

Regional Workshop: “Addressing Discrimination and Anti-gypsyism in the Enlargement Region”

Antigypsyism

A stable social structure

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Shift of perspective

Shift in the analysis of antigypsyism should be a change of focus from the object of discrimination – i.e. the Roma – to the majority society.

Antigypsyism does not necessarily need Roma to discriminate against. It could very well be projected onto other groups as well.

It is imperative not only to analyze the discriminative actions and structures themselves, but also the patterns, the logic, and the function of the antigypsyist ideology.

Working Definiton:

“Antigypsyism is a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma ‘gypsy’ or other related terms, and incorporates:

First, a homogenising and essentialising perception and description of specific social groups under the stigma of ‘gypsy’ or other related terms.

Second, the assigning of specific deviant characteristics to those stigmatised in the manner described above.

Third, discriminating social structures and violent practices that emerge against that background, which have a degrading and ostracizing effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages.”

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3 Steps of a prejudice

see Holz, Klaus (2001)

In-Group [norms and values]

(i.e. “Germans”/“Romanians”/“Serbs”)

(1)

Homogenizing

- “heritage”
- “race”
- “culture”
- “tradition”

Out-Group
 (“Gypsies”)

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Ascribing

- nomadic **vs.** sedentary
- living from other **vs.** living from one’s own labour
- direct consumption and pleasure
vs. saving und discipline

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Judging

positive:
“living happily
without sorrows”
or
negative:
“being lazy and
work-shy”

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Case Study

Antigypsyist Police Discrimination in Germany

- Based on the assumption of a General ‘Gypsy Criminality’

Quantitative Surveys

Statement:

“Sinti and Roma have a proclivity for crime.”:

Yes: 58,5%

(Brähler, E., Decker, O., & Kiess, J. (Ed., 2016). Die enthemmte Mitte: Autoritäre und rechtsextreme Einstellung in Deutschland. Die Leipziger “Mitte“-Studie 2016. Gießen, p. 50)

Open Question:

“According to you, what would be necessary to come along well with Sinti and Roma? What do you think is most important?”

78,1% chose “*Fight against criminality*”.

(Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (2014): Zwischen Gleichgültigkeit und Ablehnung. Berlin, p. 154)

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- Antigypsyist databases

Examples for Databases

The police in Baden-Württemberg and Saxony still files about 15.000 people in the category: **“changes residence frequently”** [*“wechselt häufig Aufenthaltsort (WHAO)”*].

(Landtag von Baden-Württemberg (2014), p. , Sächsisches Staatsministerium des Innern 2016: 4).

The category **“frequently change residence”** [*“häufig wechselnder Aufenthaltsort (HWAO)”*] has been used as a cover for the continued collection of racialized data since the 1970s.

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- Racial Profiling

Racial Profiling

In a speech at the central conference of the Federal Criminal Police Office, the leader of the Duisburg Police explained:

Roma would **“form a homogeneous group of migrants who live in family structures with many children”** (Bartels 2016: 5) and represented one of three groups of migrants who **“play a role”** in Duisburg police work (2016: 2). To fight this, she explains, that police **“prevented potential offenders to commit typical crimes through a high number of stop-and-search operations at possible access routes”** (2016: 4).

Conclusion

The ideology of Antigypsyism has to be understood as a basic Structural Pattern of European Societies, serving in the Identity Building of the Nation States' Majorities. As such it legitimizes Discrimination, Exclusion and Persecution of Romani people and others stigmatized as 'gypsies'.

Conclusion II

“To address the effects of discriminatory treatment that affects the lives of many of Romani citizens in Europe – poverty, poor quality housing, substandard education, etc. – of itself does nothing to eradicate the ultimate source of those bad living conditions, i.e. antigypsyism.

To treat antigypsyism as a thematic issue – alongside housing, education, health and employment, for instance – is indicative of a poor understanding of its significance. Antigypsyism is like a continuous headwind against which any successes have to be conquered. The policy objective of ‘Roma inclusion’ will remain illusory, as long as we do not confront the headwind itself.”

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