

# **Romani Racialization Beyond Majority-Minority Narratives: Transnationalism, Activism and Solidarity**

## **Final Programme with Abstracts and Bios**

This conference explores the social positions of the Romani people, the nature of anti-Romani stereotypes, and Romani agency in relation to other ethno-racial projects. It brings together critical perspectives on Romani racial formations, ethnicity, membership, and belonging, moving beyond isolated and compartmentalised majority-minority approaches. Speakers will explore ways scholars can analyse Romani racialization as intimately related to other racial projects. They will examine historical interactions between Romani people and other ethno-racial communities, tracing transnational and intercultural connections, and investigating how Romani experiences have been shaped by broader social processes. Finally, presenters will consider how different social justice movements influence one another and explore the formation of alliances. In doing so, they will invite the reimagination of solidarity that goes beyond notions of racial or ethnic unity based on prior similarity, recognising instead heterogeneity and differential modes of exclusion and incorporation.

### **1. Beyond “Europe’s Largest Ethnic Minority”. Comparing and Contrasting Social Justice Projects**

*Institute of Czech Literature, Czech Academy of Sciences* (Na Florenci 1420, 110 00, Prague)

**Wednesday, May 21**

**16.00 – 16.30 Welcome Remarks**

**16.30 – 18.30 Opening Roundtable**

Moderator: **Tina Magazzini** (Czech Academy of Sciences)

- A discussion with **Claude Cahn** (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights), **Jelena Jovanovic** (European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup) & **Sunnie Rucker-Chang** (Ohio State University and author of *Roma Rights and Civil Rights: A Transatlantic Comparison*) on policies for Roma within a broader social justice agenda, followed by reception drinks.

## 2. Relational Approaches to Romani Racialization(s)

*Vila Lanna* (V Sadech 1, 160 00, Prague)

**Thursday, May 22**

08.30–09.00 **Registration**

09.00–09.10 **Opening of Day 1 of the Conference**

09:10–10:10 Keynote Lecture 1

- **Jelena Savić** (Uppsala University) – The “Darker Side” of East European (Post)coloniality: The Case of the Balkan Roma Minority

10.10–10.30 **Coffee break**

10.30–12.10 **Panel 1: Thick Solidarities Across the Race-Mobility-Migration Nexus**

Moderator: **Márton Rövid** (Central European University)

- **Zenia Hellgren** (Pompeu Fabra University), **Dan Rodríguez García** (Autonomous University of Barcelona) **et al.** – ‘Gypsyess’ and the Race-Migration Nexus: Racialization, Identity and Agency Among Intermarried and Multiethnic Spanish Roma

**Abstract:** Spanish Roma, the oldest and largest national ethnic minority in Spain, have historically experienced widespread stigmatization, discrimination and exclusion. In recent scholarship, important similarities have been found between Roma people and non-western migrants in their respective experiences of stigma. We consider that the centrality of discrimination in the lives of both Roma people and migrants racialized as non-white points at the need to increasingly study Roma and migrant experiences through the lens of racialization. In this paper, we apply the study of ‘mixedness’—intermarriage and multiethnicity—to explore the prevalence of racialization and discrimination against Spanish Roma in relation to different forms of ‘gypsyess’ (*gitanidad*) and in comparison with non-white migrant populations. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with Roma/non-Roma mixed couples and individuals, we explore how racialization is experienced by, for instance, Roma people whose spouses are native-origin Spaniards compared to migrants of different origins; Roma with different religious identities, or Roma who—based on characteristics as phenotype—can choose to ‘pass’ as non-Roma in everyday life. We also apply a gender perspective and compare male and female perceptions on othering and different coping strategies against discrimination. This rich empirical material allows us to examine social attitudes towards interethnic mixing (from outside and from within), the effect of mixing on Roma identity, the everyday experiences of racialization and discrimination associated with ethnoracial mixing, and strategies of resistance and agency.

- **Carol Silverman** (University of Oregon) – Ethno-racial Dilemmas: Negotiating Balkan Romani Diasporic Identities

**Abstract:** Little has been written about how Balkan Roma negotiate ethno-racial categories, including coding skin color. In contrast, the robust literature about South Asians and African-Americans labels the discriminatory practices associated with dark skin as “colorism” and often explains this phenomenon as “internalized racism.” I explore how “colorism” may illuminate how Roma view themselves and how they categorize both other Roma and surrounding non-Romani ethnic groups according to variable intersectional criteria. During my 40-year fieldwork with Balkan Roma in multiple transnational sites, I have documented how this coding unfolds in discourse as well as in praxis and how it affects group boundaries. For example, fair skinned brides and fair skinned children are favored among some Kosovo Roma. On the other hand, NY Balkan Roma do not see themselves “blacks” or as “people of color,” rather as white, even though virtually all non-Romani Americans do not see them as “white.” The dynamics of difference become heightened in migratory sites where minorities are stigmatized and compete for resources. Thus, I will focus on Balkan Roma in NYC where they live among African-Americans, Hispanics, and Albanians. These Roma use the label “Spanish” to disparagingly refer to the culture and gender norms of their Puerto Rican, Dominican, Honduran etc. neighbors. Yet these labels are modified when intermarriage occurs. I note, however, that negotiating difference has historically occurred within the Balkans, where some Roma identify as Turks, Egyptians and Ashkali. On the other hand, I also analyze cases where ethno-racial processes eschew difference toward a unified Romani identity.

- **Jan Ort** (Czech Academy of Sciences) – Racial Hierarchies in Inter-Roma Solidarity in the Context of War in Ukraine

**Abstract:** After Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, unprecedented solidarity with Ukrainian refugees emerged in Central and Eastern Europe, but this was racially conditioned. Ukrainian Roma were particularly excluded as “undeserving refugees.” In contrast, Roma in Czechia, Slovakia, Poland, and Ukrainian Roma themselves mobilized to help, either individually or through NGOs. This paper, based on interviews and broader ethnographic research, explores Roma as key humanitarian aid actors during the war. It highlights the strength of inter-Roma solidarity, where shared experiences of marginalization and racialization shaped their cooperation. However, it also reveals how inter-Roma relations were influenced by broader racial hierarchies, rather than sub-ethnic or regional factors. Roma have sometimes adopted the narrative of “uncivilized and backward Gypsies” to define other Romani groups, especially Ukrainian Roma. Roma in Czechia and Slovakia, for example, explained Ukrainian Roma’s alleged “uncivilization” and cultural “non-integration” as a product of deep racism in Ukrainian society, which they viewed as not meeting Western liberal values. Similar attitudes were observed among Roma in Transcarpathian Ukraine, who helped refugees from war zones. This paper suggests that the racialization of Roma is not a one-way process from majority to minority but reflects the complex structure of social relations among Roma themselves. It calls for a relational understanding of racial hierarchies that recognizes the heterogeneity of Roma experiences and the role racialization plays in shaping intra-Roma relationships. These dynamics are connected to broader racial structures, including the relation between West and East within Europe.

12.10–13.10 **Lunch**

13.10–15.20 **Panel 2: The Role of Territory & Class for Solidarity in Racialized Contexts**

Moderator: **Rufat Demirov** (Central European University)

- **Gabriela Marques Gonçalves** (Federal University of Goiás) – The importance of territory to think about Romani people's rights in the Global South

**Abstract:** This paper explores the importance of the notion of territory in discussing the Romani reality in the Global South, and how this concept is linked to tradition, understood here not as an opposition to modernity, but as ancestral wisdom perpetuated by some communities. These two ideas are important for understanding how Romani studies and Romani movements in the Global South, especially in Brazil, can dialogue with other racialized communities and contribute to the general discussions on the areas. Considering that racism and colonialism walk side by side in the social system we live in, colonialism affects especially racialized people regardless of the country they live in. This means that beyond the exploitation of racialized bodies, the territories these bodies inhabit are also exploited, increasing the insecurity and the attacks on racialized lives, especially in rural areas. I consider not only the territory where indigenous communities live, but also those where the displaced Romani communities live. The protection of territory is related to basic rights, such as environmental issues, food and nutrition security, water access, housing, and work. This paper therefore centers the physical territory, but also its symbolic realm, and how both affect the existence of minority and ethnic groups.

- **Lison Merville-Boudjema** (Lyon 1 University) – Processes of Racialization of Roma People in Contemporary France

**Abstract:** This qualitative research analyses the way in which precarious housings and, by extension, their inhabitants, are administered by the public authorities in the light of the study of the housing category 'Roma encampments' that was defined by public policies in contemporary France. By looking at the way in which certain types of precarious housing identified as illicit or even illegal are named and classified, this work sheds light on the ways in which the residents of these areas are categorised. What is formulated as a housing policy actually administers the people who live there, i.e. the people designated as Roma. The situation of Roma people in France can be considered ambiguous in terms of their inclusion in the social relations of race – the social group may be on the borderline of whiteness. They are sometimes seen as part of Europe as opposed to other continents, notably Africa, and sometimes, on the opposite, as having Indian origins. In quantitative French statistics, which can only look at nationality, and studies on race and racism, which, for want of anything else, often define a white Europe as opposed to a racialized Africa and sometimes Asia. Yet there are many historical elements that allow us to analyse the experience of the Roma as those of racialized populations, and to link their experiences to the colonial divide. It is in this context that this work raises the following question: how is the racialization of European populations organized in France, in a country where universalism forbids speaking of ethno-racial groups, and how does this process affects Roma people housing trajectory.

- **Joanna Kostka** (Lancaster University) – Navigating Conflicting Roles in Roma Activism: Advocacy, Solidarity, and Child Welfare

**Abstract:** This presentation explores the complex realities of Roma activists navigating the dual roles of systemic advocacy and direct family support within child welfare systems. Working in racialized and often hostile environments, these activists must balance the urgency of supporting families impacted by institutional biases with the long-term goal of driving transformative change. A central challenge is working alongside social workers and child welfare services, whose institutional frameworks often reinforce systemic anti-Roma racism. This collaboration is essential yet complicated, as activists strive to advocate for families while challenging discriminatory practices. Drawing on in-depth interviews, the presentation examines how activists negotiate these emotional and strategic tensions, revealing the complexities of advocating within systems that perpetuate inequality. Using relational racialization and the race-migration nexus, it explores how systemic anti-Roma racism shapes advocacy challenges and opportunities. This session provides a nuanced perspective on the contradictions and dilemmas of Roma activism, highlighting the delicate balance between immediate support and long-term systemic change.

- **Cecilia Kovai** (Hungarian Research Network) & **Lilla Eredics** (HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences) – Exploring Romani Racialization through Semi-Peripheral Dynamics in Global Capitalism

**Abstract:** This study examines the racialization of Roma in Hungary within the framework of global capitalism and its semi-peripheral dynamics. It argues that Roma marginalization must be analyzed in relation to broader economic cycles and political processes, where the nation-state functions as a key regulatory apparatus. The research employs a socio-historical approach, tracing Roma's position through different economic regimes, from state socialism and post-socialist neoliberalism to the contemporary illiberal period. Drawing on Marxist concepts of the "reserve army of labour" and "surplus population," the study highlights how economic expansion and contraction shape Roma's access to formal employment, reinforcing a racialized class hierarchy. Roma communities are systematically excluded from stable wage labor and relegated to precarious employment, perpetuating socio-economic inequalities and ethnicized class divisions. At the local level, perceptions of ethnicity and class intertwine, where Roma are predominantly associated with informal labor, while the middle class remains linked to formal employment. By integrating empirical research with theoretical analysis, this study moves beyond Western-centric frameworks, offering a regionally grounded perspective on racialization in a semi-peripheral context. It challenges dominant theories that overlook the specific economic and social dynamics of Hungary, demonstrating how global capitalist forces interact with local structures to sustain Roma marginalization. This approach bridges global and localized perspectives, contributing to a deeper understanding of racialized class inequalities and their historical transformations.

15.20–15.40 **Coffee Break**

15.40–17.20 **Panel 3: Interrogating the Categories of Roma Race-Making**

Moderator: **Kateřina Čapková** (Charles University and NYU in Prague)

- **Rafael Buhigas Jiménez** (Autónoma University of Madrid) & **Iván Perriñez Bolaño** (University of Seville) – Romanipen/“Gypsiness”, more than a Europeanized identity. Emergencies available

**Abstract:** In our intervention we will address the complex question about the Romanipen by bringing to the debate various experiences of intra and intercultural encounters and contacts that cannot be explained or understood in the frameworks of Europeanness, in the history of nation-states or in the validation logics of Eurocentric science. In this sense, we will detach ourselves from the admittedly thrown against the Roma/Domari/Gypsy People regarding their position as an object, or their construction as subalternized, or the naturalization that imposes on us the impossibility of originating knowledge and knowing, or the constant attempt to delete our memories, spiritualities and bodies, or the supposed social isolation that has prevented the contact and encounter with other realities that are not located in Europe nor ascribed to Europeanness as identity and conception of the world that defines them. More concretely, we will gather intra and intercultural trajectories located in the Maghreb, in other Mediterranean environments, as well as in the Caribbean and Abya-Yala. We understand that an anthem, a flag and a language signed as central axes of a people inscribed in Europe, are not a sufficient guarantee to enunciate it.

- **Mariana Sabino Salazar** (Czech Academy of Sciences) – *Ciganos de Alma* and Pretendians: Navigating Marginalized Identity Claims in the Age of Multiculturalism

**Abstract:** This presentation explores the phenomenon of racial shifting and the reclamation of Romani ancestry in Brazil, focusing on two themes: the Ciganos de alma (Soul Gypsies) and individuals rediscovering their Romani heritage after their grandparents' ethnic assimilation. We examine the incorporation of Romani entities within Umbanda, a syncretic religious practice, which gained prominence in the 1990s. During this period, "Gypsy" imagery surged in Brazilian media, further intertwining cultural and spiritual representations. Non-Romani individuals engaging in Umbanda often identify as Ciganos de alma, participating in large-scale ceremonies that blend Eastern European and Flamenco music. In contrast, another group comprises individuals who reclaim their Romani ancestry later in life, sometimes identifying as "blood Romanies" in both spiritual and political contexts. These case studies raise critical questions about cultural appropriation and the broader phenomenon of "pretendians"—individuals in North America who claim Indigenous heritage without verifiable ties. The analysis draws on key theoretical works by Philip Deloria, Circe Sturm, and Darryl Leroux that offer frameworks for understanding identity-shifting and its impact on social and political dynamics. The presentation employs a mixed-methods approach, combining ethnographic fieldwork and bibliographic analysis, to assess the implications of racial shifting within Brazil's multiethnic society. Our case studies often involve individuals who could be categorized as white and present their narratives as a form of redemption to assert a spiritual connection to Cigano culture. We argue that these practices reflect broader global dynamics of race, identity, and multiculturalism, highlighting the complex interplay between spiritual, cultural, and racial self-representations in contemporary contexts.

- **Tuba Akin** (University of Illinois) – Hauntings of Racelessness: epistemological violence and Roma political agency in Turkey

**Abstract:** The Turkish state has historically framed marginalized communities, including the Roma, through top-down categorizations that reinforced its nation-state-building project, strategically denying them agency over their (re)presentation and decision-making processes. This paper interrogates the epistemological violence embedded in such frameworks by employing the concept of hauntings to analyze how suppressed histories and unresolved power dynamics persist in shaping present-day narratives. For example, liberal historical narratives



obscure the colonial and racialized structures that marginalize Roma communities, influencing how their identities and agency are framed. By invoking hauntings, I reveal how the erasure of race and coloniality in discourses of social science in Turkey continues to shape Roma lives and their political possibilities. These hauntings expose the contradictions within liberal narratives that perpetuate the myth of racelessness (Rucker-Chang and West Ohueri, 2021), obscuring the racialized dynamics underpinning Roma marginalization.

## **Friday, May 23**

**09.00–09.10 Opening of Day 2 of the Conference**

**09.10–10.10 Keynote Lecture 2**

**Manuela Boatcă** (University of Freiburg) – Romani Europeans and the Challenge of Unthinkable Histories

**10.10–10.30 Coffee Break**

**10.30–12.10 Panel 4: The Relational Making of Roma Racialization / across Europe**

Moderator: **Petra Gelbart** (Families of Roma and Sinti Holocaust Victims )

- **Siv B. Lie** (University of Maryland) – Between and Beyond Romani and Voyageur: How Race Takes Shape through Genocide Commemoration

**Abstract:** This paper examines the politics of commemoration and nomenclature with respect to the genocide of so-called “nomades” in World War II-era France. I show how participants endeavor to define who should be worthy of recognition and reparations, and how decisions about what to call persecuted populations may reinforce and/or challenge norms of Romani racialization. Within the context of projects to commemorate the broader Nazi-led genocide of Romanies, French endeavors occupy a unique position, and participants take divergent stances on how to identify the targets of persecution. Some speak of “Tsiganes” or “Roms et Sinti,” explicitly characterizing this persecution according to present-day racial categories. Others emphatically avoid racial terminology to account for non-Romani populations who were included under the same oppressive policies and to challenge the terms upon which “Voyageurs” continue to be racialized. These distinct stances become evident through commemorative activities such as museum exhibitions, conferences, ceremonies, and musical performances. I argue that although both friction and slippage between Romani-centered and Voyageur-centered terminology may compromise progress in activist objectives, they also open fruitful avenues for understanding how racialization operates in liberal republican environments such as France, and why participants may adopt or reject the label of “genocide.” I show how Romani racialization has taken shape in relation to other groups targeted for genocide within and beyond France, as well as antiracist strategies that gained momentum in the postwar era.

- **Sunnie Rucker-Chang** (Ohio State University) – Racializing Slavic and East European Studies – a Critical Romani Studies Perspective

**Abstract:** In this paper I argue that Critical Romani Studies (CRS) should be to Slavic and East European Studies (SEES) what Ethnic Studies is to American Studies. I do so to realize what literary scholar Shu-mei Shih addresses as the “racialization of area studies” that is “unafraid of its racial unconsciousness.” In ignoring the origins of Slavic and East European or East European and Eurasian Studies, what is commonly referred to as “Slavic Studies,” the field has become racialized as unmarked or white. One important exception is scholarship that engages with the reception and experience of African descended people in Russia and Eastern Europe as they were key to the realization of an international socialist ideal. Notably, however, these perspectives usually focus on transient peoples and not on those emic communities of “small numbers” such as Roma. To include these communities would unsettle common practice for the majority of scholars in SEES, and it would require confronting narratives of racelessness as well as the implications of historical and contemporary participation in both global and regional formations of race and socio-racial hierarchies. However, the comingling of CRS and SEES, in a vein similar to Ethnic Studies in American Studies, can challenge the foundation and future of SEES and assert for broader constructions of regional polities, cultures, and histories that push the field toward more theoretically complex and nuanced articulations of “Eastern Europe” beyond Slavic.

- **Daniela Gress** (Heidelberg University) – Shifting discourse through human rights activism. How the German Sinti and Roma were molded into a ‘threatened people’ in their own country

**Abstract:** In the 1979, the German human rights organization “Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker” (GfbV, Engl. “Society for Threatened Peoples”) launched a human rights campaign together with the West German “Verband Deutscher Sinti” (Engl. “Association of German Sinti”) and the International Romani Union. Under the motto “Gassed in Auschwitz, persecuted to this day”, the campaign drew attention to the ongoing discrimination against Sinti and Roma in the Federal Republic of Germany. The aim of the campaign was to shift the discourse: away from the ‘criminal gypsy’ of the 1950s and the ‘marginalized social group’ of the 1960s to the ‘threatened people’ and the ‘forgotten victim group’. With its substantive, organizational and financial support, the GfbV paved the way for the political recognition of the Nazi genocide by Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in 1982. However, the NGO’s activism also ran the risk of ethnicizing or folklorizing minorities. GfbV’s approach of emphasizing a cultural alterity to be protected from disappearance offered starting points for culturalizing and ethnological perspectives, which in part contradicted the emancipatory claims of minority activists. In addition, it seems that the ‘threatened peoples’ in the GfbV’s publications sometimes became a vehicle for provocative social criticism. With the appeal that knowledge of Auschwitz obliges us to take political responsibility to prevent future genocides, the GfbV deliberately used the Nazi mass crimes present in the Western collective consciousness as a foil to generate media attention for the suffering of persecuted minorities – a not uncontroversial strategy of genocide comparison.

12.10–13.10 **Lunch**

13.10–14.50 **Panel V: The Relational Making of Roma Racialization / beyond Europe**

Moderator: **Yasar Abu Ghosh** (Charles University and NYU in Prague)

- **Ann Ostendorf** (Gonzaga University) – Detangling Romani, Indigenous and European Bodies: The Emergence of Race in the Early Modern Atlantic World



**Abstract:** The turbulent early modern Atlantic World swept together people previously unknown to each other. Europeans departed their continent in unprecedented numbers whose ships returned with people from the Americas. Just prior to these trans-Atlantic relocations, groups of Romani people had moved into European places that were new to them as well. The interpersonal encounters at the convergences of these three streams provoked new considerations of difference, tangled expectations and enshrined structures that reordered lives. This paper examines the writings of non-Romani European men who considered Indigenous Americans through their conceptions about Romani people. The regularity with which this occurred, and the consistency of considered concepts suggests that Europeans thought about Indigenous and Romani people together from the start. Illustrative examples stretch from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries, and are drawn from imperial Portuguese, Spanish, French, and English spaces. These sources allow one to trace and explain the origins of trans-Atlantic race thinking through the relational racialization of Romani, Indigenous, and European people. To do so, I draw on Noémie Ndiaye's ideas of "racial scripts" as trans-imperial "resources" that generated racial categories, organized racial power relations, and through their reproduction gave a certain sense of timelessness to the tropes. By generating ideas about one group alongside other groups and oneself, or scripting race relationally, a multi-dimensional matrix of conceptions and power relations encompassed all. The diverse and changing early Atlantic meanings attached to Europeanness and Indigeness can be more fully understood only by untangling connections with Romani people.

- **Dalen Wakeley-Smith** (Washington University in Saint Louis) – Between Red and Roma: Race, Misrecognition, and Indigeness in the United States

**Abstract:** This presentation explores the entangled racial projects impacting Native Americans and Romani Americans throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. I argue that Europeans and Americans perceptions of Native Americans were shaped by representations of "Gypsies" as similarly primitive racialized peoples. Native Americans and Romani Americans claims to land, and property were suspect and both groups were represented as antithetical to the settler colonial project as they were forever "wandering" and racially compelled to disrupt civilization. By the later 1890s Romani immigrants like Juan de La Cerda were "compelled" to move westward because they belonged to the imagined west where they, like the Native Americans, were tribal people of the "forest" and wilderness. In the early 1900s some Romani Americans claimed Native ancestry for immigration officials not simply to classify them with a recognized racial group but because Native Americans were indigenous to the United States and thus Romani Americans could draw upon the long history of incorporation and "belonging" with the state. Romani American and Native American racial projects were constructed relationally both by outside ascriptive processes and internally whereby Roma and Native Americans encountered one another in material manners, were represented as analogous and, at times, connected cultures, and utilized those positions to mark themselves as legible Americans for authorities.

- **Gatha Rajagopal** (Pondicherry University) – Double-layered Racialisation: The Transfer of Caste-based Identity Markers onto English Gypsies in Historical Discourse

**Abstract:** The racialization of English Gypsies in historical surveys, such as John Hoyland's, reveals a deliberate intertwining of casteist and racial ideologies. Building on Heinrich Grellmann's association of Gypsies with India's lowest caste, the Sudras, Hoyland layered caste-based prejudices onto the English Gypsies' already racialized "foreign" identity.

Hoyland's appropriation of the Indian caste system framed them as doubly alien: exoticized through their supposed Eastern origin and stigmatized as inherently inferior by their association with Sudras/Pariahs. This dual framing- orientalist and casteist- extended identity markers attributed to the Sudras, such as immorality, lack of cleanliness and sexual promiscuity onto English Gypsies. Such markers, codified in historical discourse, became entrenched in the popular consciousness and have since shaped stereotypes that continue to influence how Romani people are perceived. This narrative construction reveals more about the racial and colonial gaze of historians than the origins of Roma. It shows how caste, a framework specific to Indian society, was appropriated to legitimize the social exclusion of Gypsies in Britain. This paper explores two key arguments. First, it examines how historians appropriated the Indian caste system to construct a double-layered racialization of Romani people in Britain. Second, it investigates how the identity markers associated with this caste-based racialization were embedded in cultural consciousness, influencing enduring stereotypes of Romani people as unclean, immoral and sexually promiscuous. The paper highlights how colonial ideologies and casteist frameworks shaped European racial projects and their enduring impact on Romani identity.

14.50–15.30 **Closing Reflections**

15.30–16.00 **Coffee Break**

### **3. Race and Environmentalism in a Changing Europe**

*CEFRES* (Na Florenci 1420, 110 00, Prague)

**Friday, May 23**

17.00–19.00 **Book Discussion and Reception**

Moderator: **Martin Fotta** (Czech Academy of Sciences)

- A conversation with **Elana Resnick** (University of California) about her new book, *Refusing Sustainability: Race and Environmentalism in a Changing Europe* (Stanford University Press, 2025), followed by a small reception.

### Short bios of convenors:

**Tina Magazzini** is a Researcher in the Department of Mobility and Migration at the Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences. Her research focuses on the tension between different types of inequalities, and how categories of inclusion/exclusion are created and maintained across different settings in a comparative perspective. She has published on Romani integration policies, minority rights and the governance of religious diversity in *Policy & Politics*, *International Migration*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, as well as edited books with Springer and Routledge. Outside of academia, she has carried out a wide range of consultancy and policy work for NGOs, UN agencies, the European Commission and the Council of Europe on ethnic, linguistic and religious minority rights.

**Martin Fotta** is the head of the Department of Mobility and Migration at the Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences and the PI of the Romani Atlantic project (<https://www.romaniatlantic.cz>). His primary research interests include informal economic strategies, comparative racialisation, kinship and Romanies in Latin America. He is the author of *From Itinerant Trade to Moneylending in the Era of Financial Inclusion: Households, Debts and Masculinity among Calon Gypsies of Northeast Brazil* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2018) and a co-editor, with Paloma Gay y Blasco, of *Ethnographic Methods in Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Research: Lessons from a Time of Crisis* (Bristol University Press, 2024).

### Short bios of participants:

**Yasar Abu Ghosh** is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Charles University, where he was the head of the department from 2009-2012. He has taught as a visiting professor at Central European University in Budapest, Ludwig Maximilians Universitat in Munich, Germany, and at Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France. Abu Ghosh has done extensive field research on the Roma in Southern Bohemia, focusing on the quest for recognition, survival strategies, inter-group dynamics and how governmental policies have affected this minority group. He was the co-founder of the Czech Association for Social Anthropology and has been a member of the board of experts to the Government Council for Roma Community Affairs as well as an independent expert to the European Commission program “Peer Review and Assessment in Social Inclusion”. He is a member of the European Association of Social Anthropologists.

**Tuba Akin** is a graduate student in sociocultural anthropology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She studied Romani organizational dynamics in Turkey through the hybridization of civil society and social movement organizations, inter-organizational networks, and relationships with national and international institutions in her M.S. thesis in the Sociology department at Middle East Technical University in Turkey. She seeks to study how Romani activists and NGOs negotiate, appropriate, and reconfigure diverse political discourses in their socialization processes, organization strategies to better understand racialization politics of Turkey and political discourses on EU based-human rights and citizenship. She is also a Roma-ally Roma rights activist who has worked with different Romani NGOs since 2019.

**Manuela Boatcă** is Professor of Sociology and Head of School of the Global Studies Programme at the University of Freiburg, Germany. She has published widely on world-systems analysis, decolonial perspectives on global inequalities, gender and citizenship in modernity/coloniality, and the geopolitics of knowledge in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. She is the author of several books, including *Global Inequalities Beyond*

Occidentalism (Routledge 2016), and (with Anca Parvulescu), *Creolizing the Modern. Transylvania Across Empires* (Cornell UP 2022). Her current book project with Anca Parvulescu focuses on Romani enslavement and racialization in interimperial Moldavias.

**Rafael Buhigas Jiménez** holds a PhD in Contemporary History with International Mention from the Complutense University of Madrid, where he has developed his entire academic career, having taught in the degrees of History, Art History and Musicology. His main research focuses on the Roma population's social fit into urban societies, especially during periods of repression such as the Franco dictatorship. He currently works as a research technician at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, as coordinator of the project “DocRoma. La imagen de los Roma en el documental”, which addresses the construction and representation of Roma in the media and contemporary visual arts. Between September 2024 and April 2025, he has enjoyed a Pearl Resnick Postdoctoral Fellowship of the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Washington DC (United States of America).

**Claude Cahn** is a Human Rights Officer at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). He has previously held UN human rights field posts in the OHCHR Brussels regional office, Serbia and the Republic of Moldova. Before joining the OHCHR, Mr. Cahn was Head of Advocacy Unit with the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE). Between 1996 and 2007, he worked for the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in a number of capacities including Programmes Director and Acting Executive Director. In the course of his career, he has been extensively involved in the development of equality law and international law in the area of economic, social and cultural rights. He has been continuously involved in efforts to secure justice for Romani women forcibly sterilized in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, and has been directly involved in a number of landmark rulings by the European Court of Human Rights on Roma rights issues. Other areas of experience include the rights of persons with disabilities, LGBTI rights, and the human rights of older persons. Mr. Cahn holds degrees in Law, History and Literature, including a PhD in Law from the University of Nijmegen (Netherlands).

**Katerina Čapková** is a senior researcher at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University. She also teaches at NYU in Prague. Her research and teaching focus on modern Jewish history in Europe, the history of Roma and Sinti, and refugee studies. Among her many publications is *Jewish and Romani Families in the Holocaust and its Aftermath*, co-edited with Eliyana Adler and published by Rutgers University Press in 2021. In 2016, Čapková established the Prague Forum for Romani Histories at the Institute of Contemporary History, which she has directed ever since. Since January 2025, the Prague Forum for Romani Histories has become a research centre within the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. One of the projects Čapková currently heads is [www.romatestimonies.com](http://www.romatestimonies.com), a unique database of Romani and Sinti testimonies about the Second World War.

**Rufat Demirov** is a Roma activist and scholar. He holds a B.A. in Political Science from the Faculty of Law ‘Iustinianus Primus’ in Skopje, Macedonia, and completed the Romani Studies Program at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. He has a M.A. in Political Science from the Central European University in Vienna, Austria. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in International Relations at the CEU Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy, and International Relations. The topic of his PhD project is the ambiguity of wedding rituals of the Balkan Roma and the Balkan Roma diaspora. His research areas are Rituals and Politics, Postcolonial and Decolonial Studies, Queer and Gender Studies, Biopolitics and Necropolitics, Performance Studies, Critical Romani Studies, Identity and Cultural Studies,

Political Theory, Political Philosophy, Everyday IR, Postconstructivist IR, and Poststructuralist IR.

**Lilla Eredics** is a community organizer and anthropologist specializing in the lived experiences of gendered and racially marginalized communities. Holding a Master of Arts in Sociology and Anthropology from Central European University, her expertise in ethnographic research and critical theories is currently applied at research project at HUN-REN Centre for Social Sciences, where she explores the transformative role of arts in education for marginalized communities. She is an editor at *Fordulat*, the Hungarian journal of critical social theory, and is currently the chief editor of an upcoming Roma-focused issue, set to be published in 2025 May. With a strong focus on participatory approaches, she has worked extensively with Roma communities, particularly with Roma women's networks in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. She previously led the MARA Program and an inclusion program for Ukrainian Roma refugees at Romaversitas Foundation, a Roma-led organization in Hungary.

**Petra Gelbart** is an educator, scholar, and musician. She was first introduced to Romani music and language by her family while growing up in Czechoslovakia. She earned her Ph.D. in musicology/ethnomusicology at Harvard University and went on to co-found the Initiative for Romani Music at New York University. Her research interests include interethnic communication, the psychology of music, the Holocaust, and institutional ethnography. At the university level, she has taught the theory, practice, and cultural context of Romani music as well as other subjects. Dr Gelbart is also a board-certified music therapist specialized in rehabilitative and developmental therapy. In addition to practicing in New York City, she works with Czech foster and adoptive families raising Romani children.

**Daniela Gress** is a historian and has been working as a research associate at the newly established Research Centre on Antigypsyism at Heidelberg University since 2017. She studied Modern, Contemporary and Technical History as well as Cultural Studies at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (BA degree) and completed a Masters' degree in Modern History at the University of Heidelberg. In her doctoral project, which is nearing completion, she analyses the civil and human rights activism of Sinti and Roma in the Federal Republic of Germany. Her research focuses on historical antigypsyism research (especially after 1945), minority history, the culture of remembrance, civil rights and protest history in the Federal Republic of Germany. Daniela Gress has already published numerous articles and is the editor of anthologies and two book series.

**Zenia Hellgren** is Doctor of Sociology and Senior Researcher and Lecturer at the Department of Political and Social Sciences, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. Her research addresses the intersections between inequalities and diversity with particular focus on racism and discrimination as obstacles for inclusion. In this framework she conducts empirical work with migrant and minority populations such as the Roma, often applying ethnographic and participatory action methods. She has published in leading journals including *International Political Sociology*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *International Migration Review*, and numerous books, most recently *Narratives and Practices of Migrant and Minority Incorporation in European Societies: Contested Diversity and Fractured Belongings* (Routledge) and *"Tenemos el alma cauterizada". Una etnografía del antigitanismo cotidiano y sus consecuencias* (Icaria). She is leading guest editor of the special issue "Theorizing Race, Racialisation and Racism in Spain" (*Migraciones*) and currently co-PI of the Horizon Europe project UNDETERRED addressing systemic discrimination.

**Jelena Jovanovic** has been the coordinator of the European Parliament's Anti Racism and Diversity Intergroup since December 2019. She is a Romani feminist activist from Serbia.

Before she joined ARDI, she did research and advocacy with a focus on inclusion and racial justice and advocated for the rights of Romani people. She previously worked as a Policy Coordinator at the European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network, focusing on developing recommendations on how to combat antigypsyism. She co-edited and co-authored the book *The Romani Women's Movement: Struggles and Debates in Central and Eastern Europe* (Routledge, 2019).

**Jonna Kostka** is an expert in public policy, anti-racist approaches, and social justice, specializing in the experiences of marginalized communities, particularly Roma families across Europe. Her research critically examines how power, race, and policy intersect, revealing systemic inequalities and advocating for transformative change. Using participatory action research, she collaborates with communities to amplify their voices and empower them to influence public policy. She explores how social work can disrupt oppressive systems and inspire social change. Kostka's latest work on the racialized dynamics within child protection systems challenges discriminatory practices and informs anti-racist policy reforms. She is dedicated to building a more just and equitable society by leveraging public policy, social work, and community action.

**Cecília Kovai** is a cultural anthropologist, a research fellow at the Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Hungarian Research Network. Until recently she has conducted her fieldwork in Roma communities at Hungarian rural areas (villages and small towns). Her main research interests have included the connection between ethnicity, race and class position, the role of these interconnection in the organization of local societies. Furthermore, her research area is the impact of wider (global, EU and/or national scales) economic and political processes on racialisation at local level. Currently she is a principal investigator in the research project Strategies of social mobility and economic cycles - strategies of social mobility in the disadvantaged Roma population. Her new research focuses on how economic and political processes since 2010 affect the social position of Roma living in rural Hungary. In addition, she is a chief editor of an upcoming Roma-focused issue, set to be published in 2025 May in *Fordulat*, the Hungarian journal of critical social theory.

**Siv B. Lie** is an associate professor of music and affiliate associate professor of anthropology at the University of Maryland. Her research examines how Romani cultural producers use music, language, and other expressive forms to advance their own sociopolitical and economic interests. Her award-winning first book, *Django Generations: Hearing Ethnorace, Citizenship, and Jazz Manouche in France* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), shows how tensions between racial identities and national belonging unfold in French jazz industries. In 2023-24, she was a Fellow at the University of Strasbourg Institute for Advanced Study to pursue ethnographic and archival research on the politics of French Romani genocide commemoration. She is also a Curator of the Music section of RomArchive, the first digital archive of Romani arts and cultures led in large part by Romanies.

**Gabriela Marques Gonçalves** is a permanent professor of Journalism Degree and a collaborator in the Masters and Doctorate Communication Program at the Federal University of Goiás, Brazil. She holds a PhD in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain, and a Masters in communication from the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, Brazil. She teaches audiovisual and television and conducts research on Romani Communities and Communication. In Spain, she researched media and cultural consumption of the Romani Community in Catalonia and the use of social media by Romani women to fight Antigypsyism. In Brazil, her research focuses on the relations of health and communication to access public services by the Kalon community.



**Lison Merville-Boudjema** is a post-doctoral researcher in Lyon 1 University, France. She is currently working on the categorization processes involved in the treatment of tuberculosis at the crossroads between the sociology of the production of otherness and migration, and the sociology of health. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the Migrations and Society Research Unit (Paris-Nice, France), with a thesis on how Roma people are racialized in France. She is a fellow at the Convergence Migration Institute in Paris (ICM).

**Jan Ort** is a postdoctoral researcher with the ROCIT project, focusing on the impact of the war in Ukraine on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. As an anthropologist, his research examines the experiences of Ukrainian Roma refugees and the support mobilized by Roma elsewhere, particularly in the context of institutional racism. He is also interested in how the war reshapes dominant views on the position of Roma in non-Romani societies. Ort's research, which spans anthropology, history, and sociolinguistics, includes long-term ethnographic work in eastern Slovakia on interethnic relations and Romani strategies of sociability, explored in his first book, *Facets of a Harmony* (2022). His PhD research focused on Roma life strategies in the context of a resettlement program in socialist Czechoslovakia in the 1960s, with his dissertation published as *The Roma as Agents of the "G\*psy Question"* (2024).

**Ann Ostendorf** is Professor of History at Gonzaga University. She is a historian of early America interested in cultural studies, histories of race, and the Atlantic world. Her co-edited collection (with Martin Fotta), *The Romani Atlantic*, will be published with Cambridge University Press next year. She is completing a manuscript on early American Romani history and her Romani related scholarship has appeared in *Romani Studies*, *Romano Dzaniben*, *Early American Studies*, *Frühneuzeit-Info*, *Critical Romani Studies*, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, and *Journal of Gypsy Studies*.

**Iván Perriáñez Bolaño** holds a PhD in Economics, Business and Social Sciences (Social and Cultural Anthropology) with International Mention from the University of Seville (2019). Professor and researcher in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Seville. He has been coordinator and main researcher in the European project 'Bernó\_Strategies' (2018-2020), for the defense and representation of the Roma People and Culture. Researcher in the project, 'Multiculturalism through Art' (2014) and researcher in the project 'The semantics of tolerance and (anti-) racism: public bodies and civil society in comparative perspective (TOLERACE)' (2010-2013), of the 7th European Union Framework Programme for Research Excellence. He is a researcher for the International Group CLACSO (Latin American Council of Social Sciences, Argentina), as well as for the International Laboratory of Socio-Spatial Studies of the University of Seville (LABES). His main results have recently been published in a book entitled: *Cosmosonoridades cante-gitano y canción-gyu. Epistemologías del Sentir*. Madrid: Akal, 2023.

**Gatha Rajagopal** is a PhD candidate specialising in Romani literature at Pondicherry University, India. She holds a BA and MA in English Literature. She conducts her research under the Junior Research Fellowship scheme, funded by the University Grants Commission of the Indian government and has presented her work at several international forums. Her doctoral thesis explores the evolution of Romani identity through personal narratives, examining how elements such as language, racialisation, and cultural mobility shape self-perception and societal attitudes. Her research interests extend to broader ethnic studies, focusing on the complexities of minority status in relation to identity formation, cultural expression, and social dynamics within marginalised communities.

**Elana Resnick** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She is also the founder/director of the Infrastructural Inequalities

Research Group Lab. Her book, *Refusing Sustainability: Race and Environmentalism in a Changing Europe*, is forthcoming (July 2025) with Stanford University Press. Research interests include: racism and racialization, waste, materiality, critical environmental politics, labor, linguistic anthropology, nuclear energy, rivers, infrastructural inequalities, activism, and humor. Her research has been funded by the School for Advanced Research, Woodrow Wilson Center, Council for European Studies, Fulbright-Hays, American Research Center in Sofia, Wenner-Gren Foundation, U.S. State Department, Hellman Fellows Program, and the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI).

**Dan Rodríguez-García** is Full Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology and Director of the INMIX—Research Group on Immigration, Mixedness, and Social Cohesion at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. His areas of research are immigration, ethnic minorities, interethnic relations, discrimination, racism, and identity, with a particular focus on mixedness (intermarriage, multiethnicity and multiracialism). His publications appear in leading journals in his field, such as *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, *Ethnicities* or *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. He is currently the PI of the project “Dynamics of Mixedness among Roma Populations in Catalonia, Spain: Interethnic Relations, Acculturation and Processes of social Inclusion and Exclusion (GITMIX)”, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, National Program for Research Aimed at the Challenges of Society.

**Márton Rövid** is visiting professor at the Romani Studies Program at Central European University. His research interests include racialization in post-communist contexts, theories of cosmopolitan democracy, global civil society, transnational social movements, and the Romani movement. He published several peer reviewed articles, book chapters, and policy papers. He has been teaching in various programs targeting students with limited opportunities for participating in higher education, such as the Roma Graduate Preparatory Program, the Jesuit Roma College, the Open Learning Initiative for persons with refugee or asylum seeker status, and the Socrates Project for persons who lacked educational opportunities in the past. In addition to research and teaching, he has been involved in policy research. As a research and advocacy officer of the Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, he coordinated the monitoring of Roma policies in 16 countries. He also worked for the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. He is the managing editor of the journal *Critical Romani Studies*.

**Sunnie Rucker-Chang** is the Kenneth E Naylor Professor of South Slavic Culture and Associate Professor of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures and African and African American Studies and at the Ohio State University. She works and writes on the social construction of race and culture as it relates to privileged and marginalized communities in Europe, especially in Central and Southeast Europe. In her research, Rucker-Chang focuses on how literature and film contribute to culture and nationalist identities, especially in the creation and maintenance of racialized communities in Southeast Europe and how the demographics of a field shape pedagogy and community participation. She is currently working on a research project addressing the imprint of Chinese culture, soft power, and investments in the Non-Aligned World, with a special focus on Southeast Europe, East Africa, and Central Asia.

**Mariana Sabino Salazar** is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences. She holds a Ph.D. in Iberian and Latin American Literature and Culture from the University of Texas at Austin. Her research focuses on diasporic and immigrant populations from a trans-Atlantic perspective, with ongoing projects on race-shifting in Brazil and the representation of female Gypsy characters in Mexican horror films and Brazilian

Westerns. She has published articles and book chapters, including "From 'White' Stolen Children to Devil's Assistants" in *Counterstrategies to the Antigypsy Gaze* (2024). Former head archivist at the Romani Archives and Documentation Center, she classified Prof. Ian Hancock's collection. In 2022, she was a Fulbright Grantee researching the Gypsy stereotype in Brazilian culture. Salazar co-edited the Latin American issue of *Romano Dzaniben* (2021) and collaborated with the United Nations on a Romani Memory Map (2024).

**Jelena Sávić**, a Belgrade-born activist of Roma origin is pursuing a PhD in digital humanities at Uppsala University's Centre for Gender Research. She holds an MA in philosophy from Central European University, Budapest and a BA in Adult Education from the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. Her artwork spans poetry, performance, digital illustrations, and comic books, influenced by feminist and critical theory, coloniality/modernity world system theory, Afropessimism, whiteness, and critical race theory challenges non-Roma supremacy and canonical representations of Roma subjectivity. In 2024, she performed Double Nobodies and contributed visuals to Unveiling Memories at Kai Dikhas Foundation in Berlin. Her visuals and comic books are also featured in Consent Not to Be an Individual Entity at Hammarkullen Art Gallery, Gothenburg. In 2022, she participated with her poetry in Kafana Lab programme at Grüner Salon of Volksbühne theater, and performed Draw a Roma Woman: The Politics of Emotion Under the European Gypsy Supremacy at the ACUD MACHT NEU cultural centre in Berlin. Her poems are published in the spring 2023 edition of Packingtown Review and in the anthology *Cat Painters: An Anthology of Contemporary Serbian Poetry* (2016). Her early poetry collection, *Explosive Particles* (2004), was published by The Matica srpska. She also shares her poetry at [usernamekaspoetry.wordpress.com](https://usernamekaspoetry.wordpress.com).

**Carol Silverman** has been involved with Romani culture for over forty years as a researcher, teacher, performer, and activist. An award-winning Professor Emerita of Cultural Anthropology and Folklore at the University of Oregon, she focuses on Balkan music, migration, cultural policy, and human rights issues among Roma. Based on fieldwork in Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, New York, and Western Europe, her numerous articles analyze the relationship among music, politics, ritual and gender via analyses of representation and appropriation. Her 2012 book *Romani Routes: Cultural Politics and Balkan Music in Diaspora* (Oxford), won the book prize from the Society for Ethnomusicology, and her 2021 book *Balkanology* (Bloomsbury) traces the politics and artistry of Bulgarian wedding music. She works with the US NGO Voice of Roma, is curator for Balkan music for international digital RomArchive.eu, is a professional vocalist and teacher of Balkan music, and was recently elected to the Barvalipe Academy of ERIAC.

**Dalen Wakeley-Smith** is an Assistant Professor of History at Washington University in Saint Louis whose research focuses on the history of American Roma in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wakeley-Smith is an expert in the study of race, ethnicity, and migration and is currently a Faculty Fellow at the Center for the Study of Race, Ethnicity, and Equity (CRE<sup>2</sup>) at Wash U. Wakeley-Smith has published in the *Journal of American Ethnic History* and *Critical Romani Studies* and has a forthcoming book from the University of Chicago Press entitled "Gypsy Madness": American Roma in New York City 1890-1945".

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If you have any questions about the conference, please do not hesitate to contact the conveners **Tina Magazzini** (magazzini@eu.cas.cz) or **Martin Fotta** (fotta@eu.cas.cz). For logistical or practical matters please contact grants@eu.cas.cz.