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Marginality, Advocacy, and the Ambiguities of Multiculturalism: Notes on Romani Activism in Central Europe

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Activists who take up the cause of marginalized and discriminated cultural groups often find themselves in an ambiguous position in relation to the very people whose interests they seek to represent. Inspired by the ideas of multiculturalism, minority advocates turn the cultural identity of marginalized and discriminated minorities into the central focus of a political struggle for recognition. By so doing, however, they construct a particular sectional minority identity that not only fails to give full expression to individual identities, but is usually also "stigmatized" in the sense that it is popularly associated with standard stereotypical images and negative characteristics. This article identifies this ambiguity in contemporary projects of minority rights advocacy aimed at redressing the social and economic grievances of the Roma in Central Europe. It shows how activists in the articulation of their claims rely on essentialist assumptions of Romani identity. While these minority rights claims resonate well in international forums, they also run the risk of reifying cultural boundaries, stimulating thinking in ethnic collectives, reinforcing stereotypes, and hampering collective action. By reviewing some of the recent literature on multiculturalism in social and political theory, this article explores ways of dealing with this ambiguity. It concludes that minority advocacy for the Roma can avoid the tacit reproduction of essential identities by contesting the essentializing categorization schemes that lie at the heart of categorized oppression and by foregrounding the structural inequality that drives political mobilization.

Key Words: minority rights, Roma, Central Europe, advocacy, marginality

Activists who take up the cause of marginalized and discriminated cultural groups often find themselves in an ambiguous position in relation to the very people whose interests they seek to represent. Contemporary advocates of marginalized and discriminated minorities have increasingly turned the cultural and ethnic identity of these groups into the principal focus of a political struggle for recognition. In a classic description of this phenomenon, Nancy Fraser has called this "a shift in the grammar of political claims-making" by which claims

for "the recognition of group difference have become increasingly salient" and have at times eclipsed "claims for social equality" (Fraser 1997: 2). Advocates who follow this trend have increasingly acted in the name of particular sectional identities. Although such sectional identities are presented as the "true" identities of the groups concerned, they are, however, far from unproblematic. They impose a unity that obscures differentiation within the population and, although they are meant to produce a positive image of the groups concerned, they often continue to be experienced as stigmatized identities. For this reason, a movement politics that is framed in terms of a discourse of minority identity might create "rigid and firm boundaries around cultural identities" (Benhabib 2002: 68), reinforce stereotypes, and ultimately thwart collective action against oppression. Just how contentious a process of forming a minority rights movement can be, is pointed out, for example, by Jane K. Cowan (2001). The legal recognition of culturally distinctive groups as well as the actions undertaken by minority advocates to ensure such recognition may be widely viewed as having an emancipatory effect, but, as Cowan notes, a project of constructing and consolidating minorityhood "may constrain, as much as enable, many of those it is meant to empower, by forcing their expressions of difference into a dichotomous interpretive frame that misrepresents their complex identities and rests on the same logic as the nationalism it ostensibly contests" (Cowan 2001: 154).

In Central and Eastern Europe, this problem can be detected in the activities of advocacy organizations and ethnic activists who seek to defend the Roma. The collapse of communism and the process of state-building that ensued in the 1990s have highlighted the existence of significant ethnic minorities in many European states, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. In this context, the growing plight of Europe's biggest minority—the Roma (Gypsies)—has been particularly salient. Traditionally dispersed, possessing few resources, and usually viewed as a group devoid of a "kin state" to protect their interests, the Roma have often suffered from widespread exclusion and institutionalized discrimination. Politically underrepresented and lacking popular support amongst the wider populations of their countries, the Roma have consequently become one of Europe's greatest "losers" in the transition toward democracy. Since the early 1990s, a growing range of actors has tried to improve the economic and social position of the Roma through the promotion of specific projects of minority rights advocacy and ethnic political representation. There now are a large number of local political and non-political Romani associations and Roma-supporting associations.[1] In most cases these projects have been supported by

international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), such as the European Roma Rights Center, Minority Rights Group, Project on Ethnic Relations, the European Roma Information Office, and the initiatives of the Open Society Institute. Like many other advocacy actors in the rest of the world (see, e.g., Keck and Sikkink 1998), these organizations have become known mostly for their information tactics. Through providing facts and testimonies of marginality and discrimination, they have tried to hold governments accountable and instigate them to introduce new policy initiatives. By so doing, they have not only pressured domestic and international governments; they have also directly contributed to the creation of Romani identity and have tried to make this identity into a basis for forging links of solidarity and creating a unified ethnic community across state borders. This identity is clearly "new," in the sense that many of the people who are considered to possess that identity do not think of themselves as "Roma" but as members of particular descent groups in particular nation-states.[2] At the same time, however, because it is explicitly meant to replace the overall designation "Gypsies," this new identity continues to echo visions of the group as an immutable and archaic group of eternal outsiders and situates this group in a long history of stigmatization and exclusion.

The result has been an odd mixture of success and failure. For a number of years, activists have been able to attract massive international attention to the plight of the Roma and have indeed been able to exert a considerable impact on government policy. They have also successfully disseminated the term "Roma," which now—as the director of one advocacy group described it—"has come to dominate the official political discourse, at least in Europe, and has acquired the legitimacy of political correctness" (Petrova 2003: 111). But that does not mean that activists have been able to persuade their target audience to commit themselves to Romani identity in order to form a unified mass movement. Neither does it imply that advocacy strategies are automatically embraced by those whom the activists try to unite and defend. Strategies that may be persuasive for governments and international audiences may be experienced as counterproductive and stigmatizing at the local level. This is exactly what Vesselin Popov, an engaged Bulgarian anthropologist, alluded to when he commented on the role of international NGOs in the Romani movement:

> The new approach of presenting the Roma through horrifying images of misery on the margins of society and personal degradation, with the aim of impacting foreign sponsors and public opinion in Western Europe,

only serves to increase the negative stereotypes about the Gypsies, which in the long run is [an] obstacle to the solution of their problems (quoted in Alexandrova 2004).

In Slovakia, the executive director of the Roma Press Agency stressed a similar point:

It worries me deeply that the media present only the poorest of the Roma, a kind of substandard layer of society. From the outside this creates the impression that all Roma are uneducated and live in iso-lated settlements. This is, however, simply not true. But… we are only able to see them when they are completely debased. Only then… we appear to be deeply moved (quoted in Vaňová 2005; my translation).

Clearly, these and other observers have noted what alarmingly looks like a double bind: Romani activists can make their voice heard successfully by engaging in identity politics and asserting Romani identity as the main focus of political action, but in doing so they run the risk of reifying, politicizing, and perhaps even intensifying the boundary between minority and majority identi-ties. A simplified reification of the Roma as a coherent and clearly identifiable group with common attributes (such as economic mar-ginality, common culture, common descent, specific traits, a single ethnic identity, and so on) not only misses the power to mobilize people in a unified movement, but it also fails to overcome the pow-erful negative valuations of Romani identity that are present in society at large.

This article has two closely related aims: 1) to gain a better under-standing of this double bind by reviewing and interpreting empirical observations made in Central Europe against the background of debates in political theory on multiculturalism, and 2) to find out how such a theoretical interpretation might have an impact on the research focus of those scholars who want to study Romani activism.

This article consists of three parts. In the first part, I start with some empirical observations from research recently conducted in Central Europe (the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia). This should offer a more detailed insight into the above-described suc-cesses and failures of Romani activism. I will argue that we should be careful not to conclude from these facts that Romani activism—although it is in many ways an extreme case—is intractable to any theoretical discussion. The phenomenon should be studied in the

context of what the analysis of other identity-based movements has taught us.

In the second part, I examine the dominant normative ideas that underpin contemporary Romani activism. I will argue that by founding the practical agenda of political advocacy on the principles of multiculturalism and minority rights, activists have made their advocacy vulnerable to the ambiguities that plague the discourses of multiculturalism and minority rights. One of the problems that critics have noted is that in demanding the political recognition of cultural identities, multiculturalism tacitly accepts essentialist cultural boundaries and places cultural subjects within frozen matrices of identity. I will argue that a possible way out of this dilemma might be to adopt a political basis that is more nuanced than the common multiculturalist ideal. More specifically, what is needed is a framework for activism that facilitates an understanding of groups as "overlapping, criss-crossing, and with undecidable borders" (Young 1995: 168). This entails reframing minority advocacy in such a way that it moves away from the logic of exclusive, fixed, pure, and authentic identities and instead foregrounds experiences of inequality and stigmatization. These experiences do not relate to supposedly fixed attributes of a group but to relations between potentially changing, socially constituted groups. As Iris Marion Young has argued: "Everyone relates to a plurality of social groups; every social group has other social groups cutting across it" (2002: 88). By politicizing the inequalities experienced by a social group rather than the attributes of a group as a supposedly distinct and fixed entity, minority advocates will be able to allow differentiation within a group and overlap of interests with other groups.

I will end my essay with a brief section in which I argue that this theoretical insight into the dilemma of Romani activism should be taken seriously by those who study the position of the Roma in Central Europe. What I contend is that scholars should turn their attention not only to those organizations and initiatives that explicitly try to reclaim Romani identity as a national, ethnic, and cultural identity. In studying what political activism could mean for the Roma, we should pay increased attention to those organizations and initiatives that analyze the position of the Roma from the viewpoint of a complex understanding of structural inequality and cultural diversity. They may be the ones that are able to show that groups like the Roma need not be seen as unchangeable or fixed within specific characteristics. They may create cross-cutting alliances and proffer the identity-based Romani activists new and perhaps more effective ties of solidarity.

The double bind of Romani activism in Central Europe

Since the emergence of political action in Central Europe aimed at improving the social and economic conditions of those who are known as "Gypsies," the term Roma has been promoted as a way to overcome the negative stereotypes associated with the name Gypsies. The advantage of the name "Roma" was that it could be presented as a cultural endonym (Gheorghe 1991: 829) and thus could serve as a basis for demands for recognition of the Roma as a cultural, ethnic, or even a national group. The introduction of the name Roma served not merely to replace names with derogatory overtones; it marked the decision of activists to place the issue in the context of the current debate on multiculturalism. This way of framing was likely to increase moral leverage in a geographical area where minority rights protection was increasingly seen as an important precondition for democratic stability and peace. To buttress their demands for changes in policies and procedures, activists could refer to the existing international norms and standards for recognizing cultural, ethnic, and national minority identities. From the beginning of the 1990s onward, international human rights NGOs were trying to achieve just that by criticizing the governments that ignored the plight of the Roma. Human Rights Watch was one of the first international independent actors to publish reports on the situation of the Roma in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, concentrating on a wide range of issues from segregated education to unequal access to public and private services (Helsinki Watch 1991a, 1991b; Human Rights Watch 1992, 1993). In the latter half of the 1990s, the European Roma Rights Center became the first professional international NGO to focus exclusively on the human rights situation of the Roma. Besides documenting and publicizing the systematic lack of human rights protection and sending protest letters to "shame" governments, the European Roma Rights Center also started to provide targeted legal help, including litigation, to Romani victims of human rights violations. The idea behind this was to fight discriminatory practices through courts of law by engaging in "impact litigation" on both domestic and international levels. The work of these organizations was joined by the activities specifically directed at Romani populations conducted by a wide range of international NGOs of which the most important ones were Minority Rights Group (Liégeois and Gheorghe 1995), Amnesty International, Save the Children (2001), the Open Society Institute (Zoon 2001a, 2001b), and the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights. All of this, of course, has had clear effects on the way small organizations developed. The international advocacy NGOs have all attempted to maintain

identifiable links with local organizations and local independent activists in order to legitimize the claim that they not only *speak for* a population but also *represent* this population.

Since the mid-1990s, we have seen divergent developments as a result of the activities of these organizational networks. In terms of international political response, this advocacy for the Roma has been a success. International organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the World Bank, the Council of Europe, and the European Union (EU) have all become increasingly aware of the situation of the Roma and have introduced special initiatives targeting this group. Especially the developments in the context of the Eastern enlargement of the EU should be highlighted (Vermeersch 2002a). Reference to minority protection figured as a prominent element of the EU's Copenhagen criteria, and the yearly monitoring reports by the European Commission contained a number of important references to the situation of the Roma. After 1997, it became increasingly clear that the European Commission would take the situation of the Roma into account when deciding on whether a candidate for membership would be ready to join the EU. The "Agenda 2000" noted that the treatment of minorities in applicant countries was generally satisfactory, "except for the situation of the Roma minority in a number of applicants" (European Commission 1997). In the years following, the European Commission gave the impression that it was gradually taking an even stricter approach on the issue of the Roma. In 2001, the European Commissioner responsible for enlargement, Günter Verheugen, called "respect of minorities and in particular the Roma population" one of the three important issues that needed further monitoring under the Copenhagen political criteria (Verheugen 2001). Not surprisingly, this development coincided with an increase in the number of domestic policy initiatives explicitly targeted at the Roma. Governments in Central Europe introduced minority rights models very often with an express reference to the demands of the EU. This was clearly the case in the three countries that I focus on in this article: Slovakia, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Even in the new social programs aimed at reducing unemployment and poverty, a separate heading was reserved for measures specifically targeted at the Roma (Vermeersch 2002b: 104–138). Since the end of the 1990s there has even been increased cooperation between governmental and nongovernmental actors in the field. One of the most remarkable events marking this cooperation clearly was the official opening of the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" in 2005, an attempt to instigate governments to step up their Roma integration initiatives. This program, initiated by the World Bank and the Open Society

Institute, has been officially endorsed by a number of governments in Central and Eastern Europe.[3]

But this is not the full story. In several other areas of movement activity, impact was limited and results were disappointing. One can easily identify a number of shortcomings. First of all, did changing policies lead to changing material circumstances? That official policies and new agencies were introduced should certainly not be taken to imply that these policies and agencies had a substantial impact upon communities on the ground. Figures on the current level of poverty and marginality in areas populated by Roma are rather discouraging. Secondly, did the introduction of the name Roma lead to a reduction of prejudiced thinking about the people who were labeled as such? This question is difficult to answer. Current sociological research on the way people perceive Roma is rather fragmented, but the overall impression of the data is that they paint a rather gloomy picture. Thirdly and perhaps even more importantly, did Romani activism persuade people to make Romani identity into the focus of a large-scale political movement for change? Although research on this question has been fragmented as well, one does find data from which to conclude that in this field Romani activism has not been successful at all.

Let me consider one important indicator: the inability of ethnically based political parties to attract Romani voters. In Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, the 1990s saw a profusion of ethnically based Romani parties, all with the aim of creating and representing a Romani constituency. In all three countries, such parties failed to do just that. In Hungary, the number of Romani parties increased steadily during the course of the 1990s and rose to eight in 2001.[4] Not all of these parties participated in national elections, but of those that did take part none ever managed to gain mandates in parliament.[5] In the Czech Republic, too, Romani parties failed to be significant in electoral terms. In contrast to Hungary, however, the number of Romani political parties decreased during recent years. In 1998, there were five officially registered Romani political parties, a number that according to the Ministry of the Interior dropped to three in 2000. The only Romani party that ever ran on its own in Czech national elections was the Romani Civic Initiative (ROI). It stood in the 1992 elections for the Federal Assembly and the Czech National Council, in the 1996 Senate elections, and in the 2002 elections for the Chamber of Deputies. The results were low in all these cases. In the last parliamentary elections in 2002, ROI foundered at a total of 523 votes—barely 0.01 percent.[6] The Slovak Republic differs from the Czech Republic and Hungary in the sense that the number of registered Romani-based political parties has been substantially higher and that there were

several attempts over the years to form larger coalitions. In 1999, the Slovak authorities registered fifteen ethnically based Romani political parties, a list that was even extended to eighteen in 2000 and to twenty in 2002 (Šebesta 2003: 209). Many of these parties never participated in national elections and when they did, they never managed to fulfill promises of attracting large constituencies and never passed the electoral thresholds for representation. Some of these parties placed their bet on electoral cooperation with the main competitors in the elections, in some cases even with the nationalist populist HZDS of former Prime Minister Mečiar. Whatever the Romani activists claimed was to be gained from these coalitions, it had no lasting effect on people's willingness to vote for them.[7]

Data about elections and ethnic politics are of course just one indicator of the development of Romani activism in Central Europe. There are other fields that need to be examined, and one definitely needs to consider complex configurations of factors when trying to explain the outcomes. What is clear from the total picture of Romani electoral politics in Central Europe, however, is that the substantial increase of advocacy activities on behalf of the Roma was not able to instigate a spectacular increase of popular support for Romani political parties. Whatever the introduction of the term Roma and the employment of a discourse of multiculturalism did for the creation of an international political discourse on the Roma, it did not persuade potential participants in a large-scale ethnic movement to start effectively participating in such a movement through electoral politics.

Why did Romani ethnically-based political parties in the three countries perform so badly? There are, no doubt, both structural and political reasons. The fact that Romani communities have a younger age structure means that a smaller share of their population is of voting age. This may be part of the explanation, especially in the Czech Republic, where the potential Romani electorate is rather small: given the low census score for the Romani population, it is unrealistic to expect high electoral support for ethnic Romani parties. But this reason is not entirely valid in the Hungarian and Slovak cases. If all the people who officially identified themselves as Roma in these countries had voted for a Romani party, such a party would have been relatively successful. Perhaps it would not immediately have helped them to find access to national parliaments, but it might at least have put these parties firmly on the map as the political wing of the Romani movement, both locally and nationally.

Some people have suggested that Roma are simply not interested in electoral politics for cultural or social reasons (Barany 2002: 78). This might be true to some extent (as it is surely true for many dominant

groups in European societies), but there is enough evidence to doubt that this has been the decisive factor in the development of ethnic Romani parties. For this to be true, the general levels of electoral participation of Roma should be much lower than those of other groups. From survey results in Hungary collected by Ipsos-Szonda between May 1999 and June 2000 and the results of a survey on poverty and ethnicity in Central Europe, the Hungarian sociologist János Ladányi concludes that among those identified as Roma, the percentage of people who were willing to participate in elections was as high as fifty-four percent, and that was not much lower than the sixty percent self-identified confident electoral participants among the non-Romani populations in Hungary (Ladányi 2002). On the basis of data collected during the 2002 parliamentary elections in Slovakia, one has to conclude that turnouts were indeed lower in the Eastern districts, and sometimes very low in municipalities that are known to have large poor populations. But at the same time, on the district level the turnout never dropped under fifty-eight percent. Even more telling are the results from a UNDP/ILO survey carried out in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia between November 2001 and January 2002 among a sample of about 1,000 people in areas where, according to the census, there have been concentrations of Roma (UNDP 2002). In this survey, 63.3 percent of the respondents in Hungary reported that they had voted in the last elections. In Slovakia, 64.20 percent of the respondents reported that they had done so. Only in the Czech Republic was the Romani turnout conspicuously lower (29.13 percent). On the basis of these crude measures, one may conclude that, at least in Hungary and Slovakia, the poor results of Romani candidates and parties during national elections are not necessarily caused by low numbers of Roma participating in the elections.

For the purpose of this article, I would like to focus on one particular factor that helps to explain the failure of Romani parties to mobilize voters: the complex and at the same time often confusing messages that Romani politicians have been trying to sell to their voters. I frequently had the impression from interviews with activists who were engaged in electoral politics that their motivation to do so was largely restricted to the symbolic value of ethnically based Romani representation (hence also the proliferation of political parties and the disagreement among them about who "really" represents the Roma). In other words, their political campaigns were to a large extent aimed at "making" a unified group, expressing a coherent group identity, and gaining control over the representation of the group. This strategy, however, brought them into trouble when more particular issues such as Romani segregation or poverty were at the center of the debate.

Some activists feared that linking marginality with Romani identity would convey the message that the cause of the problem was to be located within the Romani minority itself. Marginality would then be seen as the consequence of "unadjusted" social behavior (stealing, begging, loan-sharking, etc.), and therefore local activist found it problematic to raise the issue in this context. They feared that the Roma's alleged inability to create better living conditions for themselves would be construed as the core of the problem. They were afraid that by pointing to the marginality of Romani communities they would unwittingly support the popular argument that it is the unwillingness of the Roma to engage in social integration that is to be blamed for this situation. This is of course not that different from the "blame the victim" rhetoric that has often been used by individuals and organizations who directly *oppose* Romani movement formation. In other words, some Romani activists felt reluctant to expose situations of marginality in their mobilization attempts, precisely because they feared that such a stance would reinforce the idea that there is an obvious link between Romani identity and problematic social behavior.

This point can be illustrated by reference to the discussions surrounding Luník IX in eastern Slovakia. Luník IX is a housing estate in the outskirts of Slovakia's second most populous city, Košice, where around 4,000 Romani inhabitants live. It was built in the beginning of the 1980s as a residential area for dignitaries of the city of Košice, but was soon changed into a social housing project (Bačová and Bača 1994). In the 1990s the quality of the housing deteriorated quickly and it became the location where the city's poorest population was placed. In 1995, in the course of an urban renewal project, the city of Košice approved a resolution that designated Luník IX as a housing estate for the "socially problematic." In reality, the area became a ghetto for poor Roma. Luník IX attracted foreign journalists and politicians, especially after it had become clear that a considerable number of Romani asylum seekers who came to EU countries from Slovakia were from this housing estate. Although the situation in Luník IX has its own historical particularities, it nevertheless began to function as a symbol of the plight of the Roma in the whole of Slovakia, this being perhaps best illustrated by the initiative of Günter Verheugen who in February 2001, at the time he was the European Commissioner responsible for EU enlargement, visited Luník IX as part of an official trip to Slovakia.

It is interesting to consider the way in which activists framed the issue of Luník IX. Internationally oriented Romani activists tended to see the situation as caused by ethnic discrimination, in keeping with the view of supportive organizations such as the European Roma Rights Center. They referred to Luník IX as a symbol that was indicative of the

general situation of the Roma in Slovakia. In Košice and Luník IX, however, I interviewed local activists who felt reluctant to publicize the concrete situations that occurred within the housing estate, since they were afraid that they themselves would be held responsible for what was often regarded as the inability of the inhabitants to change their predicament. In other words, these activists feared that they would not succeed in persuading anyone of the interpretation that what was often perceived as abject social behavior inherent to the Roma was in fact caused by external circumstances. Many of the references to Luník IX in the dominant political discourse and the media did indeed accuse the Roma of creating the trouble themselves. Descriptions of Luník IX often served as "evidence" that it was not discrimination but the ignorant lifestyles of the Roma that was at the root of the problem. In 1996, Alexander Weber (HZDS), who was at that time mayor of Luník IX, told a research mission led by the Slovak Helsinki Committee that people in totalitarian times may have thought they could "civilize the Roma," but that history had shown this to be impossible (quoted in Young 1996: 3). In such a context, it is not surprising that many Romani activists in Slovakia turned away from movement campaigns focusing on the poverty and material conditions in Luník IX and thought such campaigns would be counterproductive and induce further negative stereotyping.

Thus, in order to avoid getting caught up in a discussion about supposedly conflicting cultures, aspirant Romani politicians very often did not make clear demands and claims. Or, more precisely, they did not connect their claims to particular situations and offered little empirical evidence to support their demands. Instead they spoke of them in general terms and simply portrayed them as self-evident. While in the beginning of the 1990s the recognition of the Roma as a national minority emerged as a major political demand, in more recent years Romani politicians usually came up with programs that contained just a handful of loose descriptions relating to the need to prevent discrimination and enforce human rights protection. Romani politicians rarely made unambiguous statements about whether they were in favor of group-specific measures, such as affirmative action, desegregation, education in the Romani language, or the recognition of the Romani language as a minority language.[8]

This fact can be interpreted in various ways, but it is, I submit, mainly illustrative of two basic characteristics of Romani activism in Central Europe. First, it shows that Romani activism is very much inspired by the identity-based tactics of international advocacy actors. It shows that Romani political parties really try to make their identity as "Roma" the central focus point of their activism, using the discourses

of "rights," "culture," and "identity" that have proven so successful on the international stage. Second, their failure to make unambiguous statements about the *way* Romani identity should be recognized by the state shows that they are not entirely comfortable with the whole project of minority rights advocacy. Here we find an interesting paradox: Romani politicians have an identity-based agenda, but simultaneously they are unsure about how to turn that agenda into clear, unambiguous policy demands. In other words, there appears to be a crucial disconnect between the mobilization efforts of internationally oriented activists—whose actions are ultimately aimed at galvanizing international audiences and governments to take action—and local Romani activists who are seeking the support of a local population.

Activists need to maneuver between multiple audiences (Cowan 2003: 141) and this is clearly not without its dangers. Large international initiatives such as the "Decade for Roma Inclusion" are meant to attract widespread international attention to the problems that face the Roma, encourage Roma to engage in political and civic action, and provide a channel through which they can help changing their situation. But the danger such international identity-oriented programs create is that if problems of poverty, inequality, discrimination, segregation, and social distance persist, they may reinforce the idea that there is something in the culture of the target group that prevents these programs from being successful.

In this context it is understandable that many local Romani activists have been suspicious of demands that foreground identity and have sometimes seen them as potentially harmful. That an identity agenda may easily give way to potentially harmful arguments is exemplified by Emil Ščuka's interpretation of the problem of segregated education in the Czech Republic. Ščuka is the Slovak-born former leader of the Romani political party ROI who became an internationally well-known Romani activist after he was elected as the president of the International Romani Union (IRU) in 2000—an organization that functions as an important identity-producing site for the Roma because it aims to be the leading actor in international activism for the Roma as a non-territorial nation. In May 2003, Ščuka said that he had changed his opinions on why Roma in the Czech Republic are generally not well educated. While in earlier years he had identified discrimination as the chief mechanism responsible for the fact that many Romani children are educated in substandard schooling and in schools for the mentally disabled, he now argued that the attitudes of Romani parents were also in part responsible for this state of affairs, since they preferred to send their children to schools where other Romani children go and were not willing to protest their isolation.

He concluded that the Czech government was to act against Romani traditions that keep Roma isolated in deplorable material conditions (personal interview). It is not difficult to see how this argument could be used in a "blame the victim" rhetoric.

What I will argue in the rest of this article is that the ambiguous way in which Romani activists deal with claims related to culture and identity should not be seen as an idiosyncratic trait of Romani activism or—even worse—as an "ethnic characteristic" of these Romani activists; I argue that such ambiguity is a potential obstacle for any form of activism that employs a discourse of multiculturalism. The problems raised in the case of the Roma are similar to the ones that can be found in the political agendas and practices of the many groups in this world that have focused their activism on the recognition of group identity and the creation of cultural sovereignty and minorityhood. Instead of analyzing the deficiencies of Romani activism and Romani politics as an isolated and particular case, I argue that we should bend our minds first to the general ambiguities of minority rights advocacy projects and examine the case of the Roma against this background.

Movement strategy and the ambiguities of multiculturalism

Romani activism in Central Europe is a multiform phenomenon. It encompasses a variety of activities, strategies, and organizations. Some of the actors in this field claim they represent the Roma, others only aim to speak for the Roma. Sometimes their strategy is limited to filing complaints against those who discriminate against Roma, while at other times activists actively involve themselves in policy- and legislation-making debates and seek to become the "voice" of the Roma in politics. In all cases, however, the central focus of this activism is on minority rights.

In a broader theoretical context, this means that Romani activists in Central Europe have found their frame of reference in the principles of multiculturalism, a political theory that contends that the political accommodation of distinctive cultural traditions is necessary to enhance ethnocultural justice and remedy marginality. Virtually all Romani activists claim that the full political recognition of the Roma as a distinct cultural and ethnic group is a crucial step toward reaching a solution for the deplorable situation in which this group finds itself. Multiculturalists, who have attracted widespread attention in political theory since the beginning of the 1990s, have argued that culture-specific political accommodation is justified in any ethnically, culturally, or linguistically diverse society. In order to prevent injustices in such societies, policies are needed that go "beyond the protection

of the basic civil and political rights guaranteed to all individuals in a liberal-democratic state" (Banting and Kymlicka 2003: 59). Cultural, ethnic, and linguistic membership should not be ignored by the state or treated as a private matter. It should be politically protected and accommodated. In other words, for the sake of justice the state should apply its power to "resist cultural homogeneity" (Yack 2002: 109).[9]

One of the criticisms that has been leveled at the defenders of multiculturalism is the tendency of the multiculturalist project to essentialize cultural and ethnic identities and to fix the boundaries between cultural and ethnic subjects. This criticism comes from at least two sources. The first is a group of theorists who—not always from the same philosophical tradition or with the exact same arguments—accuse multiculturalism of tacitly assuming cultural groups to be unitary and fixed in unchangeable properties. They show that in reality ethnic and cultural groups are not fixed, but change according to the social space in which they occur (Barry 2002; Gilroy 1998). Their point is not merely a theoretical one; it finds its practical counterpart in the arguments of a second group of critics—the ethnic and cultural subjects themselves. Very often participants in ethnic movements accuse their advocates and activists of raising boundaries between minorities and majorities, supporting "tribal politics" and promoting a simplified image of the group in question without taking into account the real internal diversity. This is illustrated, for example, by the fact that advocates, spokespersons, and leaders are often contested by the very people they seek to defend. Moreover, usually there are several competing conceptualizations of group identity among those whose rights are being defended. Sometimes people do not agree with the labels that are employed to refer to them, sometimes they do not want to be called a "minority," and in some cases they would not even want to be seen as an "ethnic" or a "cultural" group. Not surprisingly, this problem is especially visible when the identity labels in question have very negative connotations and when political mobilization is hindered by a series of socio-economic obstacles, as is true in the case of the Roma (Vermeersch 2003).

The central problem of the multiculturalist ideal in political action for the oppressed lies in the fact that it makes cultural or ethnic identity the focus of a political project. The danger is that such identity politics "casts as authentic to the self or group an identity that in fact is defined by its opposition to an Other. Reclaiming such an identity as one's own merely reinforces its dependence on this dominant Other, and further internalizes and reinforces an oppressive discourse" (Heyes 2002). This is a problem that is certainly not new, and certainly affects not only the Roma.[10] Ever since Erving Goffman published his work

on stigma, scholars have come to realize the perplexing problems facing the aspiring minority activist: "in drawing attention to the situation of his own kind he is in some respects consolidating a public image of his differentness as a real thing and of his fellow-stigmatized as constituting a real group" (Goffman 1986: 139). As Joan W. Scott has put it very succinctly, "the terms of exclusion on which discrimination is premised are at once refused and reproduced in demands for inclusion" (Scott 1999: 3). Activists demand equality and thus protest against those who see marginalized groups as inherently different. But at the same time, for political purposes they must reaffirm the difference between these marginalized groups and the cultural majority.

Can this dilemma be solved? Is there an alternative? Is it realistic and desirable, for instance, to expect a political action for the oppressed that excludes every reference to cultural substance and ethnic identity? I submit that it is not realistic to ignore cultural or ethnic identity, but I do believe that it is desirable that more complex movement strategies are pursued. Such strategies would pay attention to the existing patterns of social differentiation and identification, but at the same time demonstrate that such patterns can be changed, that boundaries between groups may shift, and that new solidarity ties may arise in response to certain new common interests.

In order to illustrate this, we need to briefly re-examine the social reality that lies behind the formation of identity groups. Since the 1960s there is a tradition in social anthropology that understands cultural and ethnic identity more and more not in terms of group characteristics, but in terms of social organization (Barth 1969; Eriksen 2002; Jenkins 1997). There now is a growing consensus in the literature that, like all forms of collective identity, ethnic and cultural identities are not given; they belong to—as Charles Tilly has formulated it—that "potent set of social arrangements in which people construct shared stories about who they are, how they are connected, and what has happened to them" (Tilly 2003: 608). Ethnic groups should thus not be understood as natural units that have always been there and therefore automatically constitute the basis for political action; on the contrary, conceptually and empirically, it makes more sense to understand them as the result of social and political processes of categorization (Vermeersch 2004: 23).

This realization has opened the door to the study of a large number of factors in the production of ethnic and cultural identity groups. While some focused on the role of a strategic, manipulative elite in forging ethnic attachments for instrumental reasons (instrumentalism), others have paid heed to the influence of widespread, inescapable beliefs and myths about descent, belonging, and group divisions (what

Clifford Geertz has called the assumed "givens" of social existence) (Geertz 1963: 109). Rogers Brubaker, among others, has done much to make clear that one may find ways to combine both views by applying insights from cognitive sociology (Brubaker et al. 2004; DiMaggio 1997; Zerubavel 1997). Cognitive sociology has pointed to the fact that we do not think just as individuals, but also as the products of particular social environments that affect as well as constrain the way we cognitively interact with the world (Zerubavel 1997: 6). In particular, a perspective on social cognition allows focusing our attention upon the acts of categorization, classification, and interpretation that make people understand the world as they do. Cognitive sociology makes us aware of the fact that the practices of social categorization and classification are crucial in our understanding of ethnicity and cultural identity, because these practices have a "constitutive significance" (Brubaker et al. 2004: 33). A cognitive perspective allows us to conceptualize ethnicity and cultural groups, not as a "thing *in* the world, but a perspective *on* the world" (Brubaker et al. 2004: 32). It directs our attention to "socially sanctioned systems, formal or informal, of racial, ethnic and national classification, categorization and identification, as well as the basic psychological processes and mechanisms that underlie such interactional and institutional classificatory practices and routines" (Brubaker 2001: 16).

What this recent attention to the "cognitive turn" (Brubaker 2004: 4) in the study of ethnicity has taught us is that patterns of social differentiation and identification are constructed and subject to change, but at the same time, that these patterns are realities that need to be taken into account. The fact that identity groups (such as cultural minorities, gender groups, etc.) are a part of our perspective *on* the world, and not a thing *in* the world, does not mean that they are pure matters of fiction. On the contrary, that people act upon the perspectives they hold is exactly what makes these perspectives all the more powerful and real. As Pels (2002: 72) has observed, all social patterns, institutions, and collectives are very light and fragile but simultaneously extremely heavy and solid.

The reasoning that supports the idea of political action in the name of an oppressed group is based precisely on the assumption that society is shaped by dominant cognitive arenas. For this reason, advocacy will have to take into consideration the patterns of categorization. This, however, does not mean that advocacy should endorse the reconstruction of the essentialist subject. It merely demands recognition of the fact that people are likely to act upon the dominant typologies and social fault lines surrounding them. A cognitive view on identity group formation allows us to understand that group leaders cannot create

identities out of the blue; they have to start from the extant group identities, and these usually echo the dominant patterns of exclusion in a society. It also shows that a satisfying advocacy will have to address the social environment *as well as* the injustices that exist as a result of the way the social environment is organized.

How should activists do this in practice? Some scholars have pointed out that "strategic essentialism" might be a helpful method (Spivak 1987: 205; Warren and Jackson 2002: 8). One author has described this mechanism as utilizing "specific signifiers of ethnic identity, such as Asian-American, for the purpose of contesting and disrupting the discourses that exclude Asian-Americans, while simultaneously revealing the internal contradictions and slippages of Asian-American so as to insure that such essentialisms will not be reproduced and proliferated by the very apparatuses we seek to disempower" (Lowe 1991, quoted in Laitin 1998: 19).

If this line of argumentation is right, identity politics should always fight a twofold battle. Defending the interests of an oppressed identity group always needs to be accompanied by an interrogation of the categorization schemes that have constructed the very identity group one is defending. In other words, Romani-based advocacy can avoid the reproduction of essential identities only when it is accompanied by a contestation of the essentializing categorization schemes that lie at the heart of categorized oppression. In this way, recuperative identity politics and the politics of deconstruction need not be mutually exclusive. The politics of recuperation may avoid the tacit reproduction of essential identities on the condition that the advocacy of specific identities is accompanied by targeted acts of contestation.

In practice, this path of action is not easy and requires a good sense of balance and timing. Activists will need to find a delicate equilibrium between certainty and doubt. In order to mobilize attention for their cause, activists will at times need to act "as if" they are the real representatives of a given, sectional group identity. But they must make sure that the emancipatory potential of this act of group construction is not overshadowed by a discourse of oppressive essentialism. As Kay B. Warren and Jean E. Jackson have pointed out in the context of the study of indigenous movements in Latin America, "essentialism can be coercively imposed by the state as well as deployed by indigenous groups as a form of resistance to demeaning political imaginaries and policies" (Warren and Jackson 2002: 8). At times it will thus be necessary to apply a discourse that constructs a stable notion of Romani identity, while at other times it may be more useful to deconstruct such a notion. In order to be able to strike this delicate balance, activists will need creativity and skill for public

framing. Studies of the uses of essentialist discourses have shown that the discursive power of essentialism may be an important strategic tool to combat inequality. As Verkuyten (2003) has argued, the effect of essentialism as a rhetorical tool and a social act is not self-evident. It may stimulate further oppression, but it may also be used to support an emancipatory agenda. Everything depends on the ways in which essentialism is used and on the context in which it is used.[11]

I would also like to suggest that activists may perhaps find it worth making a clear conceptual difference between identity- and interest-based advocacy. By engaging in an interest-based advocacy (divided along the lines of thematic issues such as poverty, housing, education, unemployment, environmental concerns, language recognition, etc.) it can be made clear that group boundaries may shift depending on the issues concerned and that individuals will experience that they do not always have to be seen as members of only one group. It can be made clear that activism is not simply about the demand for recognition of group identities, but rather about the demand for the elimination of unequal access to opportunities and resources. Ethnic and cultural identities, then, are only important because unequal access is often experienced or socially organized in terms of cultural and ethnic difference. In other words, not the recognition of cultural and ethnic difference in itself should be the target of activism, but the elimination of structural inequality. As Iris Marion Young has argued: "the primary purpose of such group-based organizing is, or ought to be, to undermine the structural processes that perpetuate the limitation of opportunities" (Young forthcoming).[12]

Implications for research practice

I would like to end this essay with the question whether this insight into the dilemmas of Romani activism has any implications for the way the Roma are studied. I argue that the above observations have important consequences, especially with regard to research focus, because scholars have to realize that they, too, are contributors in the formation of identity groups, not the least in the case of the Roma. In this respect there is much to learn from the past. The work by Willems (1995), for example, has demonstrated that the social and political influence of the ideas of classic "Gypsy experts" (such as Heinrich Grellman and George Borrow) can be far-reaching. Through the successful distribution of the work of Grellman and the Gypsy Lore Society, the idea of Gypsy identity as having an essential, unchanging core has had an overwhelming influence on popular scientific culture. Lucassen et al. (1998) have pointed out that until the mid-20th century, Heinrich

Grellmann was mentioned as an authority in Dutch encyclopaedias. Willems has contended that Grellman's text in this way contributed to the construction of Gypsy identity and the preservation of stereotypical depictions of the Gypsies as a primitive group of people who are profoundly foreign to "European culture." The case of the Nazi researcher Robert Ritter—who, like other theorists of eugenics, tried to establish a link between heredity, anti-social behavior, and Romani genes—has shown that reifications of Gypsy identity can have very real and tragic consequences (see Willems 1995 for a lengthy discussion of this topic).

The conclusions from research projects that have focused on the role that Gypsy experts played in the construction of Gypsy identity are very much in keeping with the observations I made earlier on the need to view ethnic and cultural group identities from a cognitive perspective. An important insight from cognitive sociology is that dominant societal classifications cannot be ignored. Activists as well as scholars have to take into account the fact that the identity-producing arenas in society have the tendency to reify essential identities. Although such identities are a construct, people act upon them and by doing so make them social facts.

Such practices of categorization and identity production take place at different levels at the same time. First and foremost there are the constitutive powers of state practices, authority, and political apparatuses. Although such forms of categorization are likely to be very influential because of their relation to the power structure of society (Bulmer and Solomos 1998: 823), they clearly do not exhaust the whole process of identity group formation. The process is also influenced by "unofficial, informal, 'everyday' classification and categorization practices employed by ordinary people" (Brubaker et al. 2004: 33). Popular stereotypes are the primary example here. Moreover, the wider media and also scholars contribute to the construction of categories. They become "reality instructors" in a process that Clifford Geertz once described as the "making up of a collective mind about an imagined object" (Geertz 2003: 26).

It is obvious that scholars who focus on the Roma somehow have to position themselves in this very complex field of identity construction. One way of dealing with it is to disclose the categorization schemes that are at the basis of oppression. This is, in other words, pointing out the essentializing rhetoric of those who discriminate on the basis of broad identity labels such as "Gypsies" or "Roma." This means to dissociate the group identities from the way they are usually defined and characterized. It may also be done by demonstrating the fluidity of group boundaries and by highlighting the fact that people may

belong to crosscutting social groups. This is close to what Warren and Jackson see as the task of engaged scholars: "the issue is not proving or disproving a particular essentialized view of culture but rather examining the ways essences are constructed in practice and disputed in political rhetoric" (Warren and Jackson 2002: 9). This does not mean that by deconstructing essentialized identities we separate social science analysis entirely from politics. It simply means that we readjust our focus of scrutiny. As has been argued in another context: "The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated" (Butler 1990: 148).

I would like to argue that one possible point of departure for such a research agenda would be to devote more attention to the analytical and conceptual distinction between identity politics and interest politics, very much along the lines Iris Marion Young has proposed as a basis for her political theory of difference (Young 1995, 2002). Although Young's work mainly addresses questions related to the theory of democracy, and more in particular the question of how the democratic process should deal with issues of inequality, it also offers useful clues on how scholars should conceptualize "difference" without falling prey to the logic of essentializing identities. She argues that the phenomena we call identity movements are, in fact, movements that are motivated by group-based experiences originating from a situation of inequality and oppression. Therefore, the focus of those who study these movements should be on structural difference and societal position, not exclusively on matters of cultural identity. What Young argues for is a "politics of positional difference" that gives attention to group differences generated from structural power, the division of labor, and constructions of the normal and the deviant (Young forthcoming). By focusing on the structural inequality that drives the mobilization of particular movements, it will become clear that "what makes a group a group is less some set of attributes its members share than the relations in which they stand to others" (Young 2002: 89). Moreover, according to Young, conceiving group differentiation as a function of relation, comparison, and interaction allows for overlap and interdependence among groups and their members (Young 2002: 89). What this means is that movements for the oppressed and the marginalized should not be interpreted narrowly as movements that solely claim the recognition of an oppressed and marginalized identity. The recognition of minority identity might be part of a movement's claims-making strategy, but whether it should be the single most important element of such a strategy largely depends on the context.

In some cases, it may be important to stress distinctiveness; in other cases, it may be important to deconstruct it.

When focusing on the politics of positional difference, we might gain a clearer insight into the circumstances that create the need to foreground a demand for the recognition of distinctive identities. We may also realize better that not all circumstances create such a need. In other words, the approach proposed here rejects the assumption that all the people identified as one identity group always have the same need in every context. This nuanced research perspective roughly corresponds to what Nancy Fraser in her sophisticated discussion on redistribution versus recognition has called a "pragmatist approach" to recognition. This is an approach that "sees claims for the recognition of difference pragmatically and contextually—as remedial responses to specific pre-existing injustices" (Fraser 2003: 46), not as demands simply aimed at valorizing group specificity. According to Fraser, an alternative politics of recognition is "a non-identitarian politics" that can remedy misrecognition without displacing redistributive struggles and reifying group identities. "By understanding recognition as a question of status," she argues "and by examining its relation to economic class, one can take steps to mitigate, if not fully solve, the displacement of struggles for redistribution; and by avoiding the identity model, one can begin to diminish, if not fully dispel, the dangerous tendency to reify collective identities" (Fraser 2000: 120).

Examining the Romani movement with these conceptualizations in mind, one might be able to pay increased attention not only to movement activity that is identity based, but also to circumstance-based, issue-based, and interest-based collective action. By focusing on the latter, one may find more opportunities for investigating solidarity ties, alliances, and groups whose boundaries shift. Investigations along these lines are more likely to avoid portraying the group as an essence with internal homogeneity.[13] Such a perspective may show that groups like the "Roma" are unfolded during the process of movement action and are constituted in an environment of social relations. And it may simultaneously avoid demobilizing the attempts from Romani advocates to make demands in the name of the marginalized.

Conclusion

This article has examined some data related to Romani advocacy and Romani electoral politics in order to show that there is a fundamental ambiguity in contemporary projects of minority rights advocacy aimed at redressing the social and economic grievances of the Roma

in Central Europe. Attempts at group-based interest representation appear to be predicated on essentialist assumptions of Romani identity that are ultimately harmful for the Roma and other groups in society. When seeing this in the context of the recent literature on multiculturalism in social and political theory, one may argue that this problem should not be considered unique for the Romani movement. To the contrary, it is a matter that plagues most of the movements that are organized around issues of cultural minority identity. My conclusion is not that minority advocacy for the Roma should be completely abandoned. I argue instead that such advocacy must continuously be aware of the dangers of the tacit reproduction of a particular essentialized identity. It can do so by contestations of the essentializing categorization schemes that lie at the heart of categorized oppression and by foregrounding the demand for equal opportunities. While it may largely be the task of activists and politicians to formulate interests in such a way that they avoid portraying and reifying identity groups as given and unchangeable, it is the role of scholars to highlight and explicate the importance of this task.

Notes

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1. The available literature on the Roma in Central Europe contains various crude numerical assessments of movement activity (Barany 2002: 207; Crowe 1995: 105; Šiklová 1999; Vašečka 2001: 179). Thus one finds authors reporting that, for example, in Czechoslovakia in 1990 there were more or less forty independent Romani organizations. In 1997 this figure had apparently risen to 113 in the Czech Republic alone. In 1999, the same authors tell us, Slovakia was home to ninety-two Romani organizations. Hungary in the beginning of the 1990s had eighteen of such organizations and the figure increased to about 250 in the latter half of the decade. Ostensibly, the numbers present straightforward evidence of the expansion of the Central European Romani movement in the 1990s. There is, however, less general agreement on the available figures than may appear at first sight. Not only can one find authors

who cite much lower figures, the cited authors also remain extremely vague about the *kinds* of organizations they have counted or on what sources they have based their estimates. It is important to note, however, that Romani organizational growth is not only a matter of the *number* of organizations. Ultimately, numbers are less important than public attention. A small group of people or a small number of organizations may be quite successful in setting a movement into motion, especially if they are able to attract the attention of constituents, key public figures, and the media.

2. Elena Marushiakova and Vesselin Popov, for instance, provide an overview of the various group labels among those known as Gypsies in Bulgaria (Marushiakova and Popov 1997: 45–104). The authors discern complex patterns of identification and self-identification among the people they study. Group designations are used to refer to different and sometimes overlapping groups, depending on the context in which these designations are used. For an interesting case study on Gypsy identity in Hungary, see the work by Michael Stewart based on fieldwork in the town of Harangos (Stewart 1997). Stewart argues that "for the ordinary Gypsy in one of the unofficial ghettos on the edge of an Eastern European village or town, the maneuvers of Gypsy intellectuals on the national and international stages rarely mean much, at least as yet. Sometimes it seems that the Romany political parties spend more effort establishing their credibility among non-Gypsy authorities than among their own constituents" (1997: 4).

3. See http://www.romadecade.org

4. These are parties that have a reference to Romani identity (Cigány or Roma) in their party name. See http://www.valasztas.hu

5. For the 2002 elections, for example, a number of newly established Romani parties participated, among them parties such as the Hungarian Romani Party, the Democratic Romani Party, the Democratic Party of the Hungarian Gypsies, and the Democratic Party of Hungarian Roma. All claimed large support from among the Roma, but none of them achieved any meaningful results.

6. See http://www.volby.cz and http://www.mvrc.cz

7. The bad experiences of Romani activists in Slovakia with giving up their membership in an ethnic party in order to run for a mainstream party renewed an interest in ethnically based Romani politics in the beginning of the 2000s. A number of Romani parties in Slovakia, most notably the Romani Civic Initiative (ROI-SR), in the autumn of 2000 were involved in a rather ambitious attempt to unite Romani politicians in an electoral platform for the parliamentary elections of September 2002. Two Romani parties participated in the 2002 Slovak parliamentary elections. In the end, ROI-SR did not do better than 0.29 percent of the votes; even in the district of Spišská Nová Ves, where the party received most of its votes, they only managed to attract 1.83 percent. The Political Movement of the Roma in Slovakia (ROMA), a new Romani political party at the 2002 elections, scored in general a mere 0.21 percent; only in the district of Rimavská Sobota they managed to attract the marginally better score of 1,354 votes (3.27 percent).

8. The standardization of the Romani language is a project that is inextricably bound up with the project of the formation of a unified transnational Romani identity. So far, there is no generally accepted norm or standard language among speakers of the Romani language. According to one study on the subject, this means that "in general all dialects of Romani are equally acceptable for their speakers while all Roma consider their own dialect the 'best' and the 'purest'" (Bakker and Kyuchukov 2000: 24). Not all those who are considered as Roma speak a variant of the Romani language.

9. There are at least two strands of political theorists who have called for the recognition of cultural groups. One group of authors have placed their call in the wider context of their criticism of political liberalism. Vernon Van Dyke is often referred to as one of the pioneers in criticizing traditional liberalism for its exclusive focus on individuals and the state and its ignorance of cultural and ethnic groups as "right-and-duty-bearing units" (Van Dyke 1977: 343). Others—most famously Will Kymlicka—have argued that the liberal tradition does not need to be seen as incompatible with a limited group-differentiated treatment of cultural groups (Kymlicka 1995).

10. Similar dilemmas and debates have come to mark identity-based movements in other parts of the world. For instance, studies of the indigenous movements in Latin America have shown a context where activism has evolved from an earlier paradigm where it meant "self-appointed foreigners speaking on behalf of groups, to the repositioning occasioned by the growing recognition that many groups have generated their own spokespeople and agendas for engaging the state and international non-governmental organizations" (Warren and Jackson 2002: 6). As a result, indigenous activism in this area has reached out globally to challenge the coercive power of the national state. Andrea Muehlebach (2003) has offered a detailed exploration of the debates and controversies relating to the recent attempts of indigenous movements to give voice to local injustice by employing a universal language of self-determination and raising their issues at the level of the United Nations.

11. I thank Stephen Reicher for bringing Verkuyten's article to my attention.

12. I thank Iris Marion Young for sending me her forthcoming article and for allowing me to cite from this work.

13. An example of this type of research can be found in Krista Harper's exploration of possible alliances between the Roma and the environmental movement in Hungary (Harper forthcoming). I thank Krista Harper for bringing this topic to my attention.

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