is, according to Said, “a statement of power and a claim for absolute authority. It is constituted out of racism, and it is made comparatively acceptable to an audience prepared in advance to listen to its

muscular truths.”³² This might be contested by the fact that not all of the journalists who wrote the articles in this study are white or even necessarily “European”. However the specific case of the Roma in Europe sets them on a particularly low rung in the ladder of power, even though considering their history it is incongruous to call them anything other than “European”.

The participation of Roma voices in media discourse is not necessarily an indication of cultural integration. Much like the Bechdel test in feminist film criticism, the presence of Roma voices in the domain of public discussion should be regarded as the absolute baseline of participation in society. The media, as discussed by Nordberg, plays a vital role in creating shared narratives and shared histories.³³ It is what allows the Roma population to go from being the “studied object” of Orientalist practices to contributors to and creators of their own “definitive story”. But the simple inclusion of voices does not demonstrate how much space those voices are given, or whether their authority is considered equal to a non-Roma politician’s or academic’s. We might, however, consider that during the height of the Skåne register scandal in September 2013, only 22.2% of *Dagens Nyheter* articles about Roma contained a Roma voice, while the number of articles containing voices from the government or police was considerably higher.

As Nordberg explains, the Roma currently find themselves caught within a contradictory position in society. “On the one hand,” she says, “the Roma have continuously been defined as the eternal ‘Other’. On the other hand, they have a long historical and institutional anchorage within the nation-state.”³⁴ Nordberg is referring to Finnish society here, however the same is true of Sweden and Germany. Both countries recognise the Roma as national ethnic minorities with deep



roots and historical ties to their respective nations, and yet they are not socially included. McGarry points out a further paradox – the Roma are expected to conform to the nation state, while policy and legislation marks them as separate and different.³⁵ It is not a conundrum that is easily solved, and variations of this problem are recognisable in other minority groups. Said points out that there are similar starting points for black, feminist, and socialist studies, “all of which take for their point of departure the right of formerly un- or mis-represented human groups to speak for and represent themselves in domains defined, politically and intellectually, as normally excluding them, usurping their signifying and representing functions, overriding their historical reality.”³⁶

Adichie explains how the inherent power structures and motives of society and the media dictate the kinds of stories that get published and who they are written by, as well as the fact that media such as newspapers are the forums for the discourse at all, by relating them to the principle of *nkali*, which means “to be greater than another” in Igbo. “How [stories] are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.”³⁷ As Delanty describes,

Europe’s mastery over the non-European rested very much on intellectual mastery by which the Orient in particular was constituted as an object of knowledge... With its control of the means of communication [in this case, language], Europe was able to create the structures of a discourse in which other civilisations were forced to forge their identity.³⁸

There is no equivalent opportunity to use other forums to promote the identities and stories of the Roma; the established mainstream media still have too much power. The continuing

integration of social media into the public consciousness may provide an alternative, but still requires adapting to the templates provided by the majority in order to gain comparable dissemination.

This is why the issues of education and literacy are so important to this discussion. As the FRANET reports noted, there is a serious underrepresentation of Roma in higher education, and a higher rate of illiteracy than the rest of the population in both countries.³⁹ This represents both symbolic and practical obstacles to participation in media discourse. The ability to actively, rather than passively (as e.g. an interviewee) participate in written discourse depends on a certain amount of literacy and taught skill, and the qualifications that may be required to be hired as a journalist require admission to educational or vocational institutions. These institutions might be regarded as the first gatekeepers to public discourse, as they often have the power to determine who receives sufficient education and qualifications to participate. Given the extensive problems the Roma population has had with educational systems, both historically and today, this presents a serious problem. We see the effects of this in the fact that only 2% of the articles in the Swedish sample and none of the articles in the German sample were actually written by Roma.

It is worth noting at this point that the political leanings of a newspaper seem to have some effect on the number of articles about the Roma that are published, and more importantly how high the rates of representation are. As examined in Section 3.5 of this thesis, the newspapers with a more liberal or social democratic political stance had a far higher number of articles that included a Roma voice than those with a more conservative stance, and in



fact *Aftonbladet* had a significantly higher number of articles including Roma voices than any other paper. Despite its tabloid format and populist news pages, *Aftonbladet* is known as a forum for left wing discussion in the media (particularly in the Culture section). The analysis of the political motives behind the inclusion of minority studies would make for interesting further research on the topic.

Ultimately, it is clear that traditionally powerful media such as mainstream newspapers contain complex power structures and pressures that contribute to the marginalisation of minority voices. Caspi and Elias come to the same conclusion in their study of minority media outlets, stating that “the media-for may not suffice to guarantee the minority’s authentic expression, since they are primarily committed to the majority’s goals, whereas well-developed media-by are likely to offer a better means of minority expression.”⁴⁰ The ideal situation for minority representation would therefore include the involvement of Roma people at all levels of power within the media; however, given the inequality at all levels of the system, this is unlikely to be the case for many years to come – if ever.

IX. THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNHEARD VOICES

One of the most fundamental issues in the case of the Roma as a minority is that they have no “home country” or state beyond the one they live in, that could advocate for them or create a sense of belonging – they are an intrinsic part of the national population of almost every European country. Yet media and political discourse works to keep them outside this definition. The media’s representation does not simply reflect the Roma’s position in society; it creates and perpetuates their

marginalisation.

Nordberg argues that “the media, in this case the daily press, has the potential of involving all kinds of voices or agents, debating all kinds of issues. Access to the media brings about the power of influencing those claims which successfully reach the public arena.”⁴¹ Without the tools to access the media, most of which are given to the individual through education, and without the will of media gatekeepers, the lack of access becomes a cyclic problem. McGarry notes the same problem in academia: “The presence of ‘a Romani voice’ within research is crucial so that Roma do not remain mere objects of research but become active players in informing research agendas.”⁴²

As it stands, Roma voices are not given priority or even necessarily authority in discussions about Roma issues and identity in newspaper discourse. This study has shown that in both Sweden and Germany, over twice as many articles specifically about the Roma do not contain Roma voices at all compared to those that do. As long as journalists, commentators, politicians and other figures are given more power to determine how the Roma are depicted than the Roma themselves, we cannot consider the media to present a fair or accurate depiction. Given both Sweden and Germany’s leadership roles within Europe, this is a grave signal to the rest of the continent. The marginalisation of Roma voices in the media contributes to the homogenisation of the many different groups and identities that fall under the term “Roma”, and perpetuates harmful stereotypes. As Adichie concludes,

“I’ve always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all of the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our



equal humanity difficult. It emphasises how we are different rather than how we are similar.”⁴³

X. TOWARDS CONTESTATION AND MORE COMPLEX REPRESENTATION

There are lessons to be learned from the cases of Germany and Sweden, however. While the development and implementation of inclusive social policy is important, it must be combined with the impetus for social change, and media narratives are uniquely placed to facilitate this. It will require a fundamental change in the approach to knowledge production about the Roma, and we must ask ourselves, as Said does, “how knowledge that is non-dominative and non-coercive can be produced in a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions and the strategies of power.”⁴⁴

The results of this study do show that Sweden has somewhat better levels of participation and representation than Germany overall, particularly in that there are articles actually written by Roma published in all three major newspapers within the time period of this study, on a variety of topics. This kind of active participation in the media (rather than passively being interviewed) is sadly absent from the German articles.

More telling than the national divide, however, is the political divide. Left-leaning newspapers have a higher percentage of articles including Roma voices than right-leaning newspapers overall. The association of left-wing politics with progressive policy and social responsibility seems to hold true in this instance. This is consistent with the higher levels of representation in Sweden, which is a traditionally left-wing social democratic nation, compared to

Germany, in which the conservative Christian Democrats enjoy widespread political leadership.

Unfortunately, there do not seem to have been significant improvements in the representation or participation of the Roma within the two-year period included in this study. The data shows that although the number of articles about Roma in Sweden increased in the wake of the Skåne register scandal, the percentage of those articles that contained a Roma voice did not. In Germany, there were fewer articles about Roma in the latter period of the study than in the earlier ones. Both countries saw the percentage of articles including a Roma voice remain more or less stable over time, fluctuations due to specific stories or total numbers of Roma-related articles notwithstanding.

The participation of Roma voices in discourse allows for contestation of stereotypes and inaccuracies. Hall investigates the many methods of contestation employed by those falling under the ‘black’ identity in Britain, and notes that all of those include participation. Minority media outlets such as É Romani Glinda in Sweden are already working to counteract the stereotypes and misrepresentation of the mainstream media while also consulting with government agencies and conducting educational programs. It is this kind of multifaceted approach that is most likely to see effective results – improving the educational and governmental participation of Roma while simultaneously working to improve media representation. The link between these three aspects deserves further attention, and holds the key to developing best practices for media outlets and governments in the future.

Ultimately Germany and Sweden have a responsibility, both to their national Roma populations and to the wider European community, to uphold the Roma’s right to be



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understood, as detailed by Husband.⁴⁵ There is significant room for improvement in the practices of mainstream media outlets and journalists to provide more space and opportunity for the voices of Roma to be heard, and to tell their own stories. The methods and theories employed in this research also provide ample scope for further investigation into the causes and consequences of mis- or underrepresentation. Sweden and Germany

must actively seek to comprehend the Roma in a manner that goes beyond understanding them as the Other, and recognises the Roma as a core component of their own national identities. In this way, we might see a way for the media itself to lift the stories of the Roma out of the margins and obscurity, and bring the unheard voices to the public's attention.



Notes and References

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⁵ Melanie H. Ram, “Europeanization and the Roma: Spreading the Norms of Inclusion and Exclusion,” paper presented at the 10th Biennial Conference of the European Community Studies Association - Canada, 8-10 May 2014, Montreal.

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¹⁷ McGarry, *ibid*, 767.

¹⁸ Castañeda, *ibid*, 4.

¹⁹ McGarry, *ibid*, 767.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 766-67.

²¹ Fekete, *ibid*.

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²⁴ Swedish Ministry of Employment, “A Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2012-2032” (Stockholm, 2014), at <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/176ade8198a9418ab33a449833b65f3a/fact-sheet-a-strategy-for-roma-inclusion-2012-2032>

²⁵ Lechner, *ibid*, 6.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

²⁷ Skaraborg Institute for Research and Development, *ibid*. Lechner, *ibid*.

²⁸ Skaraborg Institute for Research and Development, *ibid*, 38

²⁹ Lechner, *ibid*.

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³³ Nordberg, *ibid*, 87-88.

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