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ACCEPT
PLURALISM

**The Rise of the Extreme Right in
Hungary and the Roma Question:
The radicalization of media discourse**

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**4. National Case Studies - Political Life
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ROBERT SCHUMAN CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STUDIES

The rise of the extreme right in Hungary and the Roma question

**THE RADICALIZATION OF MEDIA
DISCOURSE**

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**Work Package 4 – National Case Studies of
Challenges to Tolerance in Political Life**

**D4.1 Final Country Reports on Concepts and
Practices of Tolerance Addressing Cultural Diversity
in Political Life**

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Tolerance, Pluralism and Social Cohesion: Responding to the Challenges of the 21st Century in Europe (ACCEPT PLURALISM)

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Executive Summary

In Hungary in the last couple of years we have witnessed the rise of radical racist discourse. The radical rightwing party succeeded in setting the terms of political debate and bringing the Roma question back to centre stage. This resulted in calls to ‘break taboos’ to allow for a sincere biologically and a culturally informed discussion of difference. Both forms of discourse lead to exclusion.

The aim of this case study is to better understand the strengthening of the radical right in Hungary, its openly anti-Roma discourses, and the reactions of mainstream political actors to this radicalism. We examine the media coverage of two murders, one in which the Roma were the perpetrators and in the other in which they were the victims. We also review public debate on the question of Roma integration and the end of political correctness as it appeared in the mainstream media. The two murders are significant for understanding how the Roma question became increasingly racialised. The first incident we have ‘Olaszliszka’ after the locale where the murder took place. In 2006, a non-Roma teacher was lynched by a group of Roma. Our second case is ‘Tatárszentgyörgy’, also named after the locale where the murder occurred. In 2009, a Roma father and his son were murdered by a number of Hungarian men who were known for their neo-Nazi political allegiances. Both murders were followed by serious local conflicts between the Roma and non-Roma actors, and both drew unprecedented media attention that set off national political debates. Our third case addresses the aftermath of the media representation and the public debates generated by the two incidents. The conclusion drawn by a number of intellectuals was that politically correct discourse should be abandoned, as they viewed it as an impediment to ‘genuine’ dialogue on these important issues. This in turn legitimated the further racialisation of the Roma question by virtually all parties to the debate.

Our interest throughout is in examining the ways in which both radical and mainstream discourse have contributed to the reproduction and legitimation of anti-Roma attitudes and actions in Hungary. Our analysis considers the radical right’s discourses on these issues and how they ultimately fed into more moderate or mainstream political and public debate.

In our case study we analyse media representations of the two murder cases (with the Roma as the perpetrators in the first one (case 1.) and the victims in the second one (case 2.)); we then conclude with a debate on ‘Roma integration and the end of political correctness’ (case 3.) as it appeared in left orientated papers. Our main purpose is to show the range of reactions to the radical right and how the Roma issue was thematised through engagement with these two murder cases. This sheds light on the ways in which radical right discourses spread to mainstream discourses. For the first two cases we included the following media: *kuruc.info.hu*, one of the most important radical right-wing internet web-sites in Hungary, the left-wing but mainstream *Népszabadság*, and the right-wing (also mainstream) *Magyar Nemzet*. For our third case we compiled a database by choosing one particular debate published in a weekly political and economic magazine, *Heti Világ Gazdaság*. For case 1. and 2. we conducted keyword searches – looking for the name of Olaszliszka and Tatárszentgyörgy – in both papers and the website to compile a dataset containing all relevant articles published since the incidents occurred. From the dataset we selected opinion articles and looked for discursive strategies employed in the articles. For case 3, we used all articles of one particular debate launched by the editors of *hvg.hu* entitled: Why don’t Hungarian Roma integrate?

Our analysis revealed intolerant discourses not only from the radical right media but from the conservative as well. In these media the Roma are characterised as biologically different: their innate inclination for crime means that they cannot be tolerated. The leftist newspaper we sampled emphasizes tolerance through norms of human rights and non-discrimination. In the integration debate we found that the emphasis switching to the Roma’s purported cultural distinctiveness. This more

culturalist interpretation was nevertheless still exclusionary in its effects, even if it was coming from the left. The main distinction between the left on the one hand and the right and radical right on the other was in the degree of their exclusion.

We also consider how these discourses relate to our non-tolerance–tolerance–acceptance model. We have argued that both *kuruc.info.hu* and *Magyar Nemzet* displayed intolerant discursive strategies that invoked the putative biological differences of the Roma. The Roma are not deserving of toleration given their genetically innate inclination to crime. *Népszabadság* in contrast used discursive strategies that emphasised tolerance through a respect of basic human rights and non-discrimination. In the integration debate we found that the ‘end of political correctness’ and ‘peculiar Roma culture’ topoi were used to stress the cultural distinctiveness of the Roma (not in genetic but cultural terms). The recognition of this distinctiveness, however, does not point to the integration of the Roma but on the contrary, to their continued exclusion, as was the case with *kuruc.info.hu* and *Magyar Nemzet* as well. The main element of the Roma’s distinctiveness is their deliberate exclusion.

These findings point to a growing tendency of non-tolerant public discourse in Hungary that spread to almost all corners of the political spectrum. There are several political and social processes that contribute to this trend of non-tolerant. First, the rise of radical racist discourses which has accompanied the political successes of the radical right wing party, Jobbik, has set the political and media agenda by thematising the ‘Roma question’.

Second, non-radical political and public figures from both the left and right have responded to this thematisation of the ‘Roma question’ in a way that has not excluded non-tolerant racist discourses. Indeed, they have often been complicit in legitimating non-tolerant discourses. By acting as partners in ‘breaking taboos’, they have simultaneously been breaking with the tolerant language that supposedly accompanied those taboos.

Third, in the current non-tolerant climate, accepting the (cultural) difference of other ethnic groups has become impossible. ‘Roma cultural difference’ instead was ‘accepted’, though in a somewhat ambiguous way: its existence was acknowledged, but as grounds for deliberate exclusion. This is similar to what we witnessed in France in the 1970s when the new right misappropriated the slogan of the left, ‘le droit à la différence’ for their own purposes, claiming that immigrants have the right to difference because their culture is so different from French culture that integration is not a possibility. Similarly, in the UK, cultural racists have claimed that other (immigrant) cultures cannot be integrated.

Finally, in Hungary as in some other post-socialist countries, non-tolerance has troublingly become a rally cry of a good number of political and public actors, often irrespective of political affiliation. State institutions, political parties and the media have joined forces to fuel suspicion of Roma difference, be it biological or cultural. As a result, tolerance as a value and discourse has suffered, embraced by only a handful of actors increasingly marginal to the political mainstream.

Hungary is thus a paradox. It recognises the Roma as culturally distinct; indeed, it reifies and essentialises their cultural distinctiveness. But this recognition is not based on respect, as we see in the ACCEPT framework. Rather, it is based on racism: the Roma are not just culturally distinct, they are culturally inferior, and that cultural inferiority prevents their full incorporation into Hungarian society. This is intolerance, feebly masked as cultural recognition. This intolerance may have the radical right as its strongest advocates, but what is perhaps most disturbing from our analysis is the extent to which the racism voiced by the radical right is used by the mainstream media and political actors as well. There is widespread consensus that Roma problem is just that: a problem, and the problem is with the Roma, and their deficient culture. This in a sense relieves majority Hungarians of responsibility for

accommodating the Roma. Indeed, it becomes an argument for the non-tolerance of the Roma: their cultural deficiencies must *not* be tolerated any longer.

This profound intolerance raises important questions about the relationship between racism and intolerance. To be sure, racism can be found in countries of immigration as well. But whilst this racism typically only becomes explicit on the fringes in these other countries (claimed by the radical right or voiced on extremist websites), the Hungarian case shows how racism has gone mainstream in Hungary. The recent incidents we have examined in Hungary have been unscrupulously used to legitimate racism in ways that greatly expands the scope of intolerance.

Keywords

radical right, media discourse, racism, political correctness, Roma

1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the strengthening of the radical right in Hungary, its anti-Roma dimensions, and how these discourses were received by mainstream political actors. We will proceed by considering the media coverage of two murder cases, one in which Roma were the perpetrators, and the other in which they were its victims. In the third part of our analysis we will turn to public debate on the question of Roma integration more generally, with a particular focus on calls to bring an end to political correctness as an impediment to genuine debate on these issues. The two murders and their treatment in the media are significant for understanding how the Roma question became increasingly racialised. The first of these murders is labelled ‘Olaszliszka’ after the village where the murder took place. In 2006, a teacher was lynched by a group of Roma. The second case is called ‘Tatárszentgyörgy’, again after the locale where the murder occurred. Here in 2009 a Roma father and his son were murdered by a number of Hungarian men who were later discovered to have neo-Nazi leanings. Both murders occasioned serious conflict between the Roma and non-Roma, and both attracted unprecedented media attention, setting off in turn national political debates. Our third case considers the media’s handling of both of the incidents and the discussion on the Roma question that the murders spurred. It is here where we see it proposed that politically correct language and discourse should be abandoned insofar as it is portrayed as an obstacle to genuine debate on these important issues. Our analysis of these examples will reveal how both mainstream and radical right media have complicit in the reproduction and legitimisation of anti-Roma attitudes and actions in Hungary. Our analysis begins with the radical right and then considers how they are received by mainstream political actors. We conclude by examining how these discourses map onto the non-tolerance – tolerance – acceptance framework.

Roma exclusion

One of the main factors contributing to the rise of the extreme right in Hungary in recent years is the inadequate and unsuccessful handling of the social integration of the Roma minority by all successive governments since the regime change. This has not only contributed to the Roma’s increased socio-economic marginalisation, it has also made as a consequence the Roma question one of the most important topics in the Hungarian political life. But this is a problem without a solution: the institutional framework for Roma political activism is unable to provide for their effective participation in mainstream politics. Roma interests are thus either overlooked completely or manipulated and represented by a small handful of civil organisations claiming to represent equal treatment and rights. Roma integration and inclusion has been on the political agenda since the regime change that occurred in 1989-90. But just as quickly as the Roma question became a topic of debate, the situation of the Roma deteriorated precipitously. The economic transition of the 1990s created a new and stable underclass (Ladányi-Szelényi 2002). This population, the losers of the transition, is characterised by intractable unemployment, low educational attainment and rural poverty. About half of this emergent underclass population are of Roma origin. Their social situation has continued to deteriorate over the course of the past 25 years.

This underclass is concentrated in small villages where tensions with the lower middle class have been intensifying. Although the roots of this conflict is primarily socio-economic, they are often represented in ‘ethnicised’ or ‘racialised’ ways. Thus conflict between segments of the population occupying different socio-economic positions come to be understood and interpreted as conflict between the Roma and the non-Roma. The last twenty years have thus witnessed the racialisation of conflicts in these marginalised rural areas.

State policies aimed at remedying this situation have not achieved their desired effects; indeed, some of these policies have even contributed to the further ethnic segregation of the Roma. The racialisation of social integration problems has multiple causes. For one, the Hungarian welfare system has been unable to reduce social inequalities or to prevent the formation and the reproduction of the underclass. Second, the social integration of the Roma population, although supposedly prioritised by successive governments, has in fact been viewed as a political liability by these governments, lacking the will to tackle the problem in a serious way. Third, the decentralisation of the Hungarian system of local administration has provided local governments with excessive authorities which are able to override other principles of non-discrimination and human rights when dealing with the Roma.

The rise of the radical right and the Roma question

Though different in its origins, the rise of the radical right in Hungary is unrelated to what is happening in many Western Europe states where the multiculturalist model has come under increased scrutiny and criticism. In Hungary, however, the success of the far right is to a large extent due to their effective exploitation of Roma issues. Both whilst campaigning for parliamentary election and since capturing 16% of the vote, Jobbik (The Movement for a Better Hungary) has successfully thematised the Roma question, putting it on the mainstream political agenda. Jobbik's first electoral success came in the European elections in 2009; a year later they captured 16% of the vote in Hungary's parliamentary elections, nearly edging out the former governing Socialists (who received just 17% of the vote). At the same time a growing number of extra-parliamentary and sometimes paramilitary groups have also become active, some with close links to Jobbik. Indeed, mainstream political actors and the media have responded to Jobbik discourses on Roma, but often in uncritical ways. Jobbik's anti-Roma rhetoric was crucial to its electoral success (Karácsony-Róna 2010). Its forceful and clear message of non-tolerance of the Roma assumes various discursive forms (such as talk about 'Gypsy crime') but can also be found in an expanding array of public actions (particularly in marches organised by a number of paramilitary groups¹ with the purpose of restoring order in settlements with high Roma concentrations).

Support for the radical right doubled between 2002 and 2009 (Juhász and Krekó 2011). There are numerous factors behind the rapid rise and success of the far right in Hungary: popular attitudes toward democratic institutions, the state, and the government and politics in general. Xenophobic attitudes can also be viewed as a determinant (but also as an effect) of the rise of the extreme right. More generally, economic decline, poor governance, interethnic tensions and the media's handling of the issue has also contributed to the strengthening of the radical right (Gimes *et al.* 2009). The consolidation of democratic institutions in Hungary since 1989 has only been partial: popular support for democracy and participation in civil activities remains weak. Indeed, low levels of trust in democratic institutions² persist. Hungarians are equally critical of the both the ruling elite and the government. Survey research that reveals high levels of popular dissatisfaction with public safety issues is attributable in part to an expectation that the state assume a greater role in such matters (itself a legacy of the communist past) (Gimes *et al.* 2009). This is consistent with other research that

¹ The most important of these groups is the Magyar Gárda, the Hungarian Guard . The Hungarian Guard was founded in 2007 as a cultural association but with links to Jobbik (Jobbik's president founded the cultural association that established Hungarian Guard). The main activities of the Guard include marches against 'Gypsy crime' in villages and towns with high concentrations of Roma. After a series of such marches the Guard was banned in 2009. Within a month, however, the Guard had reformed, composed largely of the same leaders and supporters. Since then, the group has been organising similar anti-Roma demonstrations, threatening and provoking the Roma population. The state's failure to stop their activities has helped legitimate these activities.

² Nearly half of the population support the view that democracy is not adequate for maintaining public order.

demonstrates that a quarter of the population accepts and supports authoritarian views and political rhetoric (Gimes *et al.* 2009; Juhász and Krekó 2011). These features of public opinion help explain how the extreme right is able to fill these gaps by establishing independent organisations that promise to restore and maintain public order (Gimes *et al.* 2009)

Another important factor are the high levels of xenophobia and racism in Hungarian society, amongst the highest in Europe and on the increase (Gimes *et al.* 2009). Anti-Roma attitudes, already strong throughout the entire population, have been shown to be significantly stronger amongst supporters of extreme right parties Karácsony and Róna 2010, p. 42). Indeed, anti-Roma attitudes amongst the population are more powerful predictors of party affiliation than either anti-establishment or anti-Semitic attitudes (Karácsony and Róna 2010). Jobbik clearly capitalises on this support base by using anti-Roma rhetoric to differentiate itself from the more moderate governing party, Fidesz, whose voters tend to share similar attitudes as the Jobbik voters (except with respect to anti-Roma attitudes) (Karácsony and Róna 2010).

Whilst general economic decline has contributed to the rise of the radical right, the more recent economic crisis has been shown not to be deciding factor in this same regard. Rather, it was the political crisis of 2006 and the instability that followed that can be seen to be a more decisive factor in the rise of the far right (Gimes *et al.* 2009). After winning a second term in 2006 (despite poor economic governance), the re-elected socialist prime minister privately admitted that his party had lied about the country's economic performance so that it would win the elections. When the speech was leaked to the media, a series of demonstrations and riots ensued, demanding the resignation of the government. These demonstrations were organised and dominated by the radical right, but included at times the participation and backing of mainstream right and centre-right opposition parties. As the socialist government refused to step down, the demonstrations continued for weeks, contributing to the air of political instability.

Mainstream political actors and opinion leaders have reacted ambiguously to the rise of the radical right. Their general reticence can be viewed as a silent (and at times not so silent) endorsement of the radical right's intolerance. Indeed, open and explicit challenges to extremism were formulated by only a minority of mainstream politicians. Behind the ambiguity and reticence of the majority of mainstream political actors lies a profound lack of consensus about what counts as radical and therefore unacceptable (Barta 2008).

The mainstream parties' reasons for their reluctance to denounce the radical right are varied. The previously governing Socialist Party, which in the past articulated and defended an anti-fascist platform, has become too driven by internal divisions and thus too feeble to have a real impact on influencing the political discourse. The next and smaller opposition party, the Greens, has been accused of not being straightforward enough in its condemnation of the radical right. The Greens claim to want to distance themselves from all established political forces in Hungary (Magyar 2010). But as others have argued, 'if a political party in Hungary wants to adopt a fierce anti-fascist position, this party will be, in the public eye, clearly associated with the unpopular [Socialist-Liberal] partnership' (Magyar 2010, p. 7). The governing conservative rightwing party, Fidesz, has never really articulated strong anti-fascist discourses, again mainly for political reasons. Both Fidesz and the Socialists however, the two main parliamentary factions, whilst careful to criticise the far right, have been relentless in blaming each other for the rise of the extreme right. Fidesz suggested that it was in the political interest of the MSZP to allow the radical right's activities so that they would be better able to demonise the centre right; the Socialists liked to portray the conservatives as in cahoots with the radical right (Gimes *et al.* 2009).

Problematic interethnic relations have been posited as another factor contributing to the rise of Jobbik. These ethnic tensions are in turn attributable to the Roma's deteriorating economic and social

situation. In economically deprived settings, perceived differences between groups become more accentuated and ethnicized (Gimes *et al.* 2009).

Supporters of the radical right cannot however be consistently linked to particular media, although they are overrepresented as internet users. This itself is significant because the radical right has created an alternative public space on the internet to spread its views. The mainstream media thus mobilises a good portion of otherwise politically indifferent voters by emphasising anti-Roma themes (Karácsony and Róna 2010).

Jobbik in contrast focuses its attention on issues of popular interest. Through their internet presence, they are able to keep these issues on the agenda. The internet networks of the radical right have thus been more effective than those of other parties. Jobbik has a central website with links to numerous smaller local sites. This means that local issues easily become public issues, further facilitating continued communication between the centre and the local spaces. This is also an interactive internet world proffering related discursive topoi rather than a clearly defined ideology. Their contents also appear on multiple sites (with videos on youtube, for example), thus providing greater access to a wider audience. The creation of this second or alternative public sphere is itself conducive to its message that a small minority of liberals, ex-communists, and Jews has the power to impose its view on the society. In the name of the nation, the radical right argues, this power must be opposed. Alternative knowledge against canonized knowledge is thus fabricated (Barkóczi 2010).

2. Research focus

Political processes can be understood from both their demand and the supply sides. This is particularly true when considering the rise of the far right (Mudde 2007). Jobbik's successes cannot simply be explained by their supporters' anti-Roma views, that is to say, the demand side. The reactions of other political forces and the mediatisation of the radical party also need to be considered in order to understand how anti-Roma attitudes have been used to achieve political goals; in other words, the supply side must also be investigated. The radical right made anti-Roma themes the centrepiece of its political rhetoric; for its part, the mainstream media made sure those themes remained on the agenda. Jobbik was thus able to manipulate and control the Roma question and through it the media in a way that contributed to its rapid rise. The party took advantage not only of the 'opportunity' offered by the demand side – anti-Roma attitudes – but also from the supply side.

There are at least two explanations why the mainstream media are receptive to the issues presented by the radical right. First, it has been claimed for a long time by researchers, experts and activists that the media representation of the Roma and Roma issues are strongly biased and prejudiced. Editors, journalists, and reporters are either not aware that certain media content they produce are stereotyped or even racist or they simply hold prejudiced views themselves (Bernáth-Messing 1998; Ligeti 2007; Tóth 2011). Second, the mainstream media are unable to handle or contain the radical right. They are inexperienced and lacking appropriate skills in this regard. The mainstream media present the radical right in three ways. First, they tend to overdramatise both the importance and impact of the radical right (this is particularly the case with the more leftist orientated media), second, they tend to downplay their significance (this is the case with the rightwing media), and third, while the media support extremist views (as can be seen in the extremist media) (Barta 2008).

In our study we are interested in the rise and spread of 'racist language' in public debates and the media. We take Wodak and Reisigl's (2001) premise that racism is a political 'fighting word' as our starting point. Racism in this view is both a practice and an ideology that manifests itself discursively. Ian Law argues that two fundamental discourses, racist and anti-racist ones, are in a struggle with one another in the media (Law 2010: 193). The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the emergence and rise of 'coded racism' (Downing and Husband 2005). Hall (2000) and Van Dijk (1989) observed that this coded racism was more dangerous since it was less noticeable and therefore more insidious. In many

countries the 1990s brought with it a fashion for ‘breaking taboos’ that had been earlier created by anti-racist discourses and forced upon the society. This ‘new realism’ presented itself as revealing the ‘truth’ about ethnic and racial groups (Prins 2007). This ‘new realism’ as its proponents would like to call it might also be known as the resurfacing of an open racism in public and media discourses.

This spread of racist language and discourse of course requires further analysis. ‘A “discourse” about a specific topic can find its starting point within one field of action and proceed through another one. Discourses and discourse topics “spread” to different fields and discourses. They cross between fields, overlap, refer to each other, or are in some other way sociofunctionally linked with each other’ (Wodak and Reisigl 2001: 383). A discourse analytical approach cannot however reveal causality (Downing and Husband 2005). Nevertheless, we can make use of quantitative methods through which conclusions about agenda setting can be formulated (Protest and McComb 1991).

In our case study we will analyse media representations of two murder cases (with the Roma as the perpetrators in the first one (case 1.) and the victims in the second one (case 2.)); we will then conclude with a debate on ‘Roma integration and the end of political correctness’ (case 3.) as it appeared in left orientated papers. Our main purpose is to show the range of reactions to the radical right and how the Roma issue was thematised through engagement with these two murder cases. This will shed light on the ways in which radical right discourses spread to mainstream discourses.

Research design

In our research we applied the method of discourse analysis. Wodak (Wodak and Meyer 2001; Wodak and Reisigl 2001) identifies five different discursive strategies found in discriminatory utterances: (1) *referential or nomination strategy* that serves the purpose of constructing and representing social actors as in-groups and out-groups³. (2) *Predication strategies* are characterized by the use of “stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits” in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates: “labelling social actors in a negative or a positive way, deprecatorily or appreciatively” (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 73) (3) *Argumentation strategies* and fund of *topoi*⁴ are used to justify positive or negative attributions, and political inclusion or exclusion, discriminatory or preferential treatment. (4) *Perspectivation, framing or discourse representation* is a strategy through which speakers express “their involvement in discourse and position their point of view” (Wodak and Meyer 2001: 73). (5) *Intensifying strategies* and *mitigating strategies* help to “qualify or modify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of racist, anti-Semitic, nationalist, or ethnicist utterances” (Wodak and Reisigl 2001: 386).

In our study we analysed four Hungarian media sources three of which served as a basis for case 1. and case 2., and the fourth for case 3. For the first two cases we included the following media: *kuruc.info.hu*,⁵ one of the most important radical right-wing internet web-sites in Hungary, the left-wing but mainstream *Népszabadság*⁶, and the right-wing (also mainstream) *Magyar Nemzet*.⁷ For our

³ “This is done via membership categorization devices including references by tropes like biological, naturalizing, and depersonalizing metaphors and metonymies as well as by synecdoches” (Wodak and Reisigl 2001: 386).

⁴ “Topoi are the content related-warrants or ‘onclusion rules’ which connect the argument or arguments with the conclusion, the claim. As such, they justify the transition from the argument or arguments to the conclusion” (Wodak and Meyer 2001, p. 74.).

⁵ *kuruc.info.hu* is the leading internet web-site of the radical right. Its editors use pseudonyms and it is operated from an American server. It is openly racist against all minorities. The site is constantly in the focus of debates on hate speech and efforts have been made to ban it.

⁶ *Népszabadság* is the largest national daily with left wing orientation. It used to be the Communist Party’s official paper. Since 1989 it has enjoyed the the continued support of the Sociality Party.

third case we compiled a database by choosing one particular debate published in a weekly political and economic magazine, *Heti Világ Gazdaság*⁸.

For case 1. and 2. we conducted keyword searches – looking for the name of Olaszliszka and Tatárszentgyörgy – in both papers and the website to compile a dataset containing all relevant articles published since the incidents occurred. From the dataset we selected opinion articles and looked for discursive strategies employed in the articles. For case 3, we used all articles of one particular debate launched by the editors of hvg.hu entitled: Why don't Hungarian Roma integrate?⁹

3. Analysis of the media representation and the public discourse on two symbolic events: Olaszliszka and Tatárszentgyörgy and the 'Roma integration debate'

Case 1. Olaszliszka

In October 2006 a middle aged teacher was driving through a small village in the north of the country with his two daughters when he accidentally hit a girl crossing the road. As the man got out of his car to help the girl a group of local people including the father of the girl gathered around, concerned for the girl's wellbeing. The driver was brutally attacked, and died on the spot as a result of his injuries. His two daughters witnessed their father being killed from where they sat in the car. The attackers were Roma. The girl, who had been hit by the car, had not been injured. Within two days, the police had arrested the perpetrators.

The government also reacted swiftly by issuing a statement in which it both denounced the murder but simultaneously warned that generalising from the incident by blaming the whole Roma community should be avoided:

“The police... will make every effort to find and punish the persecutors. There is no excuse for such a murder. It is a crime, a brutal act. However, any kind of generalisation or anti-Gypsy instigation should be denounced. This would be harmful... to the case and to the country. The government believes we should not let anyone lead us into this cul-de-sac. ...The state should interfere to prevent aggression and prejudice of this kind” (Government spokesperson, HVG 18.10.2006).

Despite the government's warnings the brutal murder captured the attention of the media for weeks. The initial shock caused by the incident was further aggravated by the media's insistence on the ethnic origins of the perpetrators, deliberately invoking stereotypes while discussing the details of the case. Thus expressions such as 'wild and barbarian group', 'blind family attachment', 'inclination to vigilantism', 'uncontrolled aggression', 'different norms of behaviour from that of the majority', to name but a few were found throughout the media (Pócsik 2007).

In what follows we argue that this public discourse eventually followed two different trajectories. On the one hand, one discourse continued to rely on stereotyped representation of the event and the Roma, while a second discourse attempted to use a more politically correct approach to framing the event.

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⁷ *Magyar Nemzet* was founded in 1938 and has always been a conservative paper. After 1989, the newspaper emerged as an independent and moderate/conservative paper. In 2000 the paper was merged with a more extremist right wing paper. Although it is still considered mainstream, since the merger it has adapted a rather radical voice.

⁸ *www.hvg.hu*: According to the self definition of the magazine, HVG is a liberal minded, economic-political weekly not linked to any political parties. It publishes articles regardless of political party interests.

⁹ http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014_roma_cigany_integracio. The debate was published between October and November 2009.

This second, politically correct variant proved weak in the face of the more radical and stereotypical representations found elsewhere. It was thus the stereotypical discourses that soon began dominating the media on all sides of the political spectrum. This emboldened the radical right, allowing them to take advantage of the situation by labelling the case a typical manifestation of ‘Gypsy crime’. The term in Jobbik’s formulation:

“does not mean that all Gypsies are criminals. This is not the collective stigmatization of Gypsies, neither is it racism, since the term refers not to a genetic determination but socio-cultural background. This is a term used in criminology to describe certain types of crimes specific to this minority (usury, stabbing, mob fighting, iron theft) which require special treatment. (...) Jobbik made a historic breakthrough by openly saying what everybody knows but tries to hide in the name of political correctness: Gypsy crime exists, moreover, it proliferates in Hungary” (Election program of Jobbik, 2010).

In the following paragraphs we will examine how Olaszliszka was discursively dealt with on the most important radical right web-site, kuruc.info.hu. Next, we will consider how the two major daily newspapers, the right wing *Magyar Nemzet* and the left wing *Népszabadság* reported these events, revealing the differences between these various media representations to see to how they contributed to the radicalisation of the discourse.

Kuruc.info.hu

The main discursive strategy of kuruc.info.hu was the use of the topos, ‘Gypsy crime’:

“The Gypsy mob lynched a teacher to death. Another victim of Gypsy terrorism: It is a shame that the ... Gypsies, after having fucked the possibility for peaceful coexistence, are still free and are attacking us. Us, peaceful Hungarians. They forget to mention that Olaszliszka was not a unique case. In the last sixteen years Gypsy mobs have been attacking peaceful Hungarian citizens in more and more aggressive ways. Gypsy leaders don’t want to stop this” (<http://kuruc.info/r/2/6487/>).

For kuruc.info.hu, Gypsy crime is a fact: deficient Roma attributes explain their criminal behaviour, and this in turn justifies their continued exclusion. The genetic explanation for ‘Gypsy crime’ is taken for granted as can be seen in the headings used on the website: ‘Gene cemetery’ marks the phenomenon of biological racism and the idea of inferior race as used in the far-right discourse. Anti-Semitism is also present on kuruc.info.hu. Besides ‘Gypsy crime’, the site presents other articles under the heading ‘Jewish crime’. The Roma and Jews are thus both genetic groups, having certain specific and deterministic biological characteristics that inspire them to engage in certain types of criminal activities.

Other discursive strategies included nomination and predication. The out-group, the Roma were attributed negative traits by using the expression ‘Gypsy mob’. Other out-groups, including those that represent and stand up for Roma, included human rights activists and Roma leaders. The in-group, in contrast, the Hungarians, are the opposite: they are peaceful. Presenting Hungarians (the majority) as victims is actually one of the main strategies of kuruc.info.hu when expressing their views on the Roma. There is a heading ‘Anti-Hungarianism’, that sums up the essence of the extremist understanding of intergroup relations: on the one side can be found ‘them’, the genetic waste, the criminals, and on the other side are ‘us’, the ‘Hungarians’, who are threatened and, as the case of Olaszliszka proves, attacked and killed by ‘them’.

Magyar Nemzet

In *Magyar Nemzet*, we find evidence of the same main discursive strategy favoured on kuruc.info.hu: the characterisation of the murder as an example of ‘Gypsy crime’. Here we examine how this topos is constructed by *Magyar Nemzet* and the ways it differs from kuruc.info.hu’s uses of it. What we discovered is a direct link between the radical right website, the radical party and *Magyar Nemzet*. Indeed, *Magyar Nemzet*’s initial reporting on the Olaszliszka case was as a mouthpiece for Jobbik:

“Jobbik was appalled to learn that a father who hit a Roma child with his car was beaten to death in Olaszliszka in front of the eyes of his two children. The incident is not unprecedented since in the previous years the number of brutal crimes committed by Gypsies has radically increased. The media and the authorities in the name of positive discrimination did not mention the ethnic background of the perpetrators” (<http://mno.hu/migr/jobbik-olaszliszka-utan-uj-romapolitika-kell-473660>, 16.10.2006).

The paper then quoted the Jobbik’s official statement in response to the event:

“Jobbik demands the immediate change of laws infringing legal equality by providing an unduly favourable situation for the Gypsy ethnic group. A radically new and systematically altered Roma politics has to be implemented. (...) One of the essential elements of this programme would be the implementation of crisis management based on the recognition of the existence of Gypsy crime. The majority society must be informed about Roma issues without hiding facts and the Gypsy society must be made to realise that in Hungary they also have to obey the laws” (<http://mno.hu/migr/jobbik-olaszliszka-utan-uj-romapolitika-kell-473660>, 16.10.2006)

Magyar Nemzet thus declared its ideological stance in that matter by aligning itself with Jobbik. The next day a long opinion article entitled ‘Gypsyiszka’ appeared in the newspaper.

“The perpetrators were Gypsies. Several dozens. Several dozens of lynching people.’ ‘Now what is to come is that the unbearably abject “human rights defenders” will appear in the media with tears in their eyes. The script is the following: after a couple of days an article will be published that the slaughtered teacher was racist. Then it will be succeeded by a report from the village that reveals that poor Gypsy kids are always run over by cars, and so therefore the life of poor Gypsies in Olaszliszka is a never ending dread. The third report on Olaszliszka will disclose that racism rages in the village and poor defenceless Gypsies are exposed to constant bullying. It is no wonder that they went wild. (...) Anyone hitting a Gypsy child in this country with his car should accelerate (...) and only stop at the next police station. (Since if we run over a child we stop, we should do something, so it is better to get hold of a gun before hitting the road). (...) We know very well that the state will not guarantee our safety. Similarly we cannot hope that the state will compensate us for our injuries. (...) We should shout: the majority society does not have to tolerate this. We are self-destructive fools if we tolerate this. (...) Zero tolerance. This should be the new catchword. Nobody will defend our rights. We can depend only on ourselves.” (<http://mno.hu/velemenyciganyliszka-473730>, MN 17.10.2006)

The main goal of the article and others like it is to break the taboo of referring to the ethnic background of the perpetrators¹⁰. In this way the ‘Gypsy crime’ topos features differently than the way it was used on kuruc.info.hu. There, ‘Gypsy crime’ is an expression that is taken for granted; there is thus no need to break any taboos.

The out-groups (nomination) are similar to those used by kuruc.info.hu: the Roma and the civil rights activists; the in-group is again the majority society (Hungarians). When labelling the groups

¹⁰ In Hungary the “Gypsy origin” of offenders were recorded between the period of 1971 and 1989. Today, the 1992 data protection law prohibits such data collection. <http://www.okri.hu/content/blogcategory/26/52/>

(predication), *Magyar Nemzet* employs very similar strategies: on the one hand, the majority society is again represented as victim of the minority:

“We are self-destructive fools if we tolerate this’, while on the other hand, we have the ‘unbearably abject human rights activists’ and the innately brutal and aggressive Roma: ‘They suckle criminality from their mothers’ milk and as soon as they become a majority somewhere, they destroy everything. They abuse and hate Hungarians although they have never received as much money from the state then nowadays” (<http://mno.hu/migr/hvghu-kontra-magyar-nemzet-382895>).

This latter quote also reveals *Magyar Nemzet*’s biological understanding of the Roma: ‘they suckle criminality from their mothers’ milk.’

Népszabadság

Népszabadság used different discursive strategies when reporting on Olaszliszka. The topos ‘Gypsy crime’ is used in a negation, claiming that no such phenomenon exists by citing Roma leaders: ‘This is not a Gypsy issue, but a criminal case.’ (<http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-421067>)

One of the newspaper’s other strategies is the use of various framings. Articles dealing with the desperate situation of the region where the murderous incident took place were published in the weeks and months after the murder. Journalists wrote reports and did interviews with people living there, including the Roma. One Roma woman from the village complained:

“This incident is disastrous for us. It is horrible what happened but most people generalise, they don’t treat us as individuals. (...) The grandfathers and fathers of the new generation had jobs and worked. Now they only can hope for social assistance and public service work. (...) Children growing up in destitution will become desperate themselves” (<http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-421353>).

This strategy introduces a new perspective, the perspective of the Roma as victims of social disadvantages.

The same strategy is discernable when *Népszabadság* writes about the ‘Roma being afraid of revenge’. Jobbik organised demonstrations in the village and concerts in other locations to commemorate the murdered teacher. The memorial site erected on the spot of the deadly act and just the village itself more generally gradually became a site for pilgrimage for the radical right. In connection to these events, *Népszabadság* published articles denouncing the radical right. They also reported on how the Roma population felt about the presence of these groups in the village:

“Last autumn the rumours spread among the Gypsy families of Olaszliszka that two thousand skinheads were heading to the village from Miskolc. On these occasions, hundreds of people fled their homes and found shelter on the other side of the river with their relatives. In the meantime in the Roma settlement, windows of several houses were broken and one deserted house burnt down. Another scandal broke out after anonymous death threats were delivered to many Roma. A political group organised a demonstration in Olaszliszka demanding the reinstatement of capital punishment” (<http://nol.hu/archivum/archiv-450496>, MN 17.06.2007).

Case 2. Tatárszentgyörgy

‘Four men, nine cases, six dead’

(http://nol.hu/kritika/20091004-ciganyvadaszat_magyarorszagon)

A series of murderous attacks against the Roma that began in 2008 were later revealed to be racially motivated.¹¹ The victims all lived in houses situated on the edges of small villages, and the villages were all close to major roads that helped facilitate the gunmen’s escape. The gunmen prepared meticulously for their attacks, choosing the village, street and houses carefully. Each attack took place in the middle of the night or at dawn; Molotov cocktails provided the necessary light to make the targets easier to see. The actual victims, however, were chosen randomly. This sent the message that Roma people do not deserve recognition as individuals, but rather share collective guilt for their ‘Gypsy crime’. In August 2009 four men were arrested by the police on suspicion of murder. The police found neo-Nazi symbols in the suspects’ houses, establishing the racial motivations of the crimes. Their trial is ongoing.

The murders in Tatárszentgyörgy of a father and his five year old son marked a turning point not only in public discourse but also in how the police and authorities dealt with the cases. It was then that the police began to consider possible racial motivations for the attacks. Before, their investigation had focused on the Roma as the perpetrators of the crimes on the assumption that the victims had been involved in some sort of Roma criminal activity or family revenge.

In our analysis we will look at the discursive representations of the Tatárszentgyörgy murders as they appeared on the radical right wing web-site and in *Magyar Nemzet* and *Népszabadság*.

Kuruc.info.hu

Similar to the Olaszliszka case, one of the most common strategies employed by kuruc.info.hu is the Tatárszentgyörgy case was nomination whereby the in-group, the majority Hungarians, through a process of conversion became the victims. They were the targets of an anti-Hungarian conspiracy: “Anti-Hungarianism: The funeral in Tatárszentgyörgy can be turned into an anti-Hungarian demonstration” (<http://kuruc.info/r/2/36281/>).

In other cases we find the ironic use of double conversion, whereby the ‘victims’ (the Hungarians) are mockingly recast as murderers:

“Hungarian humiliation in the Sunday Times. The sinful nation committed a murder against poor, honest, hard working Gypsies. (...) A well informed journalist from Vienna wrote that since the Cosma murder¹² the number of attacks against Gypsies has increased. We know that we Hungarians shot, stabbed, raped, threatened our dark skinned friends on a daily basis. Not the other way around, that’s for certain” (<http://kuruc.info/r/20/36261/>).

Predication strategy is also used in connection to the murders in the same way as in the Olaszliszka case. Roma and human rights activists are given pejorative, condescending labels:

¹¹ In August 2008 in the village of Piricse, a Molotov cocktail was thrown at the house of a 64 year old woman who was subsequently shot in the leg. In November of the same year in Nagycsécse, a middle aged couple were killed in a similar attack. The following February a Molotov cocktail was thrown again at another house, this time in Tatárszentgyörgy, and the fleeing father and his five year old son were shot to death. Two months later in Tiszalök a man leaving his house was shot and killed. Finally, in August 2009 in Kisléta a 45 year old woman was killed and her 13 year old daughter injured in another gun attack. The perpetrators entered their house and shot them from close range.

¹² This is a reference to the murder of a famous handball player, Cosma, by Roma perpetrators in 2009.

“The left-lib Kisalföld¹³ wants people to feel sorry for the Moccas.¹⁴ It published a timely and juicy Gypsy-pitying article so that our readers can feel even more sorry for the persecuted Roma who live in fear.” (<http://kuruc.info/r/35/38377/>).

The predication strategy does not only evaluate the out-group (Roma) negatively, but the mainstream media and press agencies as well. The media are depicted as presenting lies and they are portrayed as controlled by Jews:

“The Hungarian Press Agency lied in connection with the Tatárszentgyörgy case. How many times has the Hungarian Talmud Agency¹⁵ lied to us using our tax proceeds?” (<http://kuruc.info/r/35/37430/>). Or: ‘The race defender, HVG, lies again about racist attacks. – We are used to HVG, which has an editor- in-chief who is a famous news-faker and which used to have a Zionist ex-editor-in-chief, who spread the most brutal Gypsy-coddling, race defender propaganda.’” (<http://kuruc.info/r/35/38081/>).

There is a direct link between kuruc.info.hu, Jobbik and *Magyar Nemzet*. We found *Magyar Nemzet* reports often serving as a positive point of reference points for kuruc.info.hu. For example, [Kuruc.info.hu](http://kuruc.info.hu) referred to *Magyar Nemzet* articles in which the paper presented local Roma in Tatárszentgyörgy (including the victim’s family) as being involved in various criminal activities: “On Saturday Magyar Nemzet published a well written piece on the Tatárszentgyörgy murder” (<http://kuruc.info/r/35/38797/>).

Magyar Nemzet

In the two mainstream papers, the murder was framed as one of two possible but competing interpretations, either ‘a racial hate crime or a non-racial hate crime’. The major strategy found in *Magyar Nemzet*, was the use of the topos ‘not a hate crime’; its aim was to prove that the killing was not motivated by racial hatreds:

“Is it out of the question that racists committed the murder in Tatárszentgyörgy? No, this cannot be excluded, but it is the least likely scenario. Racist attacks everywhere in the world are committed by terrorists who are proud of their deeds and they want their victims to be afraid of them. They make their voice heard somehow, they want publicity” (MN 25.04.2009).

This perspective was frequently repeated not only by journalists writing for the paper but also by different experts reported in the paper, thus giving the interpretation even greater importance and legitimacy.

The topos, ‘not a hate crime’, is constructed with the other topos, ‘Gypsy crime’, that we saw earlier in the case of Olaszliszka. Both topoi were frequently employed by *Magyar Nemzet*. The ‘not a hate crime’ strategy depicted other interpretations ‘conjecture’, motivated by ‘revenge’ or ‘usury’. Conventional wisdom in Hungary holds that these types of crimes are committed mainly by Roma. The implication is that the murderer must have also been Roma:

“In Tatárszentgyörgy the perpetrator was most likely Gypsy. I spent a couple of weeks in the village and I know that the relatives of the victim had tense relationships with Gypsy criminals who have guns” (MN 18.06.2009).

¹³ Kisalföld is a regional newspaper.

¹⁴ Mocca is a racialised term for Roma.

¹⁵ ‘Hungarian Press Agency’ translates as ‘Magyar Távirati Iroda’, abbreviated as MTA, in Hungarian. [Kuruc.info.hu](http://kuruc.info.hu) replaces ‘Távirati’ (Press) with ‘Talmud’.

The aim of *Magyar Nemzet* was to present various types of evidence suggesting that all the Roma in Tatárszentgyörgy, including the murdered man, were criminals. In this way, *Magyar Nemzet*'s coverage of the Tatárszentgyörgy murders harkened back to the 'Gypsy crime' topos deployed in the Olaszliszka case:

"Without any reason, the Roma attacked a young man in Tatárszentgyörgy. The instigators of the fight were all relatives of Csorba Róbert, the murdered man. (...) The motivation according to the attacked man was that they had drunk too much" (MN 23.05.2009).

Magyar Nemzet also posited that the Roma could also be guilty of committing racial hate crimes. This could nevertheless be interpreted as part of the 'not a hate crime topos'. By turning the hate crime interpretation back on the Roma, the 'Gypsy crime' interpretation gains further credibility.

"I feel there is a contradiction here. While in case of the Olaszliszka murder where all relevant details are known, we are not supposed to talk about racist emotions or motivations in the name of political correctness. In the case of the Tatárszentgyörgy murder, as soon as we learnt about the ethnic origins of the victims, Roma rights activists immediately label the killing as racial hate crime" (MN 28.03.2009).

The nomination strategy employed in the Tatárszentgyörgy case was used mainly to distinguish between the human rights activists and left-liberals on the one hand and majority Hungarians on the other. The most important 'other' is thus the liberal left, advocating human rights and defending the rights of the Roma minority. One of the accusations made against left-liberals is that they demand that the murders in Tatárszentgyörgy and elsewhere be investigated as racial hate crime, but without, as *Magyar Nemzet* argues, having any proof. Moreover, the same left liberals are also instigating hatred against the Hungarian majority by labelling them racist:

"Iványi Gábor¹⁶ instigates hatred – (Talking at the funeral of the victims): He accused the non-Roma population of being accomplices to the murderers even though we don't know anything about the motivation or skin colour of these cold-blooded perpetrators. (...) In his prayer, he expressed the idea of collective sin: "Forgive us for the hate speech that we cannot stop. Forgive us for the schools where Gypsies cannot enter. We threaten you and we do not stop the vicious guards that march all over the country"(MN 05.03.2009).

This can be understood as a predication strategy whereby the pejoratively labelled minister is accused of committing the same negative racist deeds that he claims to be criticising. *Magyar Nemzet* used the same strategy while claiming that the 'racist card' is a political instrument of the left-liberals. The left-liberals accused the right of being racist to deter people from supporting to the 'racist right':

"According to the leftist liberal elite the right wing is instigating hatred against the minorities which has resulted in the serial murders of Gypsies. Tatárszentgyörgy is a metaphor, a political symbol: it means that it is not possible to support the right because it is racist" (MN 25.04.2009).

Predication strategies manifest themselves in *Magyar Nemzet* as conspiracy theories:

"A radical right, racist, ideologically motivated group of serial-murderers is a tempting idea, but it's very unlikely. What is most likely is that we are facing a politically motivated murder.... What is important is not the murder itself but the social, political and economic impact the killings have on society. This was the aim of those who committed the murder, and they found the right tools and the right plotline" (MN 08.08.2009).

The political 'other' here is marked as a negative figure, someone capable of heartlessly committing murder to achieve political goals.

¹⁶ Iványi Gábor is a well-know methodist minister and an outspoken defender of the Roma minority.

In August of 2009, four men were arrested and charged with the Tatárszentgyörgy murders. After they were taken into custody it was announced that the suspects had all possessed neo-Nazi paraphernalia and had also expressed openly radical and racist views. From that point forward, *Magyar Nemzet* stopped reporting on the murders. The topic only resurfaced in the pages of *Magyar Nemzet* once the trial began a couple of months later. The tone and language of the articles at that stage became mostly matter of fact.

Népszabadság

The discursive strategies found in *Népszabadság* were the opposite to those used by *Magyar Nemzet*. *Népszabadság* deployed the ‘hate crime’ topos as its main discursive strategy. Expert opinions were published in the newspaper that did not rule out the possibility of a racially motivated hate crime: ‘

“It is possible that the family in Tatárszentgyörgy was attacked as a result of a previous conflict, but it is also possible that racism was behind the killing. According to Németh [the chief police investigator], the murderers believed that they were omnipotent and that they knew the truth about everything. It is likely that they have families and jobs and that they are not from underground criminal groups” (NSZ 23.02.2009).

At the same time the police were criticised for not taking this interpretation seriously in their investigation:

“Until the murders in Tatárszentgyörgy, the police had not taken attacks on the Roma very seriously. Since then they have changed their tactics. In 2008 when the first Molotov-cocktail and other attempted murders occurred the police immediately ruled out the possibility of the crimes being ethnically motivated and investigated instead the lives of the victims as if they had somehow deserved their fate. They do not dare commit the same mistakes in Tatárszentgyörgy” (NSZ 07.08.2009).

Népszabadság also raised an issue that had not been addressed in other media. In their reporting, *Népszabadság* raised the possibility that the Hungarian Guard might somehow be implicated in the murders. Indeed, a direct link was posited between the Hungarian Guard’s intimidating and provocative marches and the murders that followed:

“The rotten fruit of the Hungarian Guard planted in December 2007 accompanied by the applause of the cheering villagers has now ripened”, said Sanyika, a sixty year old Gypsy man in a pub in Tatárszentgyörgy. “They were shouting that Hungarians should come with us! And we were watching them, horrified while they marched through the main street. Tell me, aren’t we Hungarians?” (NSZ 23.02.2009).

“According to a local woman, after the Hungarian Guard marched through the village in December 2007, the atmosphere changed in Tatárszentgyörgy. “They looked at us in the supermarket as if we were criminals”, she said” (NSZ 02.03.2009).

As part of a predication strategy, the paper depicted the rightwing in a negative light and insinuated that the rightwing media and assorted institutions were not doing their job responsibly (insofar as they weren’t taking the possibility of a hate crime seriously). *Népszabadság* was critical of politicians of all persuasions, including a circle of the leftwing intellectuals, for using racist discourses:

“In Kisléta the rightwing journalist was very provocative and aggressive toward the family shocked by the murder. Then he managed to write about the uncivilized and barbaric Gypsies in a witty way. Part of the media lacks self-control and instigates hatred that becomes even more plausible in periods like we’re experiencing now. This is part of our media reality. While the rightwing deliberately borrows the rhetoric of the far-right, a segment of the leftist liberal side does the same thing more indirectly but while posing as the brave opponent of political correctness, thus endorsing the prejudicial beliefs of the wider public” (NSZ 07.08.2009).

The same strategy was used to portray the victim and his family as poor but peaceful and good:

“The mayor of Tatárszentgyörgy reported that both the murdered man and his father worked regularly. They supported their families by relying on odd jobs. From the spring till the end of the autumn they worked in construction in the capital. (...) They received housing aid as do all poor families in the village. But they did not always beg for aid” (NSZ 26.02.2009).

Roma, the victims, are characterised in a positive light by the paper. Like in the Olaszliszka case, the framing strategy used by *Népszabadság* for the Tatárszentgyörgy murders tended to call for compassion for the victims whilst stressing its concern for the Roma community given the possibility of future attacks. The state in the view of *Népszabadság* was neglecting the Roma:

“Whatever the intentions of the Gypsy hating perpetrators, today several thousand people live their lives in fear. (...) The state does not feel any obligation to help the victims to get on with their lives or to overcome the trauma [of the murders], unlike in the United States where special aid workers are sent to help after murders in schools” (NSZ 07.08.2009).

Case 3. The Roma integration debate

Olaszliszka as a symbol

Now we turn to the ‘Roma integration debate’ that occurred in the mainstream, leftist oriented newspapers and weekly magazines between mainly conservative but also some leftist-liberal intellectuals. This case reveals how taboos associated with political correctness were deliberately challenged and ultimately discarded. The debate was spurred by the incidents discussed in the previous pages (mainly Olaszliszka). A content analysis of these debates revealed the incident occupied an important place in the two major mainstream newspapers for an initial six-months (the sensational period) and remained important for a long period thereafter (Vörös 2009). It was also discovered that Olaszliszka had increasingly been transformed into a reference point for the wider debate, particularly for the rightwing conservative paper. Olaszliszka was referred to in relation to other issues, but the incident itself and the events directly linked to it received little attention, implying that Olaszliszka had achieved the status of a symbol (Vörös 2009). Olaszliszka did indeed leave its imprint on the Hungarian collective consciousness through the various representations found in the media. However, as we have seen, the leftwing paper had attempted to establish a competing frame of interpretation, using different discourses, while the rightwing paper did not shy away from embracing overtly racist discourses that were basically indistinguishable to those used by the radical right on its web-site. Thus, as Olaszliszka became a symbol, a referential issue, on the one hand, its representations did continue to vary to a large extent on the other hand, at least in the two mainstream newspapers.

What then accounts for the radicalisation of these public discourses? How could Olaszliszka and the meanings attached to it (‘Gypsy crime’, ‘born criminals’, ‘Gypsies terrorising the majority’, etc) become so widely accepted?¹⁷ Here we have to refer back to Jobbik’s definition of ‘Gypsy crime’ in their 2010 election programme. They described their return to a rhetoric of ‘Gypsy crime’ as a historic breakthrough because in their view the phenomenon existed but had been stifled by political correctness. Jobbik’s claims were prophetic: ultimately a shift occurred in mainstream discourse as well. It began with prejudiced talk about ‘being Gypsies’ (*cigányozás*), becoming more widespread, penetrating public and everyday talk as well: ‘It [*cigányzás*] promises to solve existing problems. It provides momentous pleasure in breaking taboos and offers the illusion of a treacherous remedy. If the

¹⁷ About four fifths of the population believes that Roma commit crimes more often than the non-Roma, and about two thirds agrees that Gypsies have crime in their blood (Gimes-Juhász-Kiss-Krekó 2009. p. 68).

Gypsy is the cause of almost all of our problems, it is our duty to say openly this heretofore repressed truth about Gypsy crime in order that we may approach the solution. Covering up the problem makes the situation worse; such is the logic' (Zádori 2010).

One of the most important channels for unleashing racist language similar to or identical with that used by the radical right was the rightwing paper, *Magyar Nemzet*. The newspaper's influence would have still likely been limited however had it acted alone in this regard. But it didn't. It was joined by commercial TV channels, and to some extent even the public service media as well when discussing 'Gypsy issues' (Pócsik 2007). In addition, many leftist papers and weekly magazines (*Népszabadság*, *Figyelő*, *HVG*) launched debates on questions of 'Gypsy integration' where an important trend began to develop. Intellectuals with both left and conservative world views¹⁸ participated in the debates and although their voices were (mainly) moderate, they nevertheless created a new discourse that was not openly but still inherently racist. In the following paragraphs we will present some of the most typical discursive strategies that emerged in and through these debates.

Down with political correctness!

The 'Roma integration debate' involving various intellectuals of moderate political background (both conservative and leftwing) displayed two main discursive topoi: the 'end of political correctness' and the 'peculiar Roma civilisation/culture'.

The 'end of political correctness' topos was constructed by claiming that political correctness was a mistaken approach and it is time to move beyond it in order to be able to talk about real problems:

"From the very beginning, intellectuals acting in the name of "political correctness" tried to suppress debate about real problems. With the anti-liberal revolution there's no longer any obstacle getting in the way the Gypsy question for the social and political centre"
(Németh: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091029_ciganyvita_felzarkozas_integracio_akadaly).

"PC is gone with the wind. This is not a big loss. Finally we can say what we want and it is not hate speech"
(Póczik: http://img8.hvg.hu/velemeney/20091106_poczik_ciganyzag_szegenyseg/2).

"The editor of HVG has launched a more democratic debate than ever before on Roma questions. Most of the authors address the question very honestly, they voice opinions, while holding the extreme right at bay, that could not have been said in the mainstream media earlier. Not because they were so horrible but because they did not use the expected phraseology"
(Novák: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091102_cigany_roma_vita).

"In the last twenty years, we middle class Hungarians thought that it was better to look away and hide our incapacity behind political correctness"
(Babarczy: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091018_roma_cigany_felzarkozas_babarczy).

Declaring the end of political correctness is not unique to Hungarian politics. This has been termed the emergent 'new realism' (Prins 2007), a phenomenon occurring in a number of Western democratic (and multicultural) societies especially since the 1990s. Prins describes this 'new realism' as a powerful discourse that claims to face facts and speak frankly about the truth that had been theretofore

¹⁸ Some of the authors who were regular contributors to *Magyar Nemzet* can still be identified as moderate conservatives. But although they were published in leftwing papers, in most of the cases no real counterarguments were published that challenged them. Thus, the debates presented the dominant arguments of these moderate contributors without any other perspectives.

covered up by leftist censorship. In this sense it represents the *vox populi*, expressing their anxieties as well.¹⁹ In Hungary, left-liberals are portrayed as the main proponents of political correctness and it's their dominance in this regard that has to be challenged. From the new realism perspective, these left liberals have been suppressing the truth for too long, forcing an artificial language upon the people.

This new realism topos is used together with a predication strategy that constructs the left liberals as the out-group in conjunction with social scientists and the middle class. Both the validity and usefulness of the so-called pseudo-scientific language of political correctness is questioned, and the ways in which the question of Roma integration is handled by social scientists is challenged. These challenges assume various forms: 'the Roma question has been over-researched', 'the Roma question is researched in the wrong way', and 'there are very few genuine results coming out of research on the Roma.

László Sólyom, then president of Hungary (2005-2010), was unsparing in his criticism of academics who, whilst perhaps well intentioned, were hamstrung by their supposed insistence on political correctness.

"This topic is over-researched. I have been to a Roma settlement which has been invaded by sociologists every year for ten years.(...) Their meticulous diagnoses are inconsistent with their proposed remedies: more education, more jobs, less residential segregation, more Roma intellectuals. To be sure, these general statements are politically correct. But digging deeper and asking uncomfortable questions puts them at risk of ideologically motivated attacks, be it about crimes, school segregation, social benefits, corruption, or what we might expect from people living in destitution and trying only to survive. (...) It turns out that avoiding talking about these problems has serious consequences, such as the rise of the radicals"
(Sólyom: http://www.solyomlaszlo.hu/beszedekek20091013_konferencia.html).

Many others shared similar views. Some claimed that the problem was not that the Roma question had been over-researched, but that it had been researched in the wrong ways, producing few useable results:

"Both the research questions and the results are often based on ideological preconceptions. In fact, we know very little about Gypsies"
(Németh: http://hvg.hu/velemeny/20091029_ciganyvita_felzarkozas_integracio_akadaly).

"It seems to me we know very little about European Gypsies even though lots of money has been spent on researching them. We have very few tangible results"
(Pelle: http://hvg.hu/velemeny/20091102_cigany_roma_vita).

And President Sólyom again:

"I would like to see more facts... and real knowledge about the Gypsies themselves"
(Sólyom: <http://nol.hu/archivum/lap-20090228-20090228-34>).

The other topos favoured in the debate was that the Roma had a 'peculiar civilization'. Here again President Sólyom's early interventions helped shaped the debate and became an important point of reference as the debate continued. In his comments, Sólyom referred positively to a book on the topic that had been written by a Roma author:

"I would like to draw attention to a book called "Gypsy Street" written by Romano Rác Sándor. (...) The author wrote a biography interspersed with long passages in italics on the Gypsy lifestyle, their way of thinking, their customs, and the organisation of their society"
(<http://nol.hu/archivum/lap-20090228-20090228-34>).

¹⁹ In the Netherlands, 'new realism' and its more radical version, 'hyper-realism', has both national (being Dutch means being frank) and gendered dimensions (Muslim women are oppressed) dimensions.

The author of the book, Romano Rácz, defined 'Roma culture' thusly:

"The Roma constitute 'not only a distinct ethnic group, but also a peculiar and particular civilisation that evolved during the long centuries of nomadism; this is a culture of "deliberate outsiders". This culture included a very thrifty life style that provided very low and modest living conditions that would have been unimaginable for the majority society. At the same time, it also offered security for the community, united as they were in poverty by solidarity" (Romano Rácz: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091014_roma_cigany_integracio).

Romano Rácz constructs a Roma identity that is based on essentialist understandings of his own culture. This concept proves useful to others in the debate since it fits well the notion that certain features of Roma culture are the main obstacle to their integration. Thus various interpretations of this new concept of their 'peculiar civilization' were readily related to the question of Roma integration. The arguments that relied on Romano's representation of these cultural (civilisational) differences concluded that because of their long history as an outsider, the integration of the Roma was not possible for at least two reasons. First, the Roma do not want to integrate (which itself derives from their civilisational/cultural differences): there is an implication that

"perhaps the Gypsies of Hungary do not even want to integrate. This suggestion is an unforgivable offence in the eyes of the Rózsadomb crowd,²⁰ even though the author of the book, Romano Rácz, can hardly be accused of Gypsy racism" (Németh: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091029_ciganyvita_felzarkozas_integracio_akadaly).

Second, whether or not the Roma want to integrate, they cannot be integrated:

"The author [Romano Rácz] suggests that Gypsies migrating into Europe need a longer period of time to integrate, but that ultimately this process can be successful. In fact, however, nowhere in Europe have Gypsies managed to integrate even if individual members of the community have achieved success in certain areas" (Pelle: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091102_cigany_roma_vita).

Roma culture is presented as having two features that explain the Roma's lack of integration. The first is that it is pre-modern and the second is its desire for self-exclusion. This pre-modern Roma culture hinders integration:

"Gypsies are pre-modern. Their outsidersness is not only one of the manifestations of their pre-modernity, but also an effective barrier that is artificially constructed to prevent their modernisation" (Németh: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091029_ciganyvita_felzarkozas_integracio_akadaly).

The same can be said for the Roma's supposed tendency toward self-exclusion:

"If their culture is the culture of outsiders, then their exclusion is their own choice" (Németh: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091029_ciganyvita_felzarkozas_integracio_akadaly).

"We know from Romano's book (...) that Gypsies live in much more isolation than we might have thought. Conventional wisdom holds that the Roma are isolated in their world because of prejudices against them, but the truth is that they isolate themselves, integrating only if a need emerges. They never wanted to be successful in the majority society, they always wanted to lead a nomadic life outside of this society. (...) By now they have become sedentary but some of them still live according to nomadic moral code. If someone from their group suffers

²⁰ Rózsadomb is one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in the Budapest. In the debate, "Rózsadomb people" refers to researchers (sociologists, anthropologists, etc.) and civil rights activists who speak and write about the Roma using a politically correct language from the comfort of their homes, thus concealing the 'real' problems. Critics hold that they are isolated from reality and do not appreciate the real problems. The term is heavily laden with negative judgment, suggesting a strong negative stereotype.

real or imagined harm, they defend them by the excessive use of collective vigilantism, as was the case in Olaszliszka” (Stadler: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091109_cigany_roma_integracio).

The validity and strength of these arguments are of course justified by the fact that the author of the book is Roma. This, coupled with the book and author’s endorsement from the President of Hungary, can be seen throughout the entire debate. For example,

“Romano Rác has helped us immensely to understand this civilisation and culture that is far beyond ethnicity. His work marks a new era”

(Stadler: http://hvg.hu/velemeney/20091109_cigany_roma_integracio).

This debate in the mainstream, moderate, and even leftist oriented media featured a new discourse on the Roma that gave increasing legitimacy to the idea that Roma culture is directly derived from nomadism. The Roma’s intentional self-exclusion is consequently regarded as a determining feature of the Roma, reinforcing widespread stereotypes that the Roma still want to be outsiders because it is their culture’s essence not to want to integrate.

4. Conclusions

Our analysis of the two murders and the more general ‘Roma integration’ debate that followed reveals differences and similarities in discursive strategies used in the media. We distinguished four topoi in our three cases: ‘Gypsy crime’, ‘hate crime’, ‘the end of political correctness’ and ‘the peculiar Roma civilisation’. We examined how each of these topoi were used in the different media. Our first important finding regards the topos of ‘Gypsy crime’. Kuruc.info.hu used it differently from *Magyar Nemzet*. While *Magyar Nemzet* considered it important to write openly about ‘Gypsy crime’ in order to break the taboo of not talking about it, kuruc.info.hu treated ‘Gypsy crime’ as self-evident and therefore not requiring further elaboration or justification. In the integration debate we found a similar strategy: the ‘end of political correctness’ topos is used to break the taboo of not talking about the truth, the real nature of ‘Gypsy difference’. There is, however, an important feature that differentiates that understanding of difference. Kuruc.info.hu and *Magyar Nemzet* invoked biological and genetic differences, whereas in the integration debate they referred to Roma differences as cultural differences.

Our analysis of the predication strategies revealed that the left-liberals, the liberal media, and civil rights activists were the most common ‘others’ for both kuruc.info.hu and *Magyar Nemzet*. At the same time, the Roma were also othered by kuruc.info.hu and *Magyar Nemzet*. The ‘Roma’ indeed are the ‘other’ who are not assimilable because of the stereotypical characteristics ascribed to them, not all of which were negative. An important and new ‘other’ in the integration debate were the social scientists who were responsible for conspiring with the liberals to hide the truth, thus creating an atmosphere of suppression. In fact, they become the most important ‘other’ in the debate. In *Népszabadság* it’s the Hungarian Guard, the rightwing media and the institutions responsible for not putting an end to discrimination that are evaluated negatively.

Besides these argumentation (topoi) and predication strategies, *Népszabadság* also employed a framing strategy by giving voice to the Roma. This is almost the only example of Roma participating in the debate. Another example is in the integration debate, but here the Roma voice is used to justify the positions of the non-Roma.

Victims feature in all the debates (except the integration debate), but the victims change with each case. For kuruc.info.hu and *Magyar Nemzet* the Hungarians are the victims whereas for *Népszabadság* it’s the Roma.

Finally, we consider how these discourses relate to our non-tolerance–tolerance–acceptance model. We have argued that both kuruc.info.hu and *Magyar Nemzet* displayed intolerant discursive strategies that invoked the putative biological differences of the Roma. The Roma are not deserving of toleration given their genetically innate inclination to crime. *Népszabadság* in contrast used discursive strategies that emphasised tolerance through a respect of basic human rights and non-discrimination. In the integration debate we found that the ‘end of political correctness’ and ‘peculiar Roma culture’ topoi were used to stress the cultural distinctiveness of the Roma (not in genetic but cultural terms). The recognition of this distinctiveness, however, does not point to the integration of the Roma but on the contrary, to their continued exclusion, as was the case with kuruc.info.hu and *Magyar Nemzet* as well. The main element of the Roma’s distinctiveness is their deliberate exclusion.

These findings point to a growing tendency of non-tolerant public discourse in Hungary that spread to almost all corners of the political spectrum. There are several political and social processes that contribute to this trend of non-tolerant. First, the rise of radical racist discourses which has

accompanied the political successes of the radical right wing party, Jobbik, has set the political and media agenda by thematising the 'Roma question'.

Second, non-radical political and public figures from both the left and right have responded to this thematisation of the 'Roma question' in a way that has not excluded non-tolerant racist discourses. Indeed, they have often been complicit in legitimating non-tolerant discourses. By acting as partners in 'breaking taboos', they have simultaneously been breaking with the tolerant language that supposedly accompanied those taboos.

Third, in the current non-tolerant climate, accepting the (cultural) difference of other ethnic groups has become impossible. 'Roma cultural difference' instead was 'accepted', though in a somewhat ambiguous way: its existence was acknowledged, but as grounds for deliberate exclusion. This is similar to what we witnessed in France in the 1970s when the new right misappropriated the slogan of the left, 'le droit à la différence' for their own purposes, claiming that immigrants have the right to difference because their culture is so different from French culture that integration is not a possibility. Similarly, in the UK, cultural racists have claimed that other (immigrant) cultures cannot be integrated.

Finally, in Hungary as in some other post-socialist countries, non-tolerance has troublingly become a rally cry of a good number of political and public actors, often irrespective of political affiliation. State institutions, political parties and the media have joined forces to fuel suspicion of Roma difference, be it biological or cultural. As a result, tolerance as a value and discourse has suffered, embraced by only a handful of actors increasingly marginal to the political mainstream.

Hungary is thus a paradox. It recognises the Roma as culturally distinct; indeed, it reifies and essentialises their cultural distinctiveness. But this recognition is not based on respect, as we see in the ACCEPT framework. Rather, it is based on racism: the Roma are not just culturally distinct, they are culturally inferior, and that cultural inferiority prevents their full incorporation into Hungarian society. This is intolerance, feebly masked as cultural recognition. This intolerance may have the radical right as its strongest advocates, but what is perhaps most disturbing from our analysis is the extent to which the racism voiced by the radical right is used by the mainstream media and political actors as well. There is widespread consensus that Roma problem is just that: a problem, and the problem is with the Roma, and their deficient culture. This in a sense relieves majority Hungarians of responsibility for accommodating the Roma. Indeed, it becomes an argument for the non-tolerance of the Roma: their cultural deficiencies must *not* be tolerated any longer.

This profound intolerance raises important questions about the relationship between racism and intolerance. To be sure, racism can be found in countries of immigration as well. But whilst this racism typically only becomes explicit on the fringes in these other countries (claimed by the radical right or voiced on extremist websites), the Hungarian case shows how racism has gone mainstream in Hungary. The recent incidents we have examined in Hungary have been unscrupulously used to legitimate racism in ways that greatly expands the scope of intolerance.

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