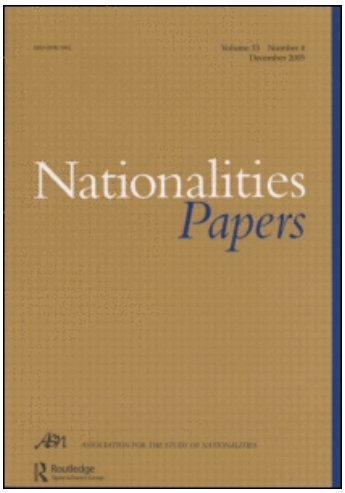

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Aidan McGarry

Introduction

There have been attempts to detail the representation of the Romani community with a focus on both the domestic[1] and transnational[2] political context; however, less is known about how Roma create organizing structures of representation and the role of these structures within the broader social movement. This article seeks to add to this growing research by analysing Roma representation in the transnational political context, as well as unpacking the relationship between ethnic group identity and shared interests. By understanding that ethnic group identity and shared interests are intertwined in the case of Roma, we can begin to understand the numerous challenges faced by the Roma social movement, particularly those relating to political participation and adequate representation.

First it is necessary to establish some common ground in ontological categories and conceptual definitions. "'Roma' is the name increasingly used by academics, activists, and politicians to refer to a wide variety of communities predominantly occurring in Central and Eastern Europe that have adopted different groups and sub-groups over time."[3] The creation of the endonyme of "Roma" is important in that naming oneself is a crucial component of a social movement and represents the elaboration of a collective identity.[4] It should not be assumed, however, that the endonyme "Roma" is unproblematic. Roma are extremely heterogeneous and house diverse communities such as Sinti, Manush, and Lovari, amongst others, each with their specific culture and interests. Although these communities are diverse, they share the same history in that their name has traditionally evoked negative connotations from the rest of society. It is this shared persecution which has led to alliances with the Traveller community in Western Europe. Furthermore, as Vermeersch elaborates: "the introduction of the term 'Roma' reflects an attempt to break away from this social stigma and to produce a more positive image of themselves as a single ethnic group occurring in different countries."[5] Particularly after the collapse of communism, Roma became subject to pronounced discrimination and persecution, sometimes spilling into violence, murder and pogroms as Roma found themselves cast as scapegoats as structural

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changes magnified their predicament as "the poorest, most disadvantaged and despised of all East Europeans."[6] In the early 1990s this led to an increase in civic awareness as Roma attempted to define their interests and secure access to political structures, as well as creating new ones through ethnic mobilization.[7] Thus "Roma" serves as a catch-all term propagated by elites within the Roma social movement which attempts to provide a unified voice to the international community, although most Roma in Central and Eastern Europe refer to themselves as "Gypsies." Prominent actors within the Romani community have highlighted the importance of strengthening *jekhipe*—oneness—whilst simultaneously embracing the diversity within Romani culture and among Romani peoples.[8]

This article cautions against assuming that a distinctive ethnic group possesses a strong and well-developed identity. Thus while Roma are the largest and most geographically dispersed minority group in Europe, they do not share a cohesive identity. This is due to differences in, amongst others, geography, income, occupation, language, religion, and familial and clan ties. This has resulted in a fragmented identity, and often Roma themselves are unwilling to identify as Romani due to the perception that this will result in further persecution.[9] This is not to say that identity cannot be constructed. Indeed, actors continually attempt to construct identities through intersubjective interaction within and between groups, and identity building has been cited as a key task for the Romani community.[10] This article contends that there is a direct link between identity and interests, and reconciling this conceptual cleavage involves theorizing the political participation of Romani actors within existing and developing organizing structures of representation.

By sidestepping issues of power and tactics in formal structures the analysis is able to concentrate on identity and the socio-cultural context in which identity is both constructed and embedded. In this respect formal organizations are an expression of culture and identity.[11] Some scholars have emphasized that identity is a strategy[12] whilst others have suggested that identity is a choice, something which the individual can opt into,[13] ignoring identity's constructed and relational qualities. In addition, identity always works in relationship to, and interacts with, other social processes and variables,[14] which is why it is futile to analytically separate identity from interests in the Roma social movement. The role of values, identity and interests emerges prominently in this macrosociological approach and it is postulated that the (re)construction of identity becomes a key task of any social movement. Thus a social movement is a "socially constructed collective reality,"[15] and Roma construct this reality with reference to their ethnic group identity with the purpose of articulating their shared interests.

Sometimes a section of society is systematically discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity and/or "race" and come to understand themselves as a targeted population or community. For instance, Simhandl points out that the EU explicitly links the discrimination which Roma face to their "way of life,"[16] that is, their ethnicity. The result of these processes of oppression can be that more attention is placed on

the needs of the community rather than on the needs of individuals within the community. In practice, this often means that the "representation of minority ethnic communities in the public sphere functions in accordance with 'racial' and ethnic stereotypes."[17] This can provoke reactions such as passive resignation whereby the community simply accept this practice and take no action, or they can engage this ethnic identity and create a positive self-image which they can project onto the majority to challenge dominant norms and practices. The Roma social movement engages in a form of collective action through the creation of organizing structures of representation which challenges dominant norms and practices to effect a positive change for the Romani community.

The Romani community is targeted through discriminatory practices as a group, which means that their interests are shared. Put simply, Roma are marginalized and oppressed collectively *because of* their ethnic group identity, resulting in their interests being informed by this collective experience. Sometimes interests are general (addressing discrimination) and sometimes they are specific (preventing the perpetuation of negative stereotypes in the media), but as a rule ethnic identification will dictate which interests are articulated. Because Roma retain many interests (both individual and shared), the role of organizing structures of representation becomes important, for it is through these institutions that shared interests find expression. The institutional form through which mobilization itself is communicated is a crucial determinant of successful ethnic mobilization. A single organization which articulates the interests of an ethnic group would appear to be the most effective way to guarantee cohesion and effective representation; however, as noted above, Roma are so divided along occupational and tribal lines (amongst others) that expecting one single organization to articulate their interests is unrealistic. This has meant that Romani organizations, both political and non-political, have proliferated in the domestic and transnational political contexts, resulting in fragmentation and competition.

For organizational purposes this article is divided into six sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the literature on ethnic group identity and social movements. The second section offers an introduction to how Roma have organized in the transnational political context. The third, fourth and fifth sections detail three transnational organizing structures of representation: international non-governmental organizations (the third section); Transnational Advocacy Networks (the fourth section); and the European Roma and Traveller Forum (the fifth section). Finally, the sixth section summarizes the main arguments and provides a conclusion.

Ethnic Group Identity and the Roma Social Movement

The Romani community is a "new social movement,"[18] which means that through collective action they struggle for the appropriation of shared values and interests. The actors involved in the movement can be described as "united by a specific

solidarity,"[19] despite being derived from a heterogeneous composition. The success of a social movement depends on a number of strategic factors including leadership, organization, opportunities and material resources;[20] however, the role and impact of identity is often overlooked.[21] This article does not dispute the importance of these strategic factors but instead attempts to draw attention to the role of identity and its impact on interests.

Whilst Roma are geographically dispersed and divided across religious, tribal, class, occupational, and linguistic lines, ethnic identity acts as an adhesive for this heterogeneous group. Thus ethnic group identity is not a tangible artefact but is a robust reference point continually contested and constructed in a given political context. Ethnicity is not an objective "given" but must be understood as a consequence of a social process;[22] therefore, this ethnic group identity is not static but is something which is "constantly shaped and reconstructed"[23] in socio-political contexts. The ethnic identity of Roma is directly linked to shared interests which are publicly articulated in both the domestic and transnational political contexts through organizing structures of representation. It has been argued that since the early 1990s there has been a turn towards ethnic identification as a framework for political mobilization for the Romani community.[24] Brubaker et al. have argued convincingly that "ethnicity is not a thing, an attribute, or a distinct sphere of life, it is a way of understanding and interpreting experience, a way of talking and acting, *a way of formulating interests and identities*."[25] Research on social movements has emphasized that group identities are produced and continually redefined by a process of collective action.[26] Brubaker has shown how the analytical focus should not be on the substance of the group (i.e. its "groupness") but on the processes and interactions which create ethnic group identity;[27] thus the role of activists, advocates, institutions and political discourses are of paramount importance. This article agrees and maintains that by focusing on actors, institutions and political discourses, such as interests, the ethnic group identity of Roma is negotiated through organizing structures of representation.

Roma have been characterized as a nation, a community, as well as a distinct ethnic group, and through the advocacy and activism of political elites from within the Romani community they can be accurately described as a social movement. However, the Roma social movement comprises only a relatively small number of individuals. Moreover, there are some who question the existence of a Roma social movement,[28] though this appears to centre on the number of actors involved and whether these elites can legitimately claim to represent the Romani community as a whole. Therefore it is important to recognize that political struggles expressed in organizational practices are a very real phenomenon which attracts attention from academics, politicians, and journalists within and beyond the Roma social movement even if these practices involve only a small fraction of the community in question. This article focuses on the advocacy and activism of these elites as they attempt to articulate the interests of the Romani community in the transnational political context.

The Roma Social Movement: Transnational Political Context

Since Roma are a transnational minority[29] which has no kin state, it means their situation is not comparable with any other minority group in Europe. Furthermore, some claim that "the Roma are Europe's largest and most vulnerable minority,"[30] meaning that the transnational political context cannot be ignored when analysing the Roma social movement. On arriving from India, Roma dispersed across Europe and their heterogeneity and diversity have prompted some to describe this community as an "archipelago."[31] Hancock points out that "it is widely felt that the fragmentation of our once cohesive population has been the result of hostile, external factors, not voluntary internal ones."[32] In this sense Romani identity is dialogical in that it has been constructed and deconstructed by *gadje* (non-Roma). A general criticism raised by Romani political elites is that non-Roma have had an impact on the construction of Romani group identity, which should not be the case. However, this position fails to appreciate how fragmentation is exacerbated by the heterogeneity of the Romani community as well as the competing claims of elites within the Roma social movement.

The transnational political context provides a useful empirical milieu to analyse Romani activism and advocacy. Mirga and Gheorghe maintain that Romani and civic activists define their concerns as being mainly political:

> they want to see the status of the Roma upgraded and demand full recognition of their linguistic, cultural, and political rights as a distinct minority. They insist on better negotiating positions with local, national and international authorities and expanded participation and representation in policy-making bodies at all levels.[33]

The relevance of transnational organizing structures of representation has become pronounced, particularly since the early 1990s when the international political community began to focus their spotlight on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe when the knowledge of their discrimination and poverty became more widespread and the effects of this, such as East to West migration of Romani economic migrants and asylum seekers, became more tangible to Western governments and institutions.[34]

Transnational organizing structures of representation are a site for the cultivation and diffusion of understandings of ethnic identity and interests. The article is careful not to introduce ethnic identity in order to "explain" the formation and articulation of interests; rather, it is maintained that ethnic identity forms the background knowledge and experience of elites within transnational organizing structures of representation. It is ethnopolitical entrepreneurs in the Roma social movement who politicize ethnicity through rhetoric, discourse and institutional practices[35]—found in reports and resolutions, statements and testimonies, and sub-institutional fora such as working groups.

The following three sections outline how Roma have created organizing structures of representation in the transnational political context. These organizing structures of

representation are created with reference to their ethnic group identity and their purpose is to articulate the shared interests of the Romani community. Whilst these organizing structures of representation claim either to represent or to advocate on behalf of the Romani community, due to spatial constraints this article does not evaluate whether these structures legitimately articulate and represent the interests of Roma.

Romani International NGOs (INGOs)

The main difference between non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) is their target audience. Whilst domestic NGOs focus their attention on state structures, INGOs lobby principally in international organizations.[36] The relationship between NGOs and INGOs is important as domestic NGOs bring a sense of connection to INGOs; indeed, many of those involved in Romani INGOs have previously worked for NGOs in their respective states. Through the repertoires of networking and lobbying,[37] Romani INGOs ensure that the international political community recognizes the organization, the Romani community, and their shared interests. This can result in the granting of consultative status or being invited to present reports at the plenary sessions of international organizations. Steiner points out that because INGOs have a greater claim to objectivity "their reports command attention as they cannot be disregarded as partisan politics."[38] The creation of organizing structures of representation such as INGOs is a crucial element of any social movement. Whilst Romani INGOs are not a single-issue organizing structure of representation such as Human Rights Watch or Greenpeace, they are cohesive in the sense that they are united by a shared vision—namely to improve the lives of Roma. Through making their voices heard to the international political community, INGOs are able to articulate the shared interests of Roma, reflecting diverse issue areas such as migration and addressing socio-economic disparities. Two INGOs are considered in turn: the International Romani Union and the Roma National Congress.

International Romani Union (IRU)

The Prague-based IRU is the executive body of the International Romani Congress which first convened in London in 1971, although the IRU was established in 1977. It is charged with lobbying and negotiating with and within the international political community on Romani issues. According to many activists, the Romani nation exists but it is more symbolic than a realistic goal. The concept of a "nation" as it is used in the European Westphalian tradition does not apply to the Romani case[39] and should more accurately be described as a "politically self-aware ethnic community."[40] Such an understanding of nation is not dependent on a fixed territorial unit and offers the possibility that Roma could be recognized as a nation and accorded

certain rights and duties as a result, for example having a seat at the United Nations General Assembly.[41] This would require an understanding of a transnational citizenship[42] for Roma and the right to representation that this concept implies, the rationale being that Roma should be in control of their destinies and be given the opportunity to secure representation and articulate their shared interests for themselves, by themselves. Only the Romani community can define their shared interests in that ethnic group identity and shared interests are inextricably linked. Without direct input and consultation with Roma, shared interests are assumed a priori by governments and international organizations, reflecting their respective ideas on the issues and concerns of the Romani community. Recognition of Roma as a transnational nation with a specific ethnic group identity is the first step for the Roma social movement to be empowered to articulate these interests.[43]

Since the early 1990s the IRU has become a more prominent pressure group representing the Romani community at seminars and conferences with international organizations including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Council of Europe, and the EU.[44] The Fifth[45] World Romani Congress in Prague in 2000 provided participants with the opportunity to come together and articulate their shared interests. The most reliable indication of these shared interests can be found in the creation of specialized working groups which met separately from the plenary meeting.[46] These working groups included: Education and Culture; Standardisation of the Romani Language; Migration; Holocaust Restitution Issues; Kosovo; the Media; International Politics and Relations; Economic and Social Issues; and the proposed new IRU Statutes and Charter.[47] The resulting Declaration of the Roma Nation has been presented to Heads of State and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.[48] Whilst the Charter expresses the lofty ambition to be the political representative of all Roma including Sinti, Lovari, Chorichani, Rumungre, Vlach, Manush, etc.,[49] it has at the very least codified these statutes. The Sixth World Romani Congress was held in Lanciano in 2004 and pledged to fight racism targeting Roma, but suffered from poor attendance.[50]

Roma National Congress (RNC)

In many ways the Hamburg-based RNC echoes the work of the IRU in that it calls for Roma to be recognized as a nation. A key tenet of its work has been pushing for the establishment of a European Romani Rights Charter which was first proposed in 1994 and would include a catalogue of legally binding cultural and political rights. The Charter would define the "legal position of the Roma in Europe and is intended to prevent the legal gaps which in the past have led to the displacement of Romani persons across Europe."[51] It maintains that this robust legislative intervention would help combat anti-gypsism, help protect Romani communities in signatory states, and serve as an instrument in securing long-term emancipation and integration. The cornerstone of RNC ideology is that Roma should not be treated as a "social

problem" by states and international organizations which can be remedied through increasing access to education and other social policy provisions; rather, it maintains that addressing anti-gypsism is the most important shared interest in improving the situation of Roma. This anti-gypsism is embedded in the social practices of the majority of society which associates Roma with pejorative connotations. It is only by addressing this anti-gypsism through pragmatic measures that the exogenously imposed negative ascription of Romani ethnic group identity can be challenged and renegotiated.

The RNC was set up in 1982 as an umbrella organization as it was felt that the interests of German Sinti clashed with the interests of immigrant Roma in Germany.[52] They maintain that Sinti had a distinct identity, as a *Volksgruppe*[53] and therefore had their own shared interests. Its aim is to unite domestic Romani NGOs across Europe and has members in 42 states. It has no President, only a Board who are responsible for its management and articulating the shared interests of Roma; therefore, interests are defined by elites within the Roma social movement. This schism highlights the tension in the Roma social movement because Roma are often treated as a cohesive unit with a common group identity without due regard to the differences within this heterogeneous minority group. Traditionally, Roma representatives have been those accepted by national and regional administrations as speakers on behalf of Roma but the interests articulated by Romani elites only reflect in part the interests of the Romani communities.[54] By arguing that Roma occupy a unique position both historically and politically as one of Europe's legitimate nations, the RNC holds this group as a vulnerable and culturally oppressed group. According to the RNC, "their emancipation process needs to draw on common roots and common perspectives beyond citizenship, group affiliation, or country of origin."[55] Thus, being a stateless and non-territorial nation in Europe, confronted with racism and persecution throughout its history, the Romani community requires special protection.

The key role of the IRU and the RNC is to give a voice to the Romani community in the international political context. The creation of the IRU in 1971 and the RNC in 1982 both pre-dated the proliferation of organizing structures of representation in Central and Eastern European countries following the collapse of communism. The RNC and IRU base their strategies on cultural arguments rather than political programmes by emphasizing the inherent worth of the Romani community. These include past experience, similarities of the Romani communities in social status and cultural characteristics, dispersion throughout Europe and beyond, anti-gypsism, and discrimination.

Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs)

Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) differ from INGOs in their form and function. As organizing structures of representation they often complement one

another, although their respective purpose, repertoire, and behaviour are distinct. A TAN includes "those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services."[56] Risse et al. have demonstrated how TANs have used the human rights norm to challenge state rule over society.[57] These TANs represent more than a "moral crusade,"[58] and, as Keck and Sikkink explain, they "represent ideas, not constituencies."[59] TANs are a crucial element in the Roma social movement as they can offer specialized skills and knowledge such as familiarity and expertise on a given issue. This section considers two TANs working on Romani issues: the European Roma Rights Centre and the Open Society Institute—Roma Participation Programme.

European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC)

The Budapest-based ERRC was established in 1996 and works to combat prejudice and discrimination against Roma, and to promote genuine equality of treatment and respect. Its advocacy is based on international law which is used as a tool to induce compliance with norms and conventions and is guided by the principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, meaning that if a state signs a treaty or convention then it agrees to abide by its rules. The ERRC as a public interest organization argues before domestic courts to criticize domestic law or conduct as violating international norms, particularly in the area of discrimination. As Vermeersch explains: "besides documenting and publicizing the systematic lack of human rights protection and sending protest letters to 'shame' governments, the ERRC also started to provide targeted legal help, including litigation, to Romani victims of human rights violations."[60] The ERRC is particularly adept at information gathering and dissemination by employing a variety of media to communicate their message and activity.[61]

Crucially, as a TAN the ERRC does not claim to represent Roma; rather, it advocates on their behalf.[62] This distinction is important due to the funding and staffing of the ERRC. There have been accusations that TANs are "elite institutions, managed bureaucratically by bourgeois intellectuals and activists, socially and culturally isolated from the constituencies [. . .] that they assist."[63] Those working in the ERRC and the OSI-RPP are not always Romani in ethnic origin.

Open Society Institute—Roma Participation Programme (OSI-RPP)

The dependence on private donors means that TANs are also dependent on the programmatic priorities of the funding organizations.[64] Trehan points out that TANs that are financed directly by Western donors do not enjoy grassroots constituency support because "they are not required to be accountable to any constituency, apart from a limited number of donors, who often subscribe to agendas that may or may not reflect the most critical needs of the communities in question."[65] This

means that as a result of their funding they are ultimately accountable to *gadje* stakeholders who finance these projects. The OSI-RPP has attempted to overcome this discrepancy by providing institutional support grants for Romani NGOs, training and internship opportunities for young Romani advocates and promoting civic advocacy. Together with the World Bank it has pushed for the inception of the Decade of Roma Inclusion and identified the key areas such as education, health, housing, employment as well as cross-cutting themes of gender equity, anti-discrimination and poverty. The projects which the OSI-RPP supports are defined by Romani leaders and it only funds Romani NGOs. By agitating for stalagmite mobilization it ensures that the OSI-RPP does not dictate the agenda.[66] Its credibility as an effective organizing structure of representation is dependent on its avoidance of a paternalistic relationship with Romani communities. It has a long-term vision of creating a better future for Roma by training tomorrow's leaders and activists.

The lack of a common ethnic identification creates problems because TANs cannot conclusively know the shared interests of the Romani community for certain because they do not share a common ethnic identity. It is worth reiterating that interests are constructed by Romani elites through reference to their ethnic group identity, therefore, without input from the Romani community, they run the risk of assuming the shared interests of Roma. One of the distinctive features of TANs is that they do not claim to represent Roma in that they are advocacy organizations. As Vermeersch correctly points out, "advocacy groups do not aim to *represent* ethnic constituencies. Rather they want to *defend* particular groups which they believe are not treated in accordance with international standards."[67] The utility of TANs lies in their capacity to empower local Romani communities through training and funding (OSI-RPP) and their ability to induce domestic political actors to uphold international norms including anti-discrimination and anti-racism (ERRC). TANs play a vital role as information networks but they do not claim to represent the Roma. They advocate on behalf of this disenfranchised minority and conduct worthy research, implement projects, and lend expertise and support to the Romani community.

Representation and Ethnic Identity in the European Roma and Traveller Forum (ERTF)

Inception

The seeds of the ERTF were planted by Tarja Halonen, the Finnish president, in 2001 and were grounded in the idea that Roma are a European minority and therefore pan-European representation is a necessity. The ERTF, based in Strasbourg, was registered in July 2004 and in December 2004 the Council of Europe signed a partnership agreement with the ERTF with the former committing to financial, technical, and human resources. It was on this occasion in December 2004 that Terry Davis, Secretary

General of the Council of Europe, stated: "with the creation of this forum, Roma and Travellers will now have a voice at the pan-European level. For the first time in their history, they will be able to influence the decision-making which affects them."[68] The ERTF is an umbrella organization which gathers together Romani organizations and delegates from across Europe to act as an interlocutor for the Council of Europe and national governments on issues facing the Romani community. To date, the ERTF has engaged in cooperation and dialogue with several Council of Europe specialized bodies including MGS-ROM, the Secretariat of the Framework Convention for the Protection National Minorities (FCNM), and the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The aims of this organizing structure of representation are outlined in its founding statutes and include facilitating the "integration of these populations into European societies and their participation in public life and in the decision-making process."[69]

The ERTF is purposively different from other transnational organizing structures of representation not least because of its size and geographic distribution. Ambitiously it brings together more than 20 ethnic Romani groups including amongst others Sinti, Beas, Kalderas, Traveller/Pavee, Kale, Jenish, Resande, and countless sub-groups. It is the only Roma and Traveller platform which is constituted by NGOs, political parties, and religious institutions under the aegis of one organizing structure of representation. Article 8 of the founding statutes[70] established the hierarchical bureaucratic structure which includes an Executive Committee and a General Assembly which is coordinated by a Secretariat. One of the key general principles of the ERTF is to promote the interests of Roma[71] and endeavours to "promote the struggle against racism and discrimination and facilitate the integration of these populations into the European societies and their participation in public life and in the decision-making process."[72] The work of the ERTF is based on the principle of representative democracy where domestic umbrella NGOs and Romani INGOs (though not TANs) select their delegates who represent their interests at the annual plenary session in Strasbourg. The composition of the General Assembly reflects proportional representation; thus those states with the largest Romani populations have the most delegates. In total there are 75 delegates from 40 states, and seven international NGOs have been admitted also. It is the task of the Executive Committee and the ERTF's President, which dictate the direction of the ERTF's work, to enact its decisions. From its inception the ERTF's President (although *ad interim* until the first plenary session) has been Rudko Kawczynski, who co-founded the RNC, and helped initiate the ERRC and the OSI-RPP.[73]

The first Plenary Assembly of the ERTF met in Strasbourg in December 2005 and was attended by delegates from the ERTF member organizations (domestic umbrella groups and international Romani and Traveller NGOs) from 40 states. Kawczynski noted it was the most diverse assembly of Roma and Traveller leadership ever gathered in terms of the ethnic groups and demographies of the delegates and the constituencies that had appointed them to take part at the meeting.[74] *Ad interim* President

Kawczynski was elected with an overwhelming 66 out of 67 votes, and other key leadership positions were determined at this stage including Miranda Vuolasranta from Finland and Stanislaw Stankiewicz from the IRU who were elected as Vice-Presidents. The Executive Committee was established at this point and together with the President and Vice-Presidents it approved the formation of Special Committees on Kosovo and Migration, Youth Issues, and Gender Issues. These committees, which were convened by political elites within the Roma social movement, can be interpreted as representing the shared interests of Roma according to the ERTF at its inception.

Shared Interests

The shared interests of Roma can be determined by examining discourse such as documents (Resolution and "Concepts Paper"), discursive interventions such as statements and testimonials of delegates, as well as the opinions of the working groups. The second Plenary Assembly of the ERTF met from 6 to 8 November 2006 at the Council of Europe's Palais d'Europe in Strasbourg.[75] The issues and concerns of the delegates were articulated over the course of the three-day meeting. The first day was spent introducing the main management structures, outlining the activities for the Assembly, explaining the rules of procedure, and featured several keynote speeches from representatives of Council of Europe institutions. The day culminated in a symbolic laying of a wreath at the Holocaust memorial in front of the Palais d'Europe building.

The second day was dedicated to each delegate giving a testimonial on the situation of Roma and Travellers in alphabetical order of their respective states. Some delegates used this opportunity to specify individual cases of discrimination or anti-gypsism which they felt were indicative of the Romani community, whilst others pointed to more systemic problems. Recurrent interests which were articulated included: discrimination, unemployment, police brutality, historical persecution, sedentarization, social exclusion, housing, eviction, poverty, racism, marginalization, the position of women and children, and education.[76] However, when taken together, several shared interests emerged prominently which impact on all Roma irrespective of the demographic size of the Romani community or the relative wealth of a state.

Delegates from both the IRU and the RNC made speeches at the ERTF. IRU delegate Stahiro Stankiewicz pointed out that the IRU had not been made redundant since the inception of the ERTF and has continued to be active in the transnational political context including participating in the Decade for Roma Inclusion, attending conferences, and working with the UN. It has placed education at the top of its agenda and maintains that cultural identity continues to be an important concern of Roma and therefore the activities of the IRU also. The IRU continues to fight for the rights of Roma in Kosovo and has set up a commission to deal with this issue. Aside from Kosovo, the IRU has developed a number of projects in the domestic political

context, including a police initiative in Russia, a housing project in Bulgaria and an economic programme in Macedonia.

Asmet Elesovski of the RNC stated that as an umbrella organization the RNC was still open to organizations which want to collaborate with it. Elesovski pointed out the main differences between the RNC and IRU on the one hand and the ERTF on the other, arguing that the activity of the RNC and the IRU is based on a traditional style of Romani representation and advocacy whereas the ERTF has a more contemporary style. The RNC is not concerned primarily with "written documents" (declarations, conventions, protocols, agreements, treaties) and therefore the RNC engages with the ERTF as this is where the high politics of Roma is conducted. Elesovski outlined the interests of Roma by highlighting the importance of addressing the situation of Roma in Kosovo, the status of Romani women, and the deportation and racism facing many Roma across Europe. Finally, a plan for a Resolution was declared which would address the lack of recognition for the various Romani and Traveller communities in European states because these communities are not acknowledged as national or cultural minorities and encounter problems as a result.

The morning session of the final day of the Plenary Assembly was given over to three working groups (WGs), after the final testimonials had been heard. The first group (WG1) dealt with human rights and covered anti-gypsism, migration, refugees, and Kosovo. WG2 focused on social issues and covered cohesion, traditions, the regions and Travellers. Finally, WG3 examined civil society, which included discussions on education, culture, the Holocaust, financing, and enlargement. Each WG had a Rapporteur who reported back the findings of their respective WGs and announced a Resolution when the afternoon session convened on the final day. Each WG had a list of interests and fed these into one document which was to be treated as work in progress. The content of this document was presented before the Plenary Assembly to be voted on in the final session on the final day and should be understood as one of the key outcomes of the three-day assembly.

The chief Rapporteur noted that each WG's concerns and interests were included in the document and they were not selective on the content. Owing to the substance and content, two documents were required. The first was a Resolution, whilst the second was a supporting "Concept Paper." The Rapporteur pointed out that a Resolution was not something which an international organization could produce in a day and would require each delegate to read the draft, make corrections, and produce a document which a majority of delegates would be in favour of. Whilst the Resolution outlines the vision and ideology of the ERTF, the "Concept Paper" includes much of its content and substance. Each document is an important development for the ERTF as it signifies the first attempt to articulate the shared interests of Roma, which the ERTF can present to the international political community, including states and international organizations, demonstrating a unified voice on behalf of Roma.

Firstly, the Resolution[77] is divided into sections and includes a Preamble which begins by acknowledging the situation of Roma in Europe and includes the

demands which the ERTF makes of its management structures such as the Executive Committee and also of domestic governments. It notes that many international and domestic commitments to human rights and equality (particularly relating to Roma and Travellers) are not implemented. Furthermore, local authorities are not aware of their domestic and international legal obligations vis-à-vis Roma, which means Roma are not benefiting from full and equal access to public services. In many states Roma are not recognized as national minorities or recognized equally with other minority groups, even in states where a Minority Ombudsman exists. Many of these issues stem from the lack of consultation on legislation and strategies related to them. In line with common practice, this document maintains that Roma make no claims to territorial autonomy.

The second document, the "Concept Paper," is broader in focus and contains interests which should be included in a European Charter on the Fundamental Rights of the Roma. This list-like document is necessarily exhaustive and includes points on: the importance of robust anti-discrimination legislation; the prevalence of deteriorated living conditions; the failure of many states to adhere to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; the lack of monitoring after EU enlargement; the practice of asylum-seeking claims being treated as bogus; in the domestic and international political context, political participation of Roma is seen as informal consultation; Roma are not treated as equal citizens; Kosovar Roma have no protection; the teaching of the Romani language is limited; it calls on the ERTF to be recognized as the main interlocutor on Romani issues at the European level; the European Fundamental Rights Agency should address Romani interests and employ Romani staff; negative associations of Roma in the media should be combated; textbooks on Romani history and culture should be produced; equal access to the labour market should be assured; affirmative action measures should be adopted; Romani should be recognized as a European language; research should be conducted on the Holocaust; more scholarships should be awarded to Romani students; and where Roma have had recognized status and lost it (such as in the Netherlands), status should be restored.

The WGs made a number of recommendations which the Resolution and "Concepts Paper" should be attentive to, and can be interpreted as shared interests. WG1 held that immigration and asylum were prevalent issues in that many Roma are denied asylum and migration due to their lack of legal status. It was noted that erecting borders created divisions and split up families such as in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as in the former Yugoslavia. Kosovo was a recurring issue, particularly the need for Roma to be consulted and included in all status talks, and calls were made to the international political community to ensure safeguards are in place to protect Roma. As regards human rights and anti-discrimination, the importance of the EU in monitoring human rights and minority rights was noted, particularly those relating to racism and xenophobia. WG2 maintained that there is a prevalence of substandard housing and that as a result Roma and Travellers should have access to adequate

camping facilities and sites and should not be subject to forced sedentarization. As regards health, there is a concern that medical services are of mediocre quality and in an unrelated matter, health information should also be in Romani. The status of women is an important issue as Romani women face double (sometimes triple) discrimination. Romani women are also more susceptible to biased representation in the media, human trafficking, unemployment, and uninformed (and forced) sterilization. WG3 focused on political participation and the role of civil society. It called on an adequate level of representation on decisions affecting Roma and the ERTF to be an equal partner in decision making on Romani issues in the transnational political context. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Contact Point on Roma and Sinti Issues should be transformed into an authoritative and representative structure with the ERTF as its Secretariat. Finally, it requested that Roma should be represented in all levels of administration in all political contexts as well as in agencies affecting Romani communities, including social affairs, health and housing.

The ERTF attempts to articulate the interest of the Romani community but the interests of the Traveller community are not fully embedded in institutional discourse and organizational routines. This is why the Traveller community attend, participate and demand their space, to ensure that their voice is heard.[78] The "Concepts Paper" addresses the Romani community but makes no distinction between the various Romani communities. Passing reference is made to the Traveller community in the "Concepts Paper," although many of the interests articulated in the document—discrimination, exclusion, access to health and social provisions—are relevant to the Traveller community. The Traveller community has seized the opportunity to engage with the Romani community for pragmatic reasons owing to the current attention being given to Roma by the international political community.

The ERTF does not depart significantly from previous endeavours by the Roma social movement and it articulates no new radical claims or controversial interests. Primarily, it signifies a new strategy to engage with the international political community. As a representative body, the ERTF offers a more robust platform than the IRU and RNC. Not surprisingly, these INGOs are limited in their scope and ability, whereas the ERTF appears to be a more politically oriented transnational organizing structure of representation which the international political community appears to take seriously. The principal value of the ERTF is that it allows Roma and Traveller communities to articulate their shared interests and it is in this area where it has made the most headway in its short life. The interests of the Romani community are not necessary the same as the interests of the Traveller community; however, both communities do share a common history as being a despised and marginalized minority group.[79] The shared interests that are articulated by the ERTF are informed by the experience of Roma and Travellers as a marginalized and oppressed minority group. It is debateable whether one organizing structure of representation can articulate and represent the interests of the Romani community, considering Roma are not a bounded, internally homogeneous community.

The ERTF is the most recent and far-reaching attempt to give Roma a voice in the international political context. Because it is still young, its impact is difficult to determine; however, as a transnational organizing structure of representation its creation is symbolic. As a result of its partnership with the Council of Europe, it can boast affiliation to a powerful ally which other transnational organizing structures of representation cannot. The creation of the ERTF was not the direct result of an established ethnic mobilization campaign, but should be understood as fitting into the broader European-wide Roma social movement which has been gathering momentum since the early 1990s. There is no question that the ERTF bolsters political participation of Roma in the European political context, and its ability to engage with the European Commission on the proposed European Charter on the Fundamental Rights of the Roma should serve as an indicator to how seriously it is taken by the international political community. The ERTF does articulate the shared interests of the Romani community from discrimination to poverty, and Kosovo to migration. These interests do not arise in a vacuum but are formulated and negotiated in the transnational political context and articulated by the delegates and associative members. It is certainly important that Roma have the capacity to speak with one voice; however, there is a risk of endogenous homogenization as Romani elites emphasize their united voice whilst simultaneously downplaying their heterogeneity.

Conclusion

Roma face discrimination and marginalization *because of* their ethnic group identity, i.e. because they are Roma, thus they perceive themselves to be a targeted group. To remedy this situation Romani elites act collectively through the creation of organizing structures of representation to articulate shared interests. These interests are formulated and articulated by elites within the Roma social movement and therefore it is more accurate to refer to "the interests of the Roma social movement" rather than "the interests of the Romani community." It is widely acknowledged that most Roma are not aware of the existence of these transnational organizing structures of representation as well as the rhetoric propagated by ethnopolitical entrepreneurs. Thus any claims to speak on behalf of the Romani community must be treated with scepticism. As Brubaker succinctly explains, "the beliefs, desires, hopes and interests of ordinary people cannot be uncritically inferred from the ethnopolitical entrepreneurs who claim to speak in their name."[80] Very often, ethnic identity is not always explicitly expressed by elites but is embedded in institutional structures and encoded in elite discourse. Identity is structurally relevant in the ERTF even if it is not explicitly debated. Romani elites do not debate their ethnic identity explicitly, which suggests that any debate could undermine the cohesion of the Roma social movement. Ethnic identity, though contested, provides a sense of solidarity and allows for the construction of shared interests.

Whilst the respective tactics, methods, and relative influence of transnational organizing structures of representation with Romani communities vary, they each share a desire to address the poverty, exclusion, and discrimination which many Romani communities are disproportionately affected by. In many respects, Roma have been socialized into democratic politics and international political negotiations. In order to ensure their voice is heard they must adopt the rules and norms of the *gadje*, for only by speaking the language of international politics will they be able to effect change and improve the situation of Roma in Europe. This does not mean that the RNC and IRU are constituted by an older generation compared to the ERTF; rather, the style of politics of the ERTF has been adapted to suit the political context. Romani elites ensure that the Roma social movement creates the necessary institutional fora to debate, define, and articulate their shared interests.

NOTES

1. Barany, "Ethnic Mobilization and the State," 308–27; Sobotka, "The Limits of the State," 1–23; Vermeersch, "Ethnic Minority Identity and Movement Politics," 879–901.
2. Klímová-Alexander, *The Romani Voice in World Politics*; Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement*.
3. Guy, *Between Past and Future*, XIV.
4. Jenson, "Naming Nations," 339.
5. Vermeersch, "Advocacy Networks and Romani Politics," 3.
6. Barany, *The East European Gypsies*, 246.
7. Guy, *Between Past and Future*, 13–15.
8. Various, "The Romani Movement," 24.
9. Ringold et al., *Roma in an Expanding Europe*, 1, 12. The census figures in many Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs) are regarded as unreliable for this reason.
10. Various, "The Romani Movement," 18, 28.
11. Lomnitz, "Formal Organizations," 569–70.
12. Rucht, "The Strategies and Action Repertoires of New Movements," 161–64.
13. Friedman and McAdam, "Collective Identity and Activism," 157.
14. Adler and Crawford, "Constructing a Mediterranean Region," 5.
15. Melucci, "The New Social Movements Revisited," 5.
16. Simhandl, "Western Gypsies and Travellers," 106.
17. Burlet and Reid, "A Gendered Uprising," 273.
18. Melucci, "The New Social Movements," 199–226; idem, "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements," 789–815; idem, "The New Social Movements Revisited."
19. Melucci, "The New Social Movements," 202.
20. Freeman, *The Politics of Women's Liberation*; Piven and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*; McCarthy and Zald, "Resource Mobilisation and Social Movements."
21. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity," 663–716. Cohen points out the incompatibility of the strategy and identity approaches to social movement research as their epistemological underpinnings are irreconcilable.
22. Barth, "Introduction."
23. Guy, *Between Past and Future*, 5.
24. Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement*.
25. Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 358, emphasis added.

26. della Porta and Diani, *Social Movements*, 87.
27. Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*.
28. Various, "The Romani Movement," 18–28, details a roundtable debate on the Romani movement.
29. There are currently 12 million Roma in Europe, mostly (though not exclusively) located in CEECs (European Commission's Report of the Condition of the Roma in Europe, 2000). The Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights 2005 Report on the "Human Rights Situation of the Roma, Sinti, and Travellers in Europe" maintains there are 10 million Roma, and that they are a truly "pan-European" minority. For full text see ⟨http://www.human-rights.hr/dokumenti/CoE%20CHR%20Roma%202005%5B2%5D.htm⟩ (accessed 12 January 2008).
30. Ringold et al., *Roma in an Expanding Europe*, 3.
31. Marushiakova and Popov, "Historical and Ethnographic Background," 33.
32. Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 113.
33. Mirga and Gheorghe, *The Roma in the Twenty-First Century*, 13.
34. Simhandl, "Western Gypsies and Travellers," 97–115.
35. See Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, for a detailed analysis of this phenomenon.
36. Steiner, *Diverse Partners*, 62.
37. Clark et al., "The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society," 12–21.
38. Steiner, *Diverse Partners*, 64.
39. Mirga and Gheorghe, *Roma in the Twenty-First Century*, 16.
40. McCall, *Identity in Northern Ireland*, 19.
41. Klímová-Alexander, *The Romani Voice in World Politics*, Chapter 3. In 1979 the IRU was given consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council. In 1993, it was promoted to Category II, Special Consultative Status at the United Nations, which in effect recognizes its authority in representing the voice of the Romani community at an international level.
42. See Wiener, *"European" Citizenship Practice*; Shaw, "The Interpretation of European Union Citizenship," 293–317, for an analysis of citizenship in the EU. The concept of transnational citizenship is not so radical in that it had been developed by the EU, which established European citizenship in the Treaty on European Union in 1992.
43. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition." Taylor details the importance of recognition for minorities.
44. Liegeois and Gheorghe, *Roma/Gypsies*, 26.
45. The previous congresses were held in 1971, 1978, 1981, and 1990, respectively. A subsequent congress was held in 2004.
46. Similar working groups have been established at previous World Congresses.
47. Acton and Klímová, "The International Romani Union," 173–87.
48. Oral Statement by the International Romani Union, a non-governmental organization with Special Consultative Status, delivered by Paolo Pietrosanti. Fifty-seventh session, March–April 2001. For full text see ⟨http://www.radicalparty.org/humanrights/gy_comm_57_pietrosanti.htm⟩ (accessed 9 January 2008).
49. Acton and Klímová, "The International Romani Union," 201.
50. See ⟨http://www.romea.cz/english/index.php?id=servis/z_en_2004_0150⟩ (accessed 15 January 2008).
51. Kawczynski, *Report on the Condition of the Roma*.
52. Acton and Klímová, "The International Romani Union," 161.
53. Sobotka, "The Limits of the State," 6.

54. Kawczynski, *Report on the Condition of the Roma*.
55. Ibid.
56. Risse and Sikkink, "The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms," 18.
57. Risse et al., *The Power of Human Rights*. These TANs receive information from domestic opposition, invoke international human rights norms, pressure repressive states, and mobilize international organizations and liberal states (Risse and Sikkink, "The Socialization of International Human Rights Norms," 20).
58. Eder, "The New 'Social Movements,'" 869–90.
59. Keck and Sikkink, "Transnational Advocacy Networks," 236.
60. Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement*, 202.
61. ERRC, *Exclusion from Employment*; ERRC, *Social Assistance*. In particular, these thematic reports are well researched and provide an invaluable tool to academics and Romani activists. Furthermore, these publications help articulate the shared interests of the Romani community.
62. Personal interviews with Dimitrina Petrova, Director of the ERRC, Budapest, 23 September 2005; and Claude Cahn, Programmes Director of the ERRC, Budapest, 11 May 2006.
63. Steiner, *Diverse Partners*, 74.
64. Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement*, 211.
65. Trehan, "In the Name of the Roma?," 138.
66. Personal interview, Bernard Rorke, Director of the OSI-RPP, Budapest, 3 May 2006.
67. Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement*, 201, emphasis in original.
68. For full text of speech see: ⟨http://www.ertf.org/01/media/downloads/english/Terry%20Davies,%20Opening.doc⟩ (accessed 9 January 2008). The Council of Europe has a long history of promoting human rights and the rights of national minorities. A Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies, known as MGS-ROM, was established in 1995, with the task of advising the Committee of Ministers on Roma issues and encouraging action where needed. This work has resulted in a growing number of Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers on education, employment and housing as well as movement and encampment of Travellers.
69. Article 2.1. For statutes in full see ⟨http://ertf.org/01/en/dyn/about_us/general/statutes_of_the_ertf.html⟩ (accessed 13 January 2008).
70. Article 2.1.
71. Article 3.1.
72. Article 2.1.
73. He also pressed for the establishment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues in Warsaw and is a board member of the European Roma Information Office in Brussels.
74. *Annual Report* of the ERTF.
75. The author was an observer at this Plenary Assembly and therefore the following analysis is based on participant observation.
76. These shared interests were confirmed by the reports of two Rapporteurs on the third day of the Plenary Assembly who summarized the main threads running through the delegates' testimonials, adding that discrimination is present in all areas and thus "discrimination is a package."
77. An unpublished, unedited copy of this document is on file with the author. The document analysis of the Resolution's content and structure is based on this copy.
78. Personal telephone interview with Martin Collins, Irish delegate to the ERTF, 11 October 2007.

79. This commonality between the Roma and Travellers was expressed separately by Catherine Joyce of the Blanchardstown Development Project and Martin Collins, the Irish delegate to the ERTF. Personal interviews, Dublin, 10 October 2006.
80. Brubaker et al., *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity*, 167.

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