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ROMA CULTURE IN SLOVAKIA – PEDAGOGICAL AND SOCIAL REFLECTION RESEARCH REPORT[1]

ABSTRACT. Kozubík Michal, Kwadrans Łukasz, Michelčíková Lenka, *Roma Culture in Slovakia – Pedagogical and Social Reflection Research Report* [Kultura romska na Słowacji – refleksje pedagogiczne i społeczne]. Studia Edukacyjne nr 35, 2015, Poznań 2015, pp. 405-427. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISBN 978-83-232-2904-9. ISSN 1233-6688. DOI: 10.14746/se.2015.35.22

The paper is a contribution to the discussion on the possibilities and obstacles to supporting education of the Romany and their social situation through culture. Despite the fact that the Romological literature contains many scientific works or quality final research reports, there exists a blank page in the field of culture of Eastern Slovakia segregated settlements inhabitants. We humbly perceive that our explanation can raise several methodological questions. The presence itself of a non-Roma researcher in Romany society requires a description of the stay process in the field through his optics. In our case of pedagogue and social worker with a focus on Romany society, the combination of science and literary genre seemed a suitable method for drawing an image of poverty in 21st-century settlements.

Key words: Roma communities, culture, social work, education

The area of Roma culture is currently one the most discussed phenomena in the field of social sciences such as anthropology, ethnology, sociology,

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pedagogy or social work. However, it is also examined by separate disciplines such as gypsiology/ciganology (the term used mainly by experts of Hungarian, Czech, Polish and other origins), or romology, or romalogy. The latter two areas of focus are the most pertracted in the local conditions. The opinions on the theoretical background and research practices of both sectors vary among experts and there does not exist a clear consensus. In Slovakia, however, a sort of a vague 'construct' prevails, which lacks a hallmark of scientism. It is therefore unclear who is 'authorized' to comment on the topic. Whatever representative of a diverse scientific field writes about Roma culture, he/she should keep in mind the mistakes often made by different authors. Among the well-known critics of the normative works about the Roma culture we can mention a Czech anthropologist Marek Jakoubek[2], who has even defined the 'seven deadly sins of multiculturalism', which the authors commit while dealing with Romany culture: 1) they believe in the existence of races, which means in the possibility of classification of members of Homo Sapiens Sapiens on the basis of heritable genetic material into appropriate groups; 2) they consider the culture to be heritable biological quality; 3) they substitute culture for cultivation (they see culture only as the so-called 'higher' culture perceived axiologically – e.g . theatre, film, dance, art, etc.); 4) only the bearers of the culture are considered to be the best experts; 5) they confuse the membership in the culture with a declaration of identity (which is in this case the declaration of a specific ideology that can not be confused with the culture); 6) ethnic group and community of bearers of a certain culture are identical (i.e. that each group has 'its own culture'); 7) they believe in the objective existence of the Romany (as a substantially defined group of human bodies). The presented sins, which several scientific studies unfortunately contain even today, have been the object of expert discussions. To avoid fundamental mistakes in our work, it was of primary importance to define the basic term culture. We can consider Tylor's definition of culture dating from 1871[3], which is seen as a starting point of similarly oriented works, to be constant and still current. He perceives culture or civilization as a complex whole, which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits which man has adopted as a member of society. His explanation of the term is also assumed

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[2] M. Jakoubek, *Cikáni a etnicita,* [Gypsies and ethnicity], Praha 2008, p. 403; M. Jakoubek, *Tradiční romská kultura,* [Traditional Roma culture], [in:] *Romské osady na východnom Slovensku z hľadiska terénneho antropologického výskumu 1999-2005,* [Roma settlements in eastern Slovakia in terms of field anthropological research 1999-2005], eds M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt, Bratislava 2008, p. 718-721.

[3] E.B. Tylor, *Primitive culture: Researchers into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*, vol. 1, London 1871.

by well-known current representatives of anthropology Soukup[4] or Jakoubek with Hirt[5]. Even Tylor himself considers the definition as ethnographic and it is also one of the reasons why we have decided for its application as well. Within the discourse we have deliberately omitted the term ethnicity, which blurs the debate about culture.

Roma Culture in the light of research

The research of the traditional elements of Roma culture cannot be done 'at the table'. The history of famous anthropological works records the study of culture even on distance in the famous Benedict's work[6], but in our case we have chosen fieldwork in the environment of the settlements of Eastern Slovakia. Our aim has not been the exploration of the type 'a gadjo explores the Romany in the tube'. The examination of classes of cultural phenomena in a given environment requires not only considerable knowledge from social science disciplines, but also a personal dedication, a kind of 'jilo' (from Romani language heart, author's note) of the researcher. We believe that we can be successful only if we are the least influenced by stereotypes and prejudices, we have no problem to shake hands, or to eat and drink from the same dishes as the poor in the settlements. It is necessary to spend some time directly in the settlement, which can bring us new dimensions of knowledge.

In addition to defining culture itself, another area of research, which is the object of frequent disputes in works dealing with the Romany, may be introduced in form of a question: Who can be considered as a Romany within the field data collection?

In past years, the estimates of the actual number of the Romany differed significantly. This varied in the range from 350,000 to 600,000. The number of the Romany in Slovakia, according to the last census which was conducted within the project Atlas of Roma Communities (2013)[7], is 402,840. In the above monitoring, the Romany represent 7.5% of the total population in Slovakia. Within the data collection we have worked with so-called credited

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[4] V. Soukup, *Přehled antropologických teorií kultury*, [Overview of anthropological theories of culture], Praha 2000.

[5] M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt, *Romské osady na východnom Slovensku z hľadiska terénneho antropologického výskumu 1999-2005*, [Roma settlements in eastern Slovakia in terms of field anthropological research 1999-2005], Bratislava 2008.

[6] R.F. Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Patterns of Japanese Culture*, Cleveland 1967.

[7] http://www.minv.sk/?atlas_2013 [26.05.2015].

ethnicity, i.e. citizens who do not register to their nationality were identified as the Romany. They were labelled by the employees of the municipality, mayors and field social workers. This labelling is however used frequently in the surveys. Although this is teetering on the edge of ethics, it is necessary to admit that if we worked with the declared identity to the Roma national minority in a given census, again we could only get a distorted final number. In this case, lesser evil has been chosen. So how to get 'out of round'?

Jakoubek and Hirt[8] offer us one of the most comprehensive explanations. They distinguish so-called popular and analytical models on the basis of which the authors perceive the Romany. The popular model works in research practice with persons who possess certain characteristics in appearance and it is assumed that whoever looks like Romany, he is automatically considered a bearer of Roma culture. It is also accepted as a fact that he also identifies with the Roma identity. However, the actual physical appearance cannot be the determining factor. Unfortunately, not only the general public, but often the experts writing about the Romany perceive them 'popularly' like this. According to the aforementioned authors, we do not necessarily have to abandon this model. In the Central European territory, which is characterized by a reduced ability to perceive the contradiction comprehensively, it is necessary (at least for now) to take this model into account.

According to the presented opinions, the physical characteristics, acquired cultural competences and national identity falsely overlap. In terms of the need for strategies by national, municipal and non-governmental institutions, as well as social research, it is needed to consistently distinguish the meaning of the word 'Romany' according to the second approach – analytical model. In it, we distinguish multiple views to the fact how can the Romany be seen? The first group comprises the above-mentioned popular model of perception of the Romany. It is used in the labelling of people who possess certain characteristics in appearance – certain anthropological type (dark hair, brown skin, etc.), as well as a territorial segregation. In words of a laic: "Why should we be concerned if anyone is Romany or not. After all, everyone knows that it is a member of the minority." We can forgive the general public this erroneous assumption. The professional writings however require clear answers to the questions. The consequences can be serious. Remember the infamous affair of the 'Roma history'. Another perception of the Romany can be seen as a bearer of culture of Roma settlements. According to this concept, the Romany is someone who is socialized to

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[8] M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt, *Romské osady na východnom Slovensku z hľadiska terénneho antropologického výskumu 1999-2005*, [Roma settlements in eastern Slovakia in terms of field anthropological research 1999-2005].

a certain system of values, principles and norms practiced in the environment of segregated Roma communities. From our perspective, it is again the widespread cliché that is characterized by the testimony as: "I personally do not mind the Romany, only those maladjusted. How can a polite, civilized Romany feel if we are talking like this about the members of the same minority"? The last group is a Romany as a member of the Roma national minority. It is therefore a man who clearly declares his nationality and is considered a member of the community of persons – of Roma nation.

In our research, we have had enough time to talk with informants about their opinions and attitudes to Roma culture. Almost all of them openly proclaimed their membership and did not have any problem to talk about the individual cultural specifics. Some of the informants, however, did not express their own identity, or their testimony remained unclear. In the text, we will refer to them as to the residents of integrated, separated or segregated settlements. We have constantly kept in mind the ethics of scientific research, so we have sensitively considered any designation of the informants – people in different locations.

Despite the fact that, in the recent decades, several authors (Stojka, Pivoň, Jakoubek, Hirt, Horváthová, Augustini ab Hortis, Kozubik and others)[9] have dealt with the topic of Roma culture in Slovakia, there does not exist a complex report (before year 2015) on the current forms of the traditional Roma culture.

We have decided to carry out an ethnographic research in this area, as a research style that uses a combination of different techniques and methods of data collection and evaluation. This research style can be defined as the study of people in their natural environment or 'field' using the methods describing the social perception and everyday reality. The very necessity of this style is a direct and active involvement of the researcher in this reality. In our case, it was a direct stay in a segregated and separated location. We use all methods of data collection: concerned observation, individual interviews, group interviews and collection of artifacts, historical and current documents, photos and videos.

Typology of Roma Culture

We can distinguish in general three basic approaches to the definition of the term culture[10]: Axiological – may include all the cultural elements which

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[9] See bibliography.
[10] V. Soukup, *Přehled antropologických teorií kultury*, [Overview of anthropological theories of culture], Praha 2000, p. 15-16.

can be seen as so-called 'high' culture (art, literature, high-minded and progressive ideas, etc.). Anthropological – a class of cultural phenomena containing: cultural artifacts (material products of human activity), socio-cultural regulations (traditions, morals, laws, taboos), ideas (symbolic and cognitive systems). They can be manifested externally towards the society, but also as internal rules of a community, they are shared by members of a particular community and passed through time and space. Reduced – restriction of the concept of culture to a certain segment of socio-cultural reality – we focus on one part of the cultural phenomenon and we try to uncover more by its detailed investigation.

In our research, we start from the anthropological definition from the ethnic perspective – the perspective of a group from the point of view of a member of another group[11] in the context of macro-ethnography – the description of the culture or its part as a compact complex. We introduce the typology of Roma culture in Kozubik work '(Not) guilty and gadjo dilo'[12], concept of Roma identity[13]. Jakoubek's division is in our opinion the most concise and reminds of the fundamental Soukup's perceptions of the concept of culture: traditional Roma culture, national Roma culture, culture of suburban areas ('Roma') quarters – culture of poverty, 'subculture of poverty'[14].

Traditional Roma culture

We could introduce the traditional in the Roma culture in one word as – romipen, romanipen (can be translated as 'Romahood'). Oláh[15] views it as

a set of values and patterns of behaviour that every (decent) Romany should obey. These values include in particular respect for elders, hospitality, helping the poor, cohesion, table manners, but also the way of behaving in public.[16]

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[11] J. Hendl, *Kvalitativní výzkum*, [Qualitative research], Praha 2005, p. 118.

[12] M. Kozubík, *(Ne)vinní a dilino gadžo*, [(Not)guilty and gadjo dilo], Nitra 2013.

[13] Ł. Kwadrans, *Education of the Roma in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia – gap confrontation between expectations and reality – comparative research*, Wroclaw 2011, p. 47-60; Ł. Kwadrans, *Roma Identity – Sociological Reflection*, [in:] *Roma in Visegrad Countries: History, Culture, Social Integration, Social Work and Education*, eds J. Balvin, Ł. Kwadrans, H. Kyuchukov, Wroclaw 2013, p. 19-37.

[14] A. Žilová, *Chudoba a jej premeny na Slovensku*, [Poverty and its transformation in Slovakia], Badín 2005, p. 41.

[15] V. Oláh, *Romipen*, [in:] *RozumMění. Literatura Romů ve výuce (nejen) romských žáků*, [Understanding. Roma literature in teaching (not only) of Roma pupils], eds L. Houdek, R. Patočková, Praha 2013, p. 95.

[16] See: A. Bartosz, *Nie bój się Cygana*, [Na dara Romestar], Sejny 2004; J. Ficowski, *Cyganie na polskich drogach*, Kraków 1985; A. Mirga, L. Mróz, *Cyganie. Odmienność i nietolerancja*, War-

Vaňová[17] characterizes the Roma culture as Romipen. This synonym of Roma culture

> does not support the creation of close social relations with non-Roma inhabitants. Inaccessibility of this culture may mislead the external observers to the assumption that those who seclude are secretive people and they hide something. Maintaining cultural or religious restrictions, which do not allow people from the outside, is certainly one of the major historical factors that explain the emergence of anti-Roma attitudes. At the same time, the need of the Romany to be separated from non-Roma population made it impossible for the observers to learn about the world of the Romany, which led to embellishing of the information and stereotypes. Thus the image of otherness and distance from the Romany has been maintained, while both factors contributed to literary and fantastic image of the Romany, which caused the Roma issue has been taken rather lightly.

In their work 'Amáro Trajo' (Our Life), Stojka and Pivoň[18] ask a question of what the Romahood is. This is a handwritten piece of Wallachian (Vlachi) Romany. They state[19]:

> Romahood stays with the Romany throughout their lives. If we want to keep it, we must respect and honour Roma traditions, without which we could not live Romahood (...) Romahood, these are some principles that we need to follow in our life, so that everybody knows we are Romany. These are: Wallachian language and speech, baptism, engagement, wedding, Roma court, relationship to the nearest and distant family, respect, wish, song, dance, dressing and Roma names.[20]
> We could not keep Romahood without these individual points, or we would not be Wallachian Romany any more.

In the next chapters, the authors then describe the individual elements of the traditional Roma (Wallachian) culture. If we searched for the literature dealing with the traditions of Roma culture of the eastern territory of our country, we would search hard. The only single complex work about this topic is that of Samuel Augustini ab Hortis Zigeuner in Ungarn[21]. To com-

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szawa 1994; M. Salo, *Gypsy Ethnicity: implications of Native Categories and Interaction for Ethnic Classification*, Ethnicity, 1979, 6, p. 73-96.

[17] J. Vaňová, *Rómska kultúra – pohľad zvnútra*, [Roma culture – view from the inside], [online]. [cit. 2014-02-11]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.mecem.sk/rpa/?id= culture&show=23791>.

[18] P. Stojka, R. Pivoň, *Náš život. Amáro Trajo*, [Our life. Amáro Trajo], Bratislava 2003.

[19] Ibidem, p. 6.

[20] Almost the same things respect the Polish Romany.

[21] S. Augustini ab Hortis, *O dnešnom stave, zvláštnych mravoch a spôsobe života, ako aj ostatných vlastnostiach a danostiach Cigánov v Uhorsku*, [On the present situation, special manners and way of life, as well as other characteristics and gifts of the Gypsies in Hungary]. Von dem heutigen Zustande, sonderbaren Sitten und Lebensart, wie auch von denen übrigen Eigenschaften und Umständen der Zigeuner in Ungarn. Bratislava 1994, DD štúdio, Wien:

pare hardly comparable different sub-ethnic groups of the Romany is shown in the words of the above-mentioned authors Stojka and Pivoň[22]: "In our community, the following proverb is true: "One hundred Romany, one hundred habits!" Therefore, to assess a class of cultural phenomena has been a difficult task waiting for us.

Roma culture at the national level (National Roma culture)

If we likened the national Roma culture to Soukup's typology[23], we could talk about some sort of axiologically 'higher' culture. This could be the artistic activities of different nature – theatre, film, musical compositions, works of art, and the like. This sphere of the Roma culture is accepted even by often very critical majority society.

Hivešová-Šilanová[24] perceives the Roma culture – especially the above-mentioned national-cultural activities in their creative and interpretative context – in the following areas: "musical performers providing musical part of events, bearers and maintainers of Slovak folklore traditions, bearers and maintainers of their own folklore traditions."

The most famous names of the three areas include for example Cinka Panna, Michal Barna, Ján Bihári, František Horváth, Pavol Čonka, František Balog and many others.

Roma national culture can be seen in several areas of cultural and social life[25]: literature (Ľudovít Didi, Elena Lacková, Dezider Banga and others), painting (Rudolf Dzurko – working in the Slovak television since 1981, Viola Petrášová, Denisa Démenová, Pavol Pokorný, Ildikó Pálová and others), music (Ján Berky Mrenica, Diabolské husle (Devil violin), Sabrosa, Cigánski diabli (Gypsy Devils), Violin orchester, Grand Slovakia, theatre orchestra Romathan), spiritual singing choirs (Children of God – Devleskere čhave), as well as Roma musical events (Khamoro – Prague, Vo víre harmónie (In the whirlwind of harmony), Medzi nebom a zemou (Between the heaven and earth)), film (Deti vetra (Children of the Wind) – 13 parts documentary cycle – director: Martin Slivka, dramaturgy: René Lužica, Jozef Banyák – the only

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Kaiserlich Königliche allergnädigste privilegierte Anzeigen aus sämstlichen Kaiserl, königl. Erbläder, Num. 20-45 (1775), Num 1-14 (1776).

[22] P. Stojka, R. Pivoň, *Náš život. Amáro Trajo,* [Our life. Amáro Trajo], p. 6.

[23] V. Soukup, *Přehled antropologických teorií kultury*, [Overview of anthropological theories of culture], Praha 2000.

[24] *Čačipen pal o Roma. Súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*, [Čačipen pal o Roma. Report on the Romany in Slovakia], ed. M. Vašečka, Bratislava 2002, p. 148.

[25] M. Kozubík, *(Ne)vinní a dilino gadžo,* [(Not)guilty and gadjo dilo], p. 43-44.

Roma director: Dietky (ne)vinné (Little children (not) guilty), Martin Šulík: Cigán (Gypsy), Dušan Hanák: Ružové sny (Pink dreams), Marek Šulík, Jana Bučková: Zvonky šťastia (Bells of luck), Ladislav Kaboš: Všetky moje deti (All My Children), Odsúdení na spolunažívanie v dobrom (Condemned to live together in good), Paula Ďurinová – Baro Mariben – civil association Jekhetane), Roma print media (whose activity is increasingly threatened – Romano nevo ľil, Buťakero Nevipen), the Internet news (Roma Media Center (MECEM), which celebrated its fifteenth anniversary in 2014), radio and television (Radio Patria – Roma cultural revue, Radio Patria – Roma word, Roma magazine: "So vakeres?"), cultural institutions supported by the state (the theatre Romathan – deceased Ján Šilan and Daniela Hivešová-Šilanová, Department of Gemer-Malohont Museum Rimavská Sobota, Department of Culture of Vihorlat Museum in Humenné, Documentation Centre of Roma culture in the Slovak National Museum in Martin, Secondary Art School Košice, director Gejza Adam).

Among state institutions supporting the development of the Roma culture, we could also include the former Department of Roma Culture[26] (Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra). It was founded in 1990 as a workplace that aimed to educate mainly teachers of Roma students. One of the motives of its establishment was encouraging and training qualified Roma intelligence (in the field of pedagogy, enlightenment and later social work focusing on the Roma community), but also members of the majority population to optimize the socio-cultural situation of the Romany in the Slovak Republic. Later the department acquired the status of the Institute and changed its name to the Institute of Romani Studies. The focus of pedagogical direction has been transformed into the area of social care and social services. Currently the Institute offers its candidates the opportunity to study in the programme 3.1.16 Social services and counselling. The planned Roma language education at university level has failed due to the strict criteria in higher education.

Roma NGOs and media

In the sphere of national Roma culture we cannot forget a significant support by NGOs. A detailed report on this subject was elaborated by Rác[27] who writes:

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[26] See: romopedia.pl [25.05.2015].

[27] I. Rác, *Hodnotiaca správa o podpore kultúry národnostných menšín, o stave národnostného školstva a používaní jazykov národnostných menšín za rok 2012. Rómska národnostná menšina*, [Eval-

Romano Nevo Ľil is the oldest Roma periodical in the Slovak Republic. It started as Romano Ľil (Roma Sheet) in September 1991 as a weekly newspaper in Slovak-Roma mutation in the press run of 5000 copies. In the years 1991-1993 it built up its own editorial staff, four filial editorial boards (Prague, Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Košice) and a network of local correspondents. In that period, binding rules and conditions for financing national culture did not exist. The only criterion was the purpose of the provided resources. Roma Sheet thus obtained the full allocation for running and publishing the newspaper. In 1992, there was a change in the name of the newspaper and Romano Nevo Ľil (Roma New Sheet) was created and a civil association Jekhetane (Together) based in Prešov became its publisher. The turning point came after 1993, when the Ministry of Culture changed the approach to funding the national press. The change in funding caused the disrupting the periodicity and the expenditures on running the editorial boards and affiliated branches reduced significantly. Since 1995, the publishing of the Romano Nevo Ľil is fully dependent on allocations from the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and in recent years the Government Office. The periodicity has markedly changed, it is published as a monthly with large variations in the issuance during the year caused by delays of funding programmes.

In 2013, the financial situation of the Roma media was uneasy, which is documented in the following words in the press releases:

Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Peter Pollák is aware that the financial situation of the Roma media is unfavourable. Existentially threatened is especially Roma cultural-social newspaper Romano Nevo Ľil – Roma New Sheet. Given the continuing unfavourable situation threatening the survival of the newspaper Romano Nevo Ľil, the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities Peter Pollák organizes a working meeting with members of the board of trustees of the newspaper on August 5, 2013 in the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities in Bratislava. He invited all members of the board of trustees – Roman Čonka, Jozef Ferenc, Tibor Huszár, Zuzana Kumanová, Arne Manna, Pavol Mešťan, Klára Orgovánová and Jurina Rusnáková. (Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák will solve the adverse situation of the newspaper Romano Nevo Ľil, 2013)[28].

The will to find all available means, was however strong, so after half a year we can note that the publishing of the periodical has not stopped. The proof can be one of the last issues of the magazine (2/2013), which is devoted to the personality of doctor MUDr. Ján Cibuľa. Sivý refers[29] to him as

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uation report on the support of the culture of national minorities, situation of minority education and use of minority languages in 2012. Roma minority], Bratislava 2013.

[28] *Splnomocnenec Peter Pollák bude riešiť nepriaznivú situáciu periodika Romano Nevo Ľil*, [Plenipotentiary Peter Pollák will solve unfavourable situation of the periodical Romano Nevo Ľil]. [online]. 2013, [cit. 2014-02-11]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.minv.sk/?spravy_rk&sprava=splnomocnenec-peter-pollak-bude-riesit-nepriaznivu-situaciu-periodika-romano-nevo-lil>.

[29] R. Sivý, *Róma z Klenovca uznával celý svet, doma nikto*, [A Romany from Klenovec was recognized by the whole world, and by no one at home], Romano Nevo Ľil, 2013, 23, 2, p. 1-2.

to the Romany who was known by the whole world, but no one at home. He states: "Ján Cibuľa was one of the most important Slovaks in the twentieth century. The communist regime concealed his achievements. From the settlement he worked his way up to his own medical practice in Switzerland and when he was awarded the Cultural price in Bern it was an honour as it received only Albert Einstein before. Canadian Romany nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011."

Some other personalities of the Roma culture would certainly deserve much more attention. We commemorated Doctor Ján Cibuľa and writer Ľudovít Didi also because they passed away last year. We think[30] that people in our local conditions do not talk about these personalities the way they would definitely deserve.

Within the Roma media, a special status is assigned to the Roma Press Agency (RPA), which was established in Košice in 2002. Since 2006 it has devoted to broadcasting of the Roma magazine (So vakeres?) in a public television. And it was one of the reasons for the change of its name to Roma Media Center (MECEM). The pilot organization of the realized activities was, however, Centre for Independent Journalism in Bratislava, which was founded in 1999. So this year, MECEM is celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of its establishment. The leading figures are Dr. Kristína Magdolenová (executive director), Bc. Jarmila Vaňová (programme director). During its functioning, the agency has undergone several changes. For example, in the period 2002-2008 several projects were implemented which focused mainly on the education of young Romany in the media environment, on the action of self-governing units working to improve the situation of the Roma community, or on publishing books, magazines, documentaries, etc. Recently, the organization also provides broadcasting of ethnically-minded programmes in the Slovak Radio.

The idea behind the support of culture of ethnic minorities is especially its development and preservation of traditional cultural characteristics and expressions for future generations. It is one of the ways how to strengthen the identity of one's own nation. It can be argued that the support for national Roma culture cannot mitigate the effects of poverty of the Roma minority. However, this is not the aim of the subsidizing of cultural and social activities. But it is particularly important in order not to refer to the traditional Roma culture as to a mythical concept which is gradually being forgotten.

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[30] Similarly to: ibidem; P. Janík, *Zomrel významný rómsky spisovateľ Ľudovít Didi*, [Eminent Roma writer Ľudovít Didi died], [online]. [cit. 2014-02-11]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.humanisti.sk/view.php?cisloclanku=2013090032>.

Culture of suburban areas of ("Roma") quarters

The last area of the Roma culture that Jakoubek presents is the sphere which may otherwise be described as culture of poverty. This is the concept of the American anthropologist Oscar Lewis, who introduced an essay entitled The Culture of Poverty in 1966. The author identified approximately seventy features that are typical for this scheme. He divided them into four main dimensions: the relationship between the majority population and a minority subculture, the nature of a slum community, family type, attitudes, values and character traits of individuals. Lewis (1966) believes that the culture of poverty is not just a matter of lack of basic needs and the state of lacking something. It's a culture in the traditional anthropological sense, i.e. one that provides guidance to human beings to life, a way of solving problems and thus it fulfills an important adaptive function. According to him, the way of life in the poor slums goes beyond the national boundaries and regional disparities between urban and rural areas in different countries. No matter where the elements of culture are located, its bearers have remarkable similarities in family structures, interpersonal relationships, habits, value system and orientation in time[31].

The author of the concept realized just after writing the article that his theory would need to be complemented by knowledge of then socialist bloc countries. We have dealt with these issues and tried to answer the research question: "Do negative socio-pathological phenomena, frustration, apathy, abuse of the social system spring from the ethnicity – the culture of the Romany (Romany thus find themselves in an unenviable situation by their own fault), or are the appointed negatives only consequences of poverty – Lewis' concept?", in Kozubik monograph '(Not) guilty and gadjo dilo', published under the project of the Scientific Grant Agency (VEGA), where he has been the main investigator. The research findings confirm the words of Lewis. All designated areas of culture of poverty of Puerto Ricans in New York and Puerto Rico are observed at the Romany living in marginalized settlements in eastern Slovakia.

Within summarizing the data we have treated the results through the optics of idiographic approach, therefore, we have not tempted to generalize our findings to the scope of the whole community living in Slovakia. There are several reasons. We think that both sub-ethnic group of the Romany living in the Slovak territory (Wallachian Romany – south and west and Rumungri – eastern Slovakia) differ from each other not only in their language,

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[31] M. Kozubík, *(Ne)vinní a dilino gadžo*, [(Not)guilty and gadjo dilo], p. 48.

but especially in cultural backgrounds in the field of socio-cultural regulations (like in Poland). The stratification of settlements is so strongly heterogeneous that even the approaches of social workers, officials and state must be tailor-made and cannot therefore be held from the table by creating a single model or strategy for all.

Opinions about the culture of poverty vary. Gorski[32] commented on the issue that the construct itself is composed of several small stereotypes that are widespread in majority society. His argument lies on the explanation of certain myths. We can quote: "People living in poverty are insufficiently motivated and have no work habits." This is derived from studies of Iversen and Farber[33] and Wilson[34] who argue that, compared to the rich, poor people have less motivation to work or they do not know how to work. Although the poor are often seen as lazy, 83 % of children from low-income families have at least one working parent, while 60 % of these parents work full time for at minimum one year. Even according to the Economic Policy Institute[35], adults living in poverty spend more hours of work per week compared to richer.

If we do not live in a society where everyone who wants to work will be able to get a job, we cannot certainly talk about idleness as about Beveridge's giant causing poverty. In our research, we have conversely confirmed the concept of culture of poverty in its various dimensions.

On the internal system of life of the Romany

A new phenomenon which has not been explored in the environment of the settlements yet is the reason for the current situation. This phenomenon is a social distance among its members. In our view, this is linked to social exclusion, which Ondrejkovič[36] perceives as a process through which the individuals, groups or even communities become isolated. European Com-

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[32] P. Gorski, *The Myth of Culture of* Poverty, EL – Educional Leadership, 2008, 65, 7. [cit. 2014-02-12]. Available on the Internet: <http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/c46c2ca9fe6dd9 e8f8cdabd522f9a7cc51d06c38_108_nespor.pdf>, p. 32-36.

[33] R.R. Iversen, N.B. Farber, *Transmission of Family Values, Work, and Welfare among Poor Urban Black* Women, Sociology, 1996, 23, 4 [online]. [cit. 2014-02-12]. Available on the Internet: <http://wox.sagepub.com/content/23/4/437.abstract>.

[34] W.J. Wilson, *When work dissapers*, New York 1997.

[35] Economic Policy Institute. 2002. The state of working class America 2002-03, Washington DC, Author, 2002. [online]. [cit. 2014-02-12]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.epi.org/publication/books_swa2002_swa2002intro/>.

[36] P. Ondrejkovič, *Úvod do metodológie spoločenských vied*, [Introduction to the methodology of social sciences], Bratislava 2005, p. 25-26.

mission[37] defined the exclusion as a restricted access to the resources needed for participation in the social, economic and political life. Socially excluded people thus have unequal chances in comparison with the majority.

The concept of social exclusion is often associated with poverty. The third program of the European Community even uses the term of social exclusion as a practical alternative to the old concept of poverty[38]. But these concepts are not identical. The difference between them is for example defined by Abrahamson and Atkinson[39] who argue that social exclusion is the final result of extreme poverty. Poverty is thus a modern phenomenon and social exclusion its postmodern equivalent.

In the context of social exclusion individual authors identify several interrelated areas and indicators[40]: Economic dimension – it is manifested by long-term unemployment, income poverty, dependency on social benefits and participation in alternative ways of living. Political dimension – disempowerment – represents the lack of political rights, low participation in elections and in solving their own situation of community activities, and so on. Community dimension – is associated with the collapse of support networks, unavailability of social services and the devastation of the environment. Individual dimension – is reflected in the health condition, particularly in high pathological nature, low level of education and skills, loss of confidence and self-esteem. Spatial dimension – the most visible component which represents the concentration of excluded groups and communities in specific locations, which can be considered disadvantaged in terms of location, lack of infrastructure, unavailability of services, and the like.

In connection with the marginalization of Roma settlements we often speak about the so-called multiple, double marginalization[41]. This means that the Romany are "disqualified" on one hand by living in segregated set-

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[37] European Commission. 2001. Report on Indicators in Field of Poverty and Social Exclusion. [online]. [cit. 2014-03-25]. 14 p. Available on the Internet: <http://www.consilium. europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/DOC.68841.pdf>.

[38] P. Mareš, *Sociologie nerovnosti a chudoby*, [Sociology of inequality and poverty], Praha 1999.

[39] P. Abrahamson, R. Atkinson, *Social exclusion in Europe: Old wine in new bottles?* [online]. [cit. 2014-03-25]. 119-136 p. Available on the Internet: <http://druzboslovnerazprave.org/ clanek/pdf/1995/19-20/7/>.

[40] J. Percy-Smith, *The contours of social exclusion*, [in:] *Posun od merania chudoby k meraniu sociálneho vyčlenenia*, [Shift from poverty measurement to social exclusion measurement], ed. R. Džambazovič, Bratislava 2004, p. 19.

[41] See: *Čačipen pal o Roma. Súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*, [Čačipen pal o Roma. Report on the Romany in Slovakia], ed. M. Vašečka, Bratislava 2002; Ł. Kwadrans, *Education of the Roma in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia*; I. Radičová, *Chudoba Rómov a sociálna starostlivosť o nich v SR*, [Poverty of the Romany and Welfare of the SR], OSI, 2002.

tlements, which are remote from the territory of the village and are often separated by a natural barrier (e.g. a river), road or rail. On the other hand, most settlements are located in eastern Slovakia, which has long been among the regions with the highest unemployment rate. However, we believe that there is one more, still unexplored, phenomenon – social distance between individual layers of the settlement population. We can therefore speak about the so-called triple marginalization.

Social distance represents an alternative perspective to the study of social stratification. It consists of mapping the networks of social interactions creating social proximity or distance, that is the distribution of the stratification in the space[42]. Social distance is reflected in the distinguishing of categories of "us" and "them"[43]. Social distance can be defined subjectively (attitude to different groups of people) and objectively (association within the friendly and partner networks) and usually an economic delimitation is concerned[44]. The distance defines social interaction and relationship to other people and characterizes both personal and social relationships[45]. The attitude of social distance is different from the original stratification models in its view of social structure as a multidimensional social space, which is formed by the interaction of people in different positions. Therefore, it does not concentrate only on the classical aspects such as income or employment[46]. Social distance which is attributed to the historical origin of the Romany and the Indian caste system[47] is interesting. Different, impenetrable status of each caste exists also at present[48]. We believe that to assess the Roma communities only according to the caste system can be just as misleading as to describe them according to the stratification models used for the majority population. We do not know any scientific papers dealing exclusively with social stratification in Slovak Roma communities. We will introduce the discussed issues in the context of field research. We focused on two areas: a) distance relation-

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[42] J. Šafr, *Kulturalistický přístup k třídní analýze a relační paradigma stratifikace*, [Culturalist approach to class analysis and relational paradigm of stratification], Socioweb, 6, p. 1-3. [cit. 2014-02-28]. Available on the Internet: <http://www.socioweb.cz/upl/editorial/download/153_socioweb_6_08.pdf>.

[43] J. Šanderová, *Sociální stratifikace*, [Social stratification], Praha 2000, p. 16; Ł. Kwadrans, *Education of the Roma in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia.*

[44] J. Šafr, *Kulturalistický přístup k třídní analýze a relační paradigma stratifikace,* [Culturalist approach to class analysis and relational paradigm of stratification].

[45] D. Ryšavý, *Sociální distance vůči Romům*, [Social distance towards the Romany], Sociologický časopis, [Czech Sociological Review], 2003, 39(1), p. 55-77.

[46] J. Šafr, *Kulturalistický přístup k třídní analýze a relační paradigma stratifikace,* [Culturalist approach to class analysis and relational paradigm of stratification].

[47] E. Dávidová, *Cesty Romů. Romano drom*, [Paths of the Romany], Olomouc 2004.

[48] A. Giddens, *Sociologie*, Praha 2000.

ship of the Roma population and the majority; b) social distance between the inhabitants of the settlement, and we contemplated on the possible mechanisms of their origin.

We have used the term "settlement culture" to define internal organization of the Roma community. It is a complex area characterized by high degree of social stratification, which is closely interdependent. It's not just family ties (often dysfunctional; as in imaginary hierarchy of families wealthier layers do not come to contact with poor ones) or locally – geographically defined (that is, segregated areas separated from the dwellings of majority by a natural or artificially created barrier), but this is about an important goods exchange or literally usury business. Triple marginalization of the poorest is perceived as the most visible manifestation of absolute poverty of Slovak society in the 21st century.

Conclusion of results (education and social situation)

To what extent can the results be generalized? We can talk about the application of the nomothetic approach in our study only in a strictly defined local community of surveyed localities. The largest differences in cultural phenomena were observed in the rural and urban environment. Segregated and separated locations and their residents do not differ very much in the perception of individual spheres of life. Our findings cannot be applied to the entire territory of Eastern Slovakia. It is essential that our work had a continuous character and completed the information on the Wallachian Romipen (Romahood, author's note). The findings are based on our long-term stay in the field and are based solely on observation, interviews, and stay in the settlements.

Education. A common feature of all the classes is a strong relationship with the children and family. The poorest parents, despite the unquestionable love of children, fail to provide adequate living conditions. Such children are brought up by the "street" and they come home only when they are hungry, thirsty or want to sleep. In this case, we can talk about the culture of poverty and not about a cultural feature. Education of children for example in the Christian mission Maranata represents a specific approach. Children are led to believe from early childhood not only by their parents, but also by other members of the religious group. Parents do not support further study of their children. The reasons are several: fear of the unknown environment,

distrust of the educational institutions of the majority, but also financial profit of families (starting a family, cohabitation).

Field social work in Roma communities occupies a specific position in the current typology of social work methods. We can observe the shift in theoretical background in expert literature. Never ending project of field social work in villages has an influence on the genesis of the method development. Its specificity lies in the fact that if the project proves successful, its sustainability can be ensured systemically by a given country, department or locality. But it does not work like this in the local conditions here. In the last year of operation of the project, all participants – state, municipality, social workers and their assistants, but especially clients – are worried about its future. This awaits us in the upcoming year 2015. We agree that the need for it is necessary. It may be important as an extended arm of control of poverty for the state and municipalities, a source of livelihood for social workers and an integral part of aid for many clients in need (unfortunately, in some cases only the directive adjoining humiliation).

Is it possible to define rules and instructions on how to proceed most adequately with the field work in such a specific environment that settlements undoubtedly are? A pioneer in this domain is Navrátil[49], who defines the so-called pillars of social work with the Roma national minority. The pillars are numerous – on one hand, piles of social work, on the other hand a Roma reform. Is it possible to adopt generally binding rules so that the imaginary bridge of understanding between majority and minority did not fell down? Examples of good practice exist, but they are few. However, they have a common denominator: quality cooperation between the state, municipality, field social workers and their assistants. But if the state adopts controversial legislative rules and the Social Development Fund bureaucratises, if municipal authorities prepare a poor plan for community development and social workers are recruited only on the basis of nepotism and not on the basis of qualifications for the job, we cannot expect quality results.

In Kozubik monograph[50], we have defined some rules that a social worker in the Roma community should keep in mind: *NOSCE TE IPSUM* (from Latin 'Know yourself', author's note) – Navrátil[51] also considers the self-knowledge necessary. A person, who does not like himself, cannot like miserable and needy. If you are prejudiced and stereotyped, you are not a good candidate. Therefore, we suggest taking into account personal and

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[49] P. Navrátil, *Romové v české společnosti*, [Romany in the Czech society].
[50] M. Kozubík, *(Ne)vinní a dilino gadžo*, [(Not)guilty and gadjo dilo].
[51] P. Navrátil, *Romové v české společnosti,* [Romany in the Czech society].

"life" attitudes of candidates as selection criteria for the post of field social workers. A combination of humanity and expert information is a necessity. *COMPLEX KNOWLEDGE OF THE ROMA MINORITY* – we humbly believe that this is where we have filled the empty blank space of the forms of contemporary Roma culture. Social work is interdisciplinary. If you lack knowledge of relevant legislation, the client easily "tricks" you and instead of activation works he throws a shovel and goes to study, and so on[52]. If you do not know anything about the culture of poverty and anthropological theory of cultures, how can you understand the context of life in the settlements? If you do not know the history of the Roma minority and basics of Romani, how can you gain honour and respect? *POWER IN SOCIAL WORK* – The institute of a special beneficiary gives considerable power to the hands of municipalities and their delegated social workers. We have witnessed unpleasant directives bordering with dressage. It is imperative for social workers to have regular supervision and socio-psychological training. It is extremely important to develop a system of the quality of work measurement for the future. *SISYPHEAN SOCIAL WORK* – a renowned sociologist Keller[53] believes that social work faces an impossible task. If social inclusion does not rest on professional inclusion, it is doomed to eternal inclusion. It can only believe that the social work will continue to be a profession helping the needy people, the poor and vulnerable and not an extended arm of state power, which will "keep the underclass under control".

If we all could live the mystery of love hidden in the opening quotation of the work "... love thy neighbor as thyself...", we would not have to worry that smile, understanding and humanity would disappear. Please, do not forget it ...

Conclusion

The researches representing the same phenomenon could have different character of interpretative quality, and according to radical opponents, also validity of such conceived research reports. However, the disadvantage of thick description and its supporters is at the same time its biggest benefit – not only lengthy coding, introducing categories into relationships, or statistical hypothesis verifying are important, but it depends mostly on the power of scientific imagination enabling to understand life of unknown people.

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[52] Ł. Kwadrans, *Education of the Roma in the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia*.
[53] J. Keller, *Soumrak sociálního státu*, [Twilight of the social state], Praha 2011, p. 123.

Clifford Geertz sees anthropology as "soft science" in which the word "to verify" is too strong. Pursuit of culture knowledge should not arise only from description of primeval forest tribe traditions or from the providing an artifact of African warriors, but it should arise mostly from the fact to what extent the researcher is able to clarify what is happening in such communities and what is the cause for such acting. We modestly believe that knowing life in segregated locations and our findings can be valuable for field social work that lies in discovering utilitarian core of life strategies of people living in these communities.

To understand other people's culture means to reveal their "normality" without lowering their uniqueness. We may agree with this Geertz' idea. By understanding the activity of Moroccans themselves, these Africans seemed to him more logical and more unique. Our experience is also similar and it is superimposed by sincerity and immediacy of the poor Romany. Moral dilemmas of usefulness of our work accompanied us from the very first ideas and suggestions leading us to write it. Is the work itself only one step of our professional growth? Or, is it a personal and spiritual growth as well? How will the specific conclusions arising from the field research help the Romany in settlements? Samuel Augustini ab Hortis himself realized that solving problems is not in Romany segregation but in knowing these people which will enable to create better conditions for their life. The first steps of a successful progress are self-knowing multiplied by knowledge of cultural differences in the environment of settlements. We believe this is our main contribution.

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