Roma National Identity and its Reflection in the Context of Czech Social Discourse

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The aim of the study is to offer a basic insight into the theoretical background of the issue of Roma national identity, which takes different forms among various social actors and is an important topic of research and social practice not only in the context of the Czech Republic. The study works with three main theses related to the topic of Roma national identity, which it discusses with the help of expert literature. The theses of the study are as follows: 1) The concept of Roma national identity is not shared by all Roma in the Czech Republic, and therefore nationality cannot form an overarching and unifying element of Roma identity, in which other aspects play an important role. 2) The reasons why the Roma do not claim a Roma identity may be diverse and will differ for different Roma people. This diversity is based on the different identities of Roma people, which must be accepted in academic and social terms. 3)The national dimension of Roma identity and the associated ethno-emancipation movement can be seen as a source of the Roma struggle for human rights and equal life opportunities, as well as a potential obstacle to the transformation of a nationally oriented society into a civil society.

Keywords: *Roma national identity; national identity; ethnic identity; civic identity; Romani; Population and Housing Census; Roma ethno-emancipation movement, Czech Republic.*

Introduction

The aim of the study is to offer basic insight into the theoretical background of the issue of Roma national identity, which has various forms among different social actors – Roma people living in the Czech Republic. Public discourse often operates with the idea of an immanent and unified Roma identity, which is often conceived and discussed as a national identity.

In society, it is often stereotypically assumed that all people belonging to a socially defined category – e.g. a national group, ethnic group or other

community – have adopted some form of identity related to that category. The Roma are often assumed to have adopted a form of national identity, specifically a Roma national identity, from which Roma, like other members of the nation, draw a sense of solidarity with one another. It is assumed that the solidarity that supposedly arises from this national identity somehow bonds Roma people together. After all, shared solidarity between members of a given national group is one of the key characteristics of national identity, or modern nationality as such. However, both nationality and national identity are specific social phenomena whose general characteristics cannot be applied to all social actors universally, without distinction or consideration of the social context. Different forms of national identity can be found across the Czech population, not only among its Roma members. For the Roma, however, the question of Roma national identity is even more complicated. Not only can Roma national identity assume different forms, but its national level can also occupy a completely different place of meaning – for some people this level of identity may be important and they may be conscious of it, while for others it may be minor or they may be completely unaware of it. Moreover, Roma national identity can intertwine with Czech national identity, or in some cases it may even merge with it, although in other contexts, it may be rather defined against it.

Roma national identity is not an identity that assumes a single concrete form shared by all Roma living in the Czech Republic. As such, however, this identity is often mistakenly treated as such in practice (e.g., in the field of social work, social policy or school reality, but also in other areas), and this can lead to social actions that may not correspond to the needs and interests of the people to whom this identity is attributed from the position of the helping professions. In order to be effective, the helping professions need to address not only the needs but also the identity of their clients. At the same time, not all Roma are potential clients of helping services. The spectrum of Roma life is large and the form of life can be related to the form of people's assumed (not only national) identity. Therefore, Roma national identity should be an important topic of research, and not only in the context of the Czech Republic.

The present study attempts to outline specifically how the form of Roma national identity may diverge from the generally expected model of national identity by reflecting on three theses that form the starting point of the study. The study is based on the position of social constructivism and perceives national identity as a socially constructed phenomenon, whose form and impact on real social life it is important to constantly reflect on critically.

The wording of the presented and considered theses is as follows[1]:

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[1] The theses are based on the article by Kolaříková, V. (2024). Romská národní identita a její nejasné ukotvení ve společenském diskurzu: sociální problém i potencionální předmět společensko-vědního výzkumu. In D. Klapko (Ed.). *Analýza vybraných sociálních*

- Thesis 1: The concept of Roma national identity is not shared by all Roma people in the Czech Republic, and therefore nationality cannot form an overarching and unifying element of Roma identity, in which other aspects play an important role.
- Thesis 2: The reasons why the Roma do not claim a Roma identity may be diverse and will differ for different Roma people. This diversity is based on the different identities of Roma people, which must be accepted in academic and social terms.
- Thesis 3: The national dimension of Roma identity and the associated ethno-emancipation movement can be seen as a source of the Roma struggle for human rights and equal life opportunities, as well as a potential obstacle to the transformation of a nationally oriented society into a civil society.

Thesis 1: The Concept of Roma National Identity Is Not Shared by All Roma People in the Czech Republic, and Therefore Nationality Cannot Form an Overarching and Unifying Element of Roma Identity, in which Other Aspects Play an Important Role.

In 2021, a Population and Housing Census took place in the Czech Republic[2]. One of the questions the Census repeatedly asks is about nationality. Completing the question on nationality is voluntary. 31.6 % of people left the question blank. People could fill in one or two nationalities within the question. One of the nationalities offered was the Roma nationality.

Of the total population of the Czech Republic, which is 10,524,167 people, 21,691 declared their Roma national identity. Of this number only 4,458 people stated that Roma national identity was their only national identity. 17,233 people claimed it in combination with another nationality, people[3]. Over the ten-year period of the Census, a significant decline in the number of people claiming Roma national identity can be observed. In 2011 5,135 people claimed Roma national identity as their only declared national identity, compared to 11,746 people in 2001 and the highest number of 32,903 people in 1991.

Qualified estimates[4] of the number of Roma living on the territory of the Czech Republic are many times higher. According to these estimates,

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a edukačních problémů z pohledu studentek a studentů sociální pedagogiky (pp. 32–50). MSD.; while the present study complements and elaborates the theses in more depth.

[2] The Population and Housing Census provides statistical information about individuals, households, housing and housing stock for a given time period. The Census is carried out by the Czech Statistical Office and one of the data collection methods is self-census through an electronic census form.

[3] Czech Statistical Office. [21. 5. 2024]. *Sčítání 2021 (Národnost).*

[4] According to the Report on the State of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for the year 2022 (in Government of the Czech Republic. (2024). *Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny*

there are approximately 250,000 Roma living in the Czech Republic[5]. The question remains, however, to what extent the category "Roma person" is intertwined in these two cases, and whether the Census and the qualified estimates do not create different (self-)identification and categorization frameworks, i.e. whether different social identities are constructed within their frameworks. Roma identity is a difficult social phenomenon. It is an identity that can take on various characteristics in different contexts and from the position of different social actors and discursive spaces.

Contextuality applies to all human identities[6] – whether personal or collective identities. The situation is all the more complex with regard to Roma identity because its form can differ in terms of who the creator of that identity is. Identity can either be chosen by people themselves, or it can be attributed to them or even imposed on them by the environment, not only by the group of which they are an immediate member (e.g., family, school class), but also by their surroundings, i.e., by groups to which they may or may not belong. It is therefore important that Roma people (as well as other social groups) and their identities are not viewed simply through **social categorization**. Social categorization is formed in relation to a person from the outside. The surroundings classify the individuals into specific categories to which stereotypical characteristics are often attributed. In the context of our topic, this is a process of external attribution of Romanipen, in which the person who is recognised as Roma by his or her surroundings (or by the media, political, academic or other discursive space) is considered to be Roma, and along with the recognition of the person and his or her real or fictional Romaniness, certain characteristics are also attributed to him or her, often assumed and stereotypically associated with Romaniness (the process of labelling). The process of social categorization can certainly be an interesting research topic,

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v České republice za rok 2022, p. 7) these are qualified estimates by stakeholders, especially regional coordinators for Roma affairs, advisors for Roma in municipalities with extended competence or field workers.

[5] *Ibidem*, p. 37.

[6] Social identity is contextual, and identification with a group is situationally contingent. People are not bearers of a single identity, but rather have several identities adopted simultaneously, and the dominant identity in social interactions may not be national or ethnic, but any other identity. Different situations may be dominated by different levels of identity. For example, in the school environment, gender or role identity comes to the fore. A different identity is emphasised within the family, another when interacting with neighbours, sometimes the identity of a resident of a particular neighbourhood may dominate, and sometimes the identity of a resident of a nation state, etc. (cf. Čechovská, L. (2014). Etnická identita Romů v akademických konfrontacích. Pole etnicity jako nejasný prostor pro vstup do debaty o etnické identitě Romů. *Slovenský národopis*, 62(1), pp. 106–118; Moravec, Š. (2006). Nástin problému sociálního vyloučení romských populací. In T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (Eds.), *"Romové" v osidlech sociálního vyloučení* (pp. 11–69); Čeněk, A. – Klíčová, K. (2006). Sčítání lidu: Romští Češi, nebo čestí Romové. In R. Marada, *Etnická různost a občanská jednota* (pp. 221–255). Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.)

but it is not possible to base research into Roma identity only on this level of research.

It is important to view Romanipen and Roma identity through the lens of the **self-identification** of the members of these groups. Group identification is related to the identification of group members with a given group. It is about who one feels oneself to be, how one identifies oneself and what community one places oneself in – i.e., a Roma is someone who considers him or herself to be a Roma.[7] The identity ascribed to someone from the outside may differ from the real group self-identification. Therefore, it is necessary to examine both levels of identity – both the discursive anchoring of a given identity in society and how the holders of that identity themselves interpret and experience it (as specific individuals or groups, not as representatives of a supposed universal Romanipen). It may be interesting to examine to what extent these ideal-typical models of identities are intertwined or differ from each other, as well as how the self-identification of Roma in the context of Roma national identity differs across different Roma actors and groups.

The need to conduct research on Roma identity directly with Roma people is highlighted by Čechovská[8], who raises the issue of Roma ethnic identity in the context of academic confrontations, pointing out that many studies on Roma identity have not been based on research with Roma respondents, and that Roma themselves have not been the spokespeople for their own identity.[9] Obrovská[10] points to other research and another general societal problem when she says that ethnicity is theoretically framed as contextual, unstable, and relational (the constructed nature of ethnic identities) across various interpretive sociological paradigms, but in academic debates and public discourse it often remains a relatively monolithic category that is attributed to seemingly homogeneous groups. However, Roma in the Czech Republic do not form a homogeneous population, so it is not realistic or scientifically advisable to view all Roma individuals through the lens of the stereotypical category of the Roma community in the sense of a homogeneous, conscious minority united by the same life stories, goals, identities, and sense of mutual solidarity and interdependence. On the contrary, it is preferable to conduct research on particular Roma groups and individuals and their identities.

Although the form of Roma (national) identity among Roma living in the Czech Republic can vary significantly, in public discourse this identity is often viewed as a univocal category. It is problematic that within the

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[7] Cf. Moravec, *op. cit.*; Jenkins in Kreisslová, S. (2019). *Konstrukce etnické identity a kolektivní paměti v biografických vyprávěních českých Němců. Na příkladu vzpomínek Němců na Chomutovsku*. Charles University, Faculty of Arts Press, pp. 36–37.

[8] Čechovská, *op. cit.*

[9] This situation does not apply in general. Research based on research work with Roma respondents has also been conducted in the Czech Republic.

[10] Obrovská, J. (2016). Frajeři, rapeři a propadlíci: etnografie etnicity a etnizace v desegregované školní třídě. *Sociologicky časopis*, 52(1), p. 56.

category of Roma national identity, ethnic and national identity are often intertwined, which is problematic because the terms nation and ethnicity do not have the same meaning.

National identity is a modern phenomenon. Despite various transnational tendencies and transformations, Lavi[11] still sees national identity as the basis for the formation of collective self-determination and presents national identity as continuously constructed through the constant repetition of everyday actions and rituals and through talking about the nation and its representation in order to achieve a sense of belonging and identification of the individual with that nation. Similarly, Smith[12] understands national identity as part of the self-concept of a national community. According to him, national identity cannot be perceived as a mere variant of group identity, because personal identity and social identity also enter into its formation, while these two identities express how an individual presents him/herself in social interaction and how he/she is accepted by others in interaction.[13] The function of national identity is that it defines a person's belonging to a collective personality and thus determines his/her place in the world. In doing so, the form of national identity is derived from a number of characteristics, such as a shared culture, language, history, sovereign state, and other.[14]

Ethnic identity is a group identity that is enacted through the organization of group membership on the basis of cultural differences.[15] Identities are situationally ascribed to people or groups on the basis of specific cultural traits that people have identified as the basis for group differentiation. Ethnic identity-constructing cultural traits typically include people's visible characteristics (e.g., physical appearance, dress, language) and value standards (including moral standards). Haaland[16] points out that ethnicity is not something that exists for its own sake. Ethnicity refers to the interactions between members who identify themselves as members of different groups – in such interactional contexts, we can identify how cultural assumptions become relevant and what social consequences this has. The fact that ethnicity

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[11] Lavi, L. (2013) Making time for national identity: Theoretical concept and empirical glance on the temporal performance of national identity. *Nations and Nationalism*, 19(4), pp. 696–714.

[12] Smith, A. D. (2011). National identity and vernacular mobilisation in Europe. *Nations and Nationalism*, 17(2), pp. 223–256.

[13] Hroch, M. (2009). *Národy nejsou dílem náhody: Příčiny a předpoklady utváření moderních evropských národů*. Sociologické nakladatelství, p. 38.

[14] For more on the elements of national identity on which Czech national identity is built see Kolaříková, V. (2020). Czech National Identity and the Elements Through Which is Constructed. *Czech-Polish Historical and Pedagogical Journal*, 12(2), pp. 66–96.

[15] Jakoubek, M. – Budilová, L. (2020). Etnická identita ve světě charakterizovaném globálními politickými, ekonomickými a kulturními změnami Rozhovor s profesorem Gunnarem Haalandem. *Sociální studia*, 2 (2020), p. 135.

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 137.

is a relational matter is also agreed by Kašparová[17], who argues that (ethnic) identity is the result of a dialogue between a person's own ideas about him or herself and the ideas others have about him or her. From these conceptions, it is evident that ethnicity should be understood as a social category rather than as an a priori existing concept, an immanent human characteristic that creates distinctions between members of different human groups. Ethnicity should be seen as a social construct that may or may not be a component of human identity. To assume that all members of society construct their identities on an ethnic or national basis (or that these identities naturally overlap and replicate each other) in all situations and social roles would be wrong. To conceive of identity in this way could lead to methodological distortions and misdescriptions of social reality.

According to Maříková[18], it may be the case that all members of one ethnicity are also members of one nation and nationality, but this situation does not always apply. Therefore, the concepts of national and ethnic identity cannot be confused either. According to Haaland[19], it is common in multiethnic nation-states for national identity to be superior to ethnic identities, as the mechanisms of state power symbolic construction emphasize nationalism as the primary group affiliation over ethnic identity in an attempt to promote the loyalty of the population to the state. This situation is to some extent also true for the Czech Republic, which is perceived by its inhabitants as a homogeneous nation-state in which a number of different ethnic minorities live together with the majority. At the same time, the Roma are perhaps more likely to be viewed in public discourse through the lens of ethnicity and ethnic differences than as a national minority[20].

In addition to national and ethnic identity, there may also be a **civic component** to Roma identity. According to Marushiaková and Popov[21], the civic level of the national identity of European Roma is evident in the Roma and is usually linked to the country in which they live – that is, their homeland, which in many cases has been their home country for centuries. However, according to the authors, researchers pay little attention to this civic-national level of identity. This is problematic, because without acknowledging the civic level of national identity, it is impossible to understand the topic of Roma civic emancipation. Marushiaková and Popov[22] understand Roma civic emancipation as a movement to achieve equal citizenship status for Roma as an ethnic community and as individual citizens with rights in all spheres of

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[17] Kašparová, I. (2014). *Politika romství – romská politika*. Munipress, p. 78.

[18] Maříková, H. – Petrusek, M. – A. Vodáková et al. (1996). *Velký sociologický slovník I, A-O*. Karolinum, p. 277.

[19] In Jakoubek, Budilová, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

[20] This topic would certainly deserve further exploration.

[21] Marushiaková, E. – Popov, V. (Eds.). (2021). *Roma Voices in History: A Sourcebook*. Brill. In their book, the authors focus their research on Central, East and Southeast Europe.

[22] *Ibidem*.

social life. The goal of this emancipation is not assimilation in the sense of merging with the majority, but the preservation and development of the Roma as an ethnic community that is a full and equal part of specific civic nations or nation states.

In public discourse, Roma identity sometimes takes on a racial dimension. Within the racial definition of Roma, the Roma are perceived as representatives of a particular **anthropological type** – i.e., Romanipen can be perceived as a biological category, a physical given (the concept of innate Romanipen), where the designation of someone as Roma is based primarily on his or her appearance and thus on the elements of Romaniness recognized by the surrounding environment, which can typically be skin colour, hair, eyes, or other visual differences from the majority.[23] Ways of looking at the definition of the Roma category can also be mixed – for example, anthropological and cultural definitions often go hand in hand and, together with language and the element of self-identification, are manifested in the widely shared ethnic concept of Romanipen, which vaguely mixes cultural and biological categories. Thus, according to Jakoubek[24], a kind of folk concept of Romanipen often emerges, which is usually based on assumptions and stereotypes, and it is important to avoid this concept and the idea of an immanently different Roma category, especially but not only in academia. Jakoubek[25] argues against the racial concept of Romanipen, referring to the fact that the notion of race in the sense of the idea of the immanent difference of certain biological entities has already been refuted by today's science.

These days, Roma identity is most often conceptualized as an **identity formed on a cultural basis** (as such, it may or may not be part of an ethnic category). Very often, in relation to the concept of Roma culture, Roma identity is associated with the Roma language (here the ethnic level is also strongly intertwined). However, basing Roma (national) identity on **the Roma language** is problematic. In the 2021 Population and Housing Census[26], 4,280 people claimed the Roma language as their only mother tongue. In combination with another mother tongue, the number was another 23,822 people. In total 28,102 people claim that the Roma language is their mother tongue. These numbers are relatively consistent with the number of people claiming Roma national identity, with 2,131 more people claiming the Roma language as their mother tongue than the Roma national identity. However, it is not clear from the statistics presented whether these are the same people.

The data collected on the number of people claiming that the Roma language is their mother tongue points to the fact that not all Roma – assuming there are more than 28,000 Roma living in the Czech Republic – use the Roma

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23 Cf. Jakoubek, M. (2004). *Romové – Konec nejednoho mýtu (Sešity pro sociální politiku)*. Socioklub.; Kašparová, *op. cit.*
24 Jakoubek, *op. cit.*
25 *Ibidem,* pp. 55–59.
26 Czech Statistical Office. [21. 5. 2024]. *Sčítání 2021 (Mateřský jazyk)*.

language to communicate. We cannot even talk about the fact that all Roma use the written form of the Roma language, which is defacto an invented construct. The Roma language is a language that has always been strongly influenced by the languages of the places where Roma have lived and has never been the majority language. Roma people usually do not use written Roma language, but rather different Roma ethnolinguistic dialects, or they are bilingual and use Roma language together with Czech or Slovak, or they do not actively speak Roma language at all.[27] This has also contributed to the need for multilingualism among Roma groups which has led to the fact that today with rare exceptions the Roma language has no monolingual speakers.[28]

Worldwide, the number of Roma is currently much higher than the number of speakers of the Roma language.[29] Roma in the Czech Republic usually speak rather different Romani ethnolinguistic dialects[30], or they are bilingual and use the Roma language together with Czech or Slovak with regard to the context and the communication environment, or they do not actively speak Romani at all. Moreover, it appears that the group of speakers of the Roma language is narrowing with each new generation.[31] It is therefore impossible to base Roma national identity automatically on active use of the Roma language. According to Hirt[32] the category of the Roma language as an identifying framework is also problematic because tying the idea of a unified ethnic language to the category of Roma also gives the impression that if a Roma does not speak Romani, he or she is alienated from his or her ethnicity. According to the author, the conviction that Roma always speak Romani is, in the context of the revitalization movement associated with the communitarian doctrine, distinctly normative – it constructs a norm that establishes the rule "A Roma should speak Romani."

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[27] Czech Statistical Office. [cit. 18. 12. 2022]. *Obyvatelstvo podle národnosti a mateřského jazyka podle výsledků sčítání lidu v letech 1970, 1991, 2001, 2011 a 20211*.

[28] Kubaník, P. – Červenka, J. – Sadílková, H. (2010). Romština v České republice – předávání jazyka a jazyková směna. *Romano Džaniben*, 2(2010), p. 13.

[29] *Ibidem*, p. 14.

[30] According to Laederich (in Laederich, S. (2011). Roma Cultural identity. In G. Mirescu (Ed.), *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South-Eastern Europe* (pp. 19–28). Swisspeace.) "the migrations of Roma in Europe led to what can broadly be described as "meta-dialects", of which there are four: Carpathian, with a strong northern Slavic basis; Vlax (or Vlach), with a very strong layer of Romanian acquisitions; the Nordic dialects, spoken from Spain to Russia, with a strong German influence; and finally, the Balkan meta-dialect, with a layer of Turkish words" (p. 20). According to the author, today still about two-thirds of Roma speak Romani. But "generally, the repressive assimilation policies and the communist past contributed to acculturation of many Roma in Eastern Europe" (p. 21).

[31] Government of the Czech Republic, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

[32] Hirt, T. (2004). Romská etnická komunita jako politicky projekt: kritická reflexe. In M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt (Eds.), *Romové: kulturologické etudy (etnopolitika, příbuzenství a sociální organizace)* (pp. 72–91). Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, p. 82.

In the Czech environment, at many discursive levels, Roma identity stands out as a **socio-economic identity**, where Roma are discussed not only in the public sphere but also in academic terms in the context of the situation of social exclusion and structural poverty they experience.[33] In the media and other public discursive spaces, mainly the negative effects resulting from this way of life (unemployment, dependence on social support and social welfare benefits, low educational level, social pathologies, etc.) are discussed and presented. In essence, it is a definition based on people's belonging to a certain social structure, which is defined not only socio-economically but also culturally. It is also a cultural definition of being Roma, since life in socially excluded localities is often associated with specific life patterns and models of behaviour, values, attitudes, etc. However, not all Roma are in a situation of social exclusion, and therefore it is not possible to speak about all Roma as people facing this life situation. Moreover, Roma living in the same socially excluded locality cannot be viewed through the lens of a community that shares an identical identity. As Jakoubek[34] points out, Roma living in socially excluded areas usually base their identity on family membership rather than feeling solidarity and connection with all the inhabitants of the locality. Therefore, living in these localities cannot be a categorizing tool for the collective identities of these people.

According to Jakoubek[35], some Roma can also be categorized as bearers of **Traditional Romani culture**. Jakoubek conceives of Romanipen primarily as a cultural concept. He identifies those Roma as bearers of Traditional Romani culture who preserve in their lives certain elements of Traditional Romani culture[36] within which they were socialized. Traditional Romani culture is not observed everywhere and is certainly not part of the everyday life experience of all Roma. Typically, according to the author, elements of Traditional Romani culture can be found in the environment of Romani settlements (so-called *osadas*), where cultural patterns of Traditional Romani culture are practiced in the sense of a distinct cultural system. However, according to Jakoubek[37], Traditional Romani culture no longer constitutes a culture of its

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[33] For example Zpráva o stavu romské menšiny v České republice za rok 2022 - Report on the State of the Roma Minority in the Czech Republic for 2022 (Government of the Czech Republic, *op. cit.*, p. 37) says that a difficulty in analyzing the situation of Roma is the unknown number of Roma who are integrated into mainstream society. Public authorities have a rough overview of the Roma who are clients of municipal social services. They live mostly in socially excluded localities, where they make up 57 % of the population and their lives are affected by the situation of social exclusion.

[34] Jakoubek, *op. cit.*

[35] *Ibidem*.

[36] Traditional Romani culture "is strictly oral, with no documents or scriptures that outline either the people's history or the rules and values that govern their lives" (in Matras, Y. (2015). *The Romani Gypsies*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p. 39).

[37] Jakoubek, M. (2006). Přemýšlení (rethinking) "Romů" aneb "Chudoba Romů" má povahu Janusovy tváře. In T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (Eds.), *Romové v osidlech sociálního vyloučení* (pp. 322–400). Aleš Čeněk.

own in the existing socially excluded localities (which can be found in the Czech Republic rather than Romani osadas), where only certain relics of this culture are preserved.

Traditional Romani culture is typically associated with social organization, the basis of which is kinship (the **family as the basic organizing principle**, which carries with it specific values and patterns of behavior), sub-ethnic division, and the institution of ritual non/purity. People's collective identity is thus derived from their membership in the family as a specific social group – not the ethnic group as a whole. At the same time, these elements support the division of Roma into different, mutually defining groups that occupy different places on the social ladder, and that define themselves in relation to each other rather than experiencing a sense of mutual unity and shared ethnic solidarity.

Similar to Romani identity, the topic of the traditional Romani extended family is not an entirely clear and simple topic today. Indeed, at present it cannot be assumed that this social organisation based on the traditional basis of the extended family is realised in all Roma families. The gradual weakening of large families has occurred as a result of various historical realities and the transformation of modern and post-modern social structures, which have created conditions for the functioning of nuclear families throughout the wider society. These changes have also affected Romani societies, for whom the family usually still represents a basic social value, but the gradual diminishing of the ties of the extended family has weakened traditional Romani culture.

According to Davidová[38], in the context of the territory of the current Czech Republic, there has been a gradual disintegration of the broad kinship structures of multigenerational Romani families since the 1960s. The state policy of the former Czechoslovakia was aimed at the settlement and assimilation of Roma into the majority society. In 1959, the National Assembly adopted the Law on Permanent Settlement of Travellers, which banned the traditional nomadic way of life. At that time, not all Roma were living this way, but still a large part of them (especially the Wallachian Roma, for whom the emphasis on the traditional way of life is typical). The reason that Romani families are increasingly organized as nuclear or two/three-generation families today may be a change in values related to the changing lifestyle of the new younger generations. Regardless of the complex reasons for the weakening of the organizational structure of Romani extended families, they have all led to the gradual uprooting of Roma people from their extended family-based societies. This does not mean, however, that the family as a fundamental value and organizational framework of the family cannot still be a key part of Roma identity today. A topic for reflection and deeper research is the fact that, despite the fact that not all members of a large family live

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[38] Davidová, E. (1997). K současným změnám romského společenství, jeho postavení a způsobu života. *Pedagogická orientace*, 1997(2), pp. 68-69.

together, the family can still maintain mutual cohesion and loyalty, even when family members live far apart, sometimes across different nation-states.

Regardless of the current transformation of the Romani family, which may take different forms for different groups of Roma, the key argument is that according to Jakoubek[39], the idea that the Romani community functions in unity and acts in a united manner towards the majority society is usually only a mental construct of this majority. In fact, Roma form distinctly heterogeneous, internally diverse societies. Individual Roma societies differ in terms of their traditions, culture, language, historical fate and current way of life, as well as in terms of their adopted identities, shared values, life interests, goals, etc. All this, according to Jakoubek[40] and Hirt[41], leads to the belief that the Roma cannot be viewed as a unified community. According to Budilová and Jakoubek[42], for Roma people the term denoting the "Roma community" as "Roma" does not serve to indicate their belonging to a specific community, but rather indicates a "special quality of humanity" – to be Roma means to be different from non-Roma (*Gadje*). By sharing this same difference between all people labeled and self-identified as Roma, no other similarities, solidarity, or shared identity emerge. This is important to realize, for example, when trying to introduce community work intended for Roma clients, which, according to the authors, can fail precisely because of its foundation on the communitarian principle.[43]

Thesis 2: The Reasons Why the Roma Do Not Claim a Roma Identity May Be Diverse and Will Differ for Different Roma People. This Diversity Is Based on the Different Identities of Roma People, which Must Be Accepted in Academic and Social Terms.

The self-identification of Roma with Roma nationality is a complex social issue, and the reasons why people who identify themselves as Roma or who have this identity ascribed to them by the majority society do not declare their Roma nationality in national censuses can be various. Some of these have already been outlined in the first thesis, although the list is certainly not exhaustive. I will now attempt to deepen our understanding of this issue.

One of the reasons many authors cite for Roma not declaring their Roma national identity in national censuses is **the fear of declaring their Roma**

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[39] Jakoubek, *op. cit.*

[40] *Ibidem*.

[41] Hirt, *op. cit.*

[42] Budilová, L. J. – Jakoubek, M. (2014). *Romové, Československo a transnacionalismus.* Sociológia, 45(5), pp. 487–503.

[43] Rather than community work, according to this approach, work focused on family or individual social work may be more effective with clients living in socially excluded areas.

nationality. According to Hübschmannová[44], who has already considered why Roma do not declare their Roma national identity in censuses in the context of the 1992 Census, the year when Roma in the Czech Republic were able to declare their Roma nationality for the very first time, this may be related to the fear of stigmatization of the bearers of this identity by the majority society. This fear may be influenced not only by the current social situation, but above all by the historical experience of victimisation and persecution by the majority society, which took place significantly during the Second World War. However, to attribute the low numbers of people claiming Roma national identity to this factor alone would be simplistic.

Klíčová[45] presents as an example of a discussion on this topic a controversy from 2006 between the former chairman of the Office for Personal Data Protection, K. Neuwirth, who was of the opinion that Roma were afraid to declare their Roma identity in the Census precisely because of their historical experience with registers, and the position of the Czech Statistical Office, which emphasised the fact that people in a democratic society have the freedom of choice within the lived form of their national identity, and that this is also the reason for whether or not they declare their Roma national identity. Both approaches then, according to Klíčová[46], assume that all people have an acquired concept of national identity that they consciously work with in some way. However, this is quite often the wrong assumption. Not all Roma perceive their Romanipen in terms of national identity.

Moravec[47], in the context of the low number of people declaring their Roma nationality in the Census, considers the possibility that many citizens of the Czech Republic may well consider themselves Roma, but **do not perceive their Romaniness as their nationality, or do not feel themselves to be members of a unified Roma nation**. Similarly, Jakoubek[48] says that it is not the case that the bearers of Traditional Romani culture or its relics (recall that Jakoubek in this case is talking about Roma living in Roma settlements, i.e. not all Roma in general) refused to declare their nationality during the census or denied it. Rather, the point is that this kind of self-identification is alien to them, because these Roma feel themselves to be members of a kinship-based formation (large family), not a bounded national group that would form a separate political community. According to Jakoubek, the attempt to grasp the difference of the bearers of Traditional Romani culture in ethnic or national categories is a misunderstanding of their otherness, a misunderstanding that is an expression of a very ethnocentric style of thinking.

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[44] Hübschmannová, M. (2002). *Šaj pes dovakeras. Můžeme se domluvit.* Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.

[45] Klíčová, *op. cit*.

[46] *Ibidem*.

[47] Moravec, *op. cit*., p. 16.

[48] Cf. Jakoubek, M. (2005). Apologie kulturomů (Odpověď Pavlu Baršovi). Politologický časopis, 2 (2005), p. 186; cf. Jakoubek, *op. cit*.

Another important topic that must be taken into account in the polemic about Roma national identity is t**he concept of national identity, which is not identical to the concept of civic identity**, i.e., belonging to the specific nation state in which one lives, and the possible failure to distinguish between these two concepts from the position of Roma people. Hübschmannová[49] suggested that already in 1992 the small number of people who declared their Roma nationality at that time was related to the fact that many Roma were not aware of the difference between the political status of nationality and citizenship. The ambiguous understanding of the categories of nationality, citizenship and statehood is also elaborated by Klíčová[50], who describes that in the research she conducted, respondents in some situations referred to national identity and in other situations – often when choosing their nationality in the Census conducted – to civic identity, when these people assumed that, living in the Czech Republic, they were Czech and thus claimed Czech national identity (or even Moravian national identity), although in other contexts they considered themselves to be Roma.

Other research findings are consistent with this. For example, in research on the ethnic, familial and religious identities of Roma adolescents in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Kosovo and Romania[51] the researchers found that Roma respondents showed lower levels of national and ethnic identity compared to respondents from the majority population. This was in line with expectations based on the literature, which points out that Roma living in Europe and elsewhere tend to identify with the national culture of the mainstream[52]. At the same time, Dimitrov[53] correlate the low level of support for national and ethnic identity with the marginalisation and oppression experienced by Roma, national assimilation policies, and ethnic tensions that may emerge in individual states. Here, this brings us back to the thesis on the fear of stigmatization of admitted Romanipen.

Marushiaková and Popov[54] also reflect on the civic level of Roma identity and explain the sense in which they use the term Roma community. They use the term community, or Roma community, as a label for Roma representing a category of ethnic formation that is clearly distinct from the surrounding population (i.e. it is a dimension of ethnicity). By the term Roma society, the authors mean Roma as an ethnically based integral part of the respective nation-states of which they are citizens (i.e. it is a dimension of civic nationality). Both of these dimensions are then part of the Roma identity,

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[49] Hübschmannová, *op. cit.*

[50] Klíčová, *op. cit.*

[51] Dimitrov, R. – Vijver, F. J. R. – Taušová, J. – Chasiotis A. – Bender, M. – Buzea, C. – Uka, F. – Tair, E. (2017). Ethnic, Familial, and Religious Identity of Roma Adolescents in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kosovo, and Romania in Relation to Their Level of Well-Being. *Child Development*, 88 (3), pp. 693–709.

[52] Cf. Prieto-Flores and Marushiakova, Popov in *ibidem*, p. 695.

[53] *Ibidem*.

[54] Marushiaková – Popov, *op. cit.*

which, according to them, is multidimensional, structurally hierarchical and contextual, which means that in different contexts and different life situations, more or less one of these two dimensions of identity comes to the fore, while other dimensions of identity may also come to the fore, such as dimensions based on gender, group membership, family membership, social class, etc. These levels of identity are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary, according to the authors, they are in constant, albeit historically and situationally conditioned, balance.

Hübschmannová[55] adds to the indistinction and conflation of the concepts of national identity and civic identity **the lack of orientation of Roma (especially the less educated) in the situation of their own group and individual consciousness**. According to Hübschmannová[56] the national consciousness of the Roma, or rather **the Roma national revival, is lagging behind the Czech national revival**. The author likens the low rate of Roma claiming Roma nationality to the Czech national revival by suggesting that even at the beginning of the Czech national revival not all Czechs were aware of their Czechness. It is certainly important to note that the most assimilated Roma claim a Roma national identity.[57] In practice, this means that these are often Roma who no longer preserve elements of Traditional Romani culture. Furthermore, within the people actively claiming Roma nationality we can also find people who are higher up on the social ladder due to higher education and other factors. It is often these people who are actively involved in the construction of Roma national identity within the ethno-emancipation movement, with which the forthcoming third thesis is connected.

Kašparová[58] agrees that the Roma are undergoing a process that shows signs of nationalism, and she believes that the Romani ethno-emancipation movement, like the Czech national revival, is based on the concept of an ethno-cultural concept of nation. This is related to the fact that the Roma do not have their own state territory and do not currently seek it. According to Kašparová[59], it is possible that the emphasis on one's own territory will be one of the most important programmatic points of Roma nationalism in the future. But there is also the possibility, according to her, that territory is already defined in Roma nationalism, albeit in a somewhat different way than in the nationalism of other nations. Territory, with its reference to nomadism as one of the basic attributes of Romani culture, represents the whole planet, the whole world. Within the framework of national identity, this opens up the issue that some people may share a **transnational concept of identity**. "Roma often identify with other Romani groups in a way that transcends national boundaries. There is no single territory around which Roma can rally and

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[55] Hübschmannová, *op. cit.,* p. 27.
[56] *Ibidem*. The book was first published in 1993.
[57] Klíčová, *op. cit*., p. 252.
[58] Kašparová, *op. cit*., p. 81.
[59] *Ibidem*, p. 82.

unite. The awareness of an Indian origin plays a role mainly for Romani political activists in their attempts to consolidate international solidarity with the Roma and among the different Romani communities. But for the majority of Roma, even those who are aware and informed of the early history of their people, India remains a very abstract and academic aspect of their identity".[60]

The topic of nomadism[61] as one of the constitutive elements of Romani culture is also raised by Jakoubek[62], who says that part of the nomadic myth is the proclaimed resignation to the establishment of a Romani nation-state and to the nation-state principle as such. But the result of this myth, according to Jakoubek, is not a release from the territorial level of national identity. Rather, it results in the heightening of this territorial level of national identity in the form of the emergence of a kind of global claim to move across all (national) territories. The sovereign right of one nation to free nomadism is analogous to the right to sovereign national territory. Similarly, according to Jakoubek[63], the concept of the Roma nation as a transnational nation does not imply the abolition of national categories, but establishes a sovereign distinctiveness that distinguishes the Roma nation from other nations.

Thesis 3: The National Dimension of Roma Identity and the Associated Ethno-emancipation Movement Can Be Seen as a Source of the Roma Struggle for Human Rights and Equal Life Opportunities, as well as a Potential Obstacle to the Transformation of a Nationally Oriented Society into a Civil Society.

As I have tried to explain, the Roma living in the Czech Republic are not a homogeneous group and therefore do not and cannot form a politically unified, conscious and engaged community that would be universally connected across all social groups by a conscious sense of national Romani belonging. Nevertheless, there are politically engaged individuals and groups among the Roma who are fighting for various political issues, including the Roma ethno-emancipation movement. The year 1971, when the first International Congress of Roma[64] was held in Orpington near London, can be

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[60] Matras, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

[61] "Romani culture is often associated with travel. In fact, the great majority of Roma do not travel and their families have lived in permanent settlements and dwellings for many centuries" (Matras, *op. cit.*, p. 41). It is, however, appropriate to distinguish between migration and nomadism.

[62] Jakoubek, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

[63] *Ibidem*.

[64] Krištof reflects on the 1971 International Congress of Roma, which he sees as a "nationalist" project of the construction of Romaniness by the international Roma elite. In his view, the question remains to what extent the activities of these international Roma elites are the authentic efforts of the Roma people themselves, or to what extent they are provoked by a Roma discourse of which the Roma are usually not actors. (in Krištof, R. (2004).

considered a significant political milestone of the Roma ethno-emancipation movement in Europe – and with it one of the pillars by which the existence of the phenomenon of Roma national identity is legitimised. Here, representatives of Roma groups from all over the world officially declared the designation Roma as the only acceptable name for all Roma in the world. Along with this, the Romani anthem and the Romani flag were adopted and the process of international standardization of the Roma language orthography began.[65] Representatives of Roma from Czechoslovakia also participated in the Congress. Members of the Union of Gypsies-Roma, which was the first officially recognised Roma organisation in Czechoslovakia and was founded in 1969 mainly by members of the Roma intelligentsia with the aim of enabling Roma to participate actively in social life, went to London.[66]

Romani ethno-emancipation movement is viewed differently in the academic environment and its concept differs from the position of researchers and from the position of Romani activists. One approach to the Romani ethno-emancipation movement is offered by a group of scholars who are grouped around the Pilsen anthropologists Jakoubek, Hirt, Budilová, etc. According to these and other authors[67], the Romani ethnic movement and its idea of a unified Romani identity is constructed by the Romani elite[68] and (non)Romani

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Romové, Evropa a mezinárodní instituce. In M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt (Eds.), Romové: kulturologické etudy (etnopolitika, příbuzenství a sociální organizace) (pp. 102–133). Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, p. 117). Krištof argues that typical of the emerging nationalising Roma leaders is the attempt to gain an information monopoly on the situation of the Roma, giving way to the stylisation of spokespersons for the Roma masses (*ibiden*, p. 133).

[65] Závodská, M. (2012). Romové v českých zemích a na Slovensku v letech 1918–1989. In R. Steklá, L. Houdek (Eds.), *Druhá směna (Jak využívat dějiny a literaturu Romů ve výuce na 2. stupni ZŠ)* (pp. 45–71). Romea, o. s., p. 45.

[66] Lhotka, P. (2009). Svaz Cikánů-Romů 1969–1973. In M. Schuster, M. Závodská, *Doprovodná publikace k výstavě Muzea romské kultury "Svaz Cikánů-Romů (1969–1973). Z historie první romské organizace v českých zemích."* (pp. 5–23). Muzeum romské kultury.

[67] For example, according to Cohn (in Cohn, W. (2008). Mýtus cikánského národnostního hnutí. In M. Jakoubek (Ed.), *Cikáni a etnicita* (pp. 134–143). Triton, p. 139), there is no other significant loyalty among Roma beyond loyalty to extended family. According to the author, the Romani national movement meets with misunderstanding among the majority of Roma. The author therefore refers to the Roma national movement as a myth.

[68] According to Jakoubek (Jakoubek, 2006, *op. cit.*), Romani elites, Romani leaders, and Romani political representation are recruited from the bearers of high culture – Romani national culture, which is written and transmitted through school education and is associated with Romani museums, theaters, television programs, etc. However, according to him, the majority Romani culture is a rather traditional culture, which does not take the form of high culture. Historically, it has been an oral culture that has been passed down through the generations and, as already mentioned, it is based on the organisational principle of kinship; an important identifying element here is sub-ethnicity, which is linked to the concept of ritual impurity. In this culture, the sphere of public space is absent, along with public (political) authority and representation – even authority in traditional Romani culture is derived from kinship. By its very nature, according to Jakoubek, traditional Romani culture is in conflict with the national Romani culture of the elites.

activists, while the majority of the Roma population remain indifferent to this topic or do not even identify with it.

The representatives of the ethnorevitalization movement, however, are passing the Roma national identity off as the identity of all Roma and are trying to build it in a similar way as other national identities were built in the national-revivalist era. The problem is that representatives of the ethnorevitalization movement understand Roma national identity in primordial terms, essentialize it, and due to the influence of methodological nationalism perceive national identity as a self-evident and necessary part of the identity of all people.[69] However, national identity conceived in this way is not a self-evident part of the collective identity of all Roma; on the contrary, according to these authors, the ethnically conceived concept of national identity is, as we have already said, foreign to most Roma.

According to Jakoubek[70], the representatives of the ethnorevitalization movement refer to the unifying ethnic origin of the Roma in order to gain political recognition of the defined national minority's identity and the associated collective rights based on ethnic and national principles. According to Pogány[71], the recognition of the Roma as a nation and as a national or ethnic minority is highly advantageous, especially for tactical reasons. The international community is familiar with these categories, and in Europe in particular, a laboriously constructed structure of interlocking norms and institutions has developed to speak in favour of these minorities and protect their rights. National or minority status thus provides Roma with a number of substantive rights, as well as a source of institutional support. The author adds that, in political and legal terms, the concept of the Roma 'nation' is undoubtedly a valuable tool for securing the increasing recognition of European Roma communities, as well as the legal measures taken in their favour. The concept of a Roma "nation" is also a useful means of fostering cohesion between the current, often fragmented, Roma communities, as well as giving greater pride and self-esteem to Roma in general. The constructed nature of the concept of a Roma "nation" in no way detracts from its potential usefulness or the possibility that it could become real at some point in the future.[72]

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[69] This issue is discussed, for example, by Krištof, *op. cit.*, p. 104), according to whom many scholars, politicians, officials, and human rights activists are dominated by the desire to see the Roma as a nation that must somehow legitimately undergo "nation-building development", which it is noble to facilitate. All those who share some common anthropological traits are then perceived as Roma.

[70] Jakoubek, M. (2008). Rivalita identit: Cigán versus romský národ. In M. Jakoubek (Ed.), *Cikáni a etnicita* (pp. 144 –164). Triton.

[71] Pogány, I. (2008). Přijímání ustavující se národní identity: Romové střední a východní Evropy. In M. Jakoubek (Ed.), *Cikáni a etnicita* (pp. 165–186). Triton, p. 175.

[72] *Ibidem*, p. 177.

Krištof[73] is a bit more skeptical of the current "identity politics", saying that the current identity politics is undoubtedly the strongest factor influencing the formulation of measures to address or empower the status of Roma in Europe. However, it must be asked which groups of Roma are affected by such policies. In the author's view, it is at least questionable whether the empowerment of the emerging political entity of "international" Roma can achieve a change in the status of the inhabitants of Roma ghettos, who are, at least declaratively, the target group of many programmes aimed at their upliftment. However, these programmes combine ethno-emancipatory approaches, where the emphasis on ethnic self-awareness forms the basis of the assumed success, and social approaches, based on the fight against social exclusion.

Giordano and Boscoboinik[74] look at the issue in a similar way, saying that "there is now a process of ethnicisation, i.e., an intention to create a collective ethnic identity among the disparate Roma groups, mainly led by an educated Roma elite. Thus, despite the groups' heterogeneity, some Roma activists and politically engaged Roma seek to develop a sort of ethnic solidarity. This identity should express a feeling that all Roma belong to the same distinct group, which shares common cultural traits and common problems resulting from widespread injustice and prejudice, ethnic hostility, and violence."

Kašparová[75] also provides an interesting perspective on Romani nationalism and its perception by the majority, according to which it is evident that both sides – the Roma and the majority society – have an interest in Roma being perceived as a nation, as both actively participate in this discourse and contribute to the continued existence of this dream community. This implies that both sides are aware of their distinct identity, which is reinforced by the existing discourse. Thus, once again, we encounter the paradox of nationalism. Seen from one point of view – the participation of members of the majority in the national emancipation process means the recognition of the equivalence of the Roma by using a universal national dialogue. On the other hand, by doing so, we make it clear that differences exist between us, and therefore individuals must be categorized into the categories of the nation where they rightly belong. At the same time, however, Kašparová[76] adds that national revival along the lines of ethnic emancipation is a very complex and fragile phenomenon. On the one hand, its development is desirable and should be supported, as those Roma who are interested in this development of their

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[73] Krištof, R. (2006). Nezamýšlené důsledky podpory "romské integrace" (aneb Systém "trvale udržitelného vyloučení"). In T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (Eds.), *Romové v osidlech sociálního vyloučení* (pp. 165–180). Aleš Čeněk., p. 169.

[74] Giordano, Ch. – Boscoboinik, A. (2011). The Roma "Problem": Ethnicisation or Social Marginalisation? In G. Mirescu (Ed.), *Social Inclusion and Cultural Identity of Roma Communities in South-Eastern Europe* (pp. 11–18). Swisspeace, p. 13.

[75] Kašparová, *op. cit.,* p. 84.

[76] *Ibidem*, p. 85.

identity have every right to it in accordance with the legal order of the Czech Republic. The folklorization and museification of culture labeled by Romani and non-Romani intellectuals as "traditionally Romani" is deliberately supported by the state because it helps to clearly define the ethnic identity of Roma, the existence of which is crucial to the successful functioning of a multicultural society. What is important here is not the debate about whether ethnicity represents only a social construct or a genetically transmitted core, but the fact that there is a group of people in our republic who experience their otherness (whether intellectually or physically) and who therefore identify or are identified with this concept. On the other hand, it cannot be said that this concept of identification applies to all Roma, and as such it should not be imposed on anyone.

The initiators and supporters of the ethno-emancipatory Romani movement perceive the national emancipation of the Roma as a path to the integration of the Roma into society that leads through the formation of their own nation. This path, according to these actors, makes it possible to achieve proper pride in one's Romani belonging, which is also a necessary step towards asserting oneself in society.[77] However, in promoting national rights, or the rights of national minorities, according to Jakoubek, the representatives of the ethnorevitalization movement do so at the expense of the concept of individual civil rights, which are neglected in this process, which Jakoubek sees critically, as he understands civil rights as rights associated with postmodern society. These are rights that bind, or at least should potentially bind, all citizens of a given country together, without distinction as to their nationality, ethnicity or other specific characteristics.

A different approach to the topic of Roma (nationality) emancipation is offered by Marushiaková and Popov[78], who emphasize that the topic of the emancipation of the Roma, or their efforts to participate in functioning society, have received little attention from scholars in the past and many historical sources related to this topic have remained unresearched. According to the authors, the lack of research on historical sources has led to the misconception that the Roma did not participate in the political life of the country where they lived in the past. However, according to the authors, this view of the matter is simplistic and does not correspond to reality. In their book, which has been edited in an attempt to bring more relevant findings to the issue by the individual authors, primary historical sources from different countries have been examined. The archival documents presented in the book show that many Roma communities in Europe were not merely passive recipients of local political measures, but their members sometimes actively tried to influence their own lives. As a result, the authors present a new paradigm that shows the

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[77] Jakoubek, 2008, *op. cit.*, p. 147.
[78] Marushiaková & Popov, *op. cit.*

Roma as active subjects of their own history and of political emancipation taking place there.

According to Marushiaková and Popov[79], the roots of the civic emancipation of the Roma can be traced in historical sources as early as the second half of the 19th century (i.e., the time of the spread of nationalism) and the beginning of the 20th century. These authors consider the aspirations of Janos Kaldaras and Sava Mihaly as the beginning of the civil emancipation of the Roma, or at least as one example of an effort to gain political autonomy. At the time of national emancipation carried by the Habsburg Empire in the era of modernization, they tried to gain public and political recognition of the Roma community, or rather of "their" Roma tribes located at that time in Bihar (the territory of present-day Romania). These two Gypsy chiefs asked the Hungarian authorities to establish a separate territorial-administrative unit, "Gypsy Vojvodina", which was reported in the contemporary press in 1865. According to the authors, this is probably the first historical evidence of active cooperation between differently living Roma (Kaldaras was a nomadic Roma, while Mihaly lived a settled life), which took place in the name of the community's common desire to become an integral and equal part of society. This cooperation between Roma from different groups, which usually define themselves and do not communicate with each other, was not a commonplace, but rather a unique feature. This is just one of many examples of the civic emancipation of Roma, or the efforts of Roma to participate in the common political, religious and cultural life of their respective civic nations.

Today, representatives of the Romani community involved in civic emancipation are, of course, taking on different characteristics due to historical social changes. Previously, according to Marushiaková and Popov[80], civic emancipation was primarily the responsibility of traditional Romani elites, whose functioning was limited to their own (small) part of the community. The new Roma civic elite is made up more of Roma visionaries and activists, but this does not exclude the possibility that these people are in some cases the same people as at the beginning of the emancipation movement.

Koubek[81] writes about the transformation of the form of the emancipation movement in the context of the Czech environment, arguing that self-definition and the framing of collective identity evolve (whether consciously or unconsciously) in connection with the change of the dominant poles of the discursive field. Activists take advantage of new structural or discursive opportunities that provide additional important (material, non-material) resources for their activities. According to the author, the initially predominant political level of the characterization of the Roma minority has gradually been

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[79] *Ibidem.*

[80] *Ibidem.*

[81] Koubek, M. (2013). *Zápas o uvozovky: interpretační rámce a repertoár jednání pro-romského hnutí v letech 1989–2007*. Munipress, p. 162. Koubek's work deals with the pro-Roma movement and its transformation between 1989 and 2007.

placed on the socio-economic level (e.g., the issues of social exclusion and poverty and related financial support have begun to be addressed) and further shifted to the level of assimilation, which aims at the individual inclusion of Roma into the majority society. But the ethnicisation process of the potential life problems faced by the Roma, however, can be problematic. According to Giordano and Boscoboinik[82] the problems that Roma face are "essentially those of many other majority or other ethnic groups. Therefore, it is crucial to find solutions for social and economic problems (and not only of Roma communities), without forcing them on ethnic status. This does not mean that we support movement towards the assimilation of Roma communities into the majority. The need for equal access to economic development must be achieved by means other than stressing belonging to a minority to prevent ethnic conflicts."

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to show how extensive and divergent in opinion the issue of Romani national identity and the related topic of the ethno-emancipation movement can be at both academic and non-academic levels. The aim of the study was not to argue for or against one of the poles of opinion on this topic, but rather to bring this debate closer to the reader and to show the importance of a complex perception of the research subject, which is the multilayered concept of Roma national identity. Understanding the concept of Roma national identity, which touches on Romani identity in general and Romani identity as such, is crucial for choosing appropriate ways of dealing with various potentially problematic or difficult situations related to the so-called Roma issue, and therefore also for finding ways to resolve the various situations that Roma face in their lives. These can also be related to the search for one's own identity or the way of experiencing this identity. In other words, the aim of the study was to draw attention to the fact that perceiving Roma national identity as an a priori existing concept that takes on a particular form could lead to simplistic thinking, methodological distortions and problematic social practice that could be reflected in ineffective social work or other government policies, such as education policy.

The form of Roma national identity is a complex social phenomenon that deserves deeper attention in the context of the Czech Republic. In order to provide a basic insight into the issue, the study discussed three theses that emerge from my field of research and experience in practice. These theses are thought through on a theoretical level, drawing on research and the work of authors who have dealt with the issue. This theoretical insight could now, I

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[82] Giordano & Boscoboinik, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

hope, be used to think about new or deepening research intentions of other authors dealing with various social issues related to Roma (national) identity.

In the first thesis, the study showed that perceiving Roma identity as automatically based on nationality would be a mistake and that researchers and helping professionals should avoid this idea. The concept of a Roma national identity is not shared by all Roma in the Czech Republic, which is also evident in the research censuses collecting population characteristics as part of the repeated Population and Housing Censuses. National identity is far from being the basic basis of Roma identity. In view of this fact, it is clear that the activities of the ethno-emancipation movement cannot in practice target all Roma people and all of the life situations they experience. As such, the goals of the ethno-emancipation movement cannot be passed off as a universal value, a kind of optic applicable to all situations or an optic shared by all Roma individuals. Strengthening Roma national identity, although it may entail strengthening one's own self-esteem and positive self-assessment, as well as other important aspects, does not provide a universal answer to all the situations that Roma face in their daily lives and whose experience and resolution is crucial for these social actors. Social identity is multidimensional and different key dimensions of our identity may come to the fore in different situations. Thus, in many social contexts, other aspects of identity are more important than national ones. Therefore, it is always advisable to perceive (not only) Roma identity in a broader context.

The study attempts to provide a basic insight into how Roma identity can be viewed within the sociological discourse with regard to its anchoring in Czech social discourse within the framework of the first thesis. The thesis was interested in what levels Roma identity can take and what elements it is typically built on in the context of the Czech Republic. The study started from the fact that the form of identity can differ in terms of whether it is a chosen identity (self-identification) or one externally ascribed by the environment (social categorisation). The study outlined which forms of Roma identity appear most frequently in the Czech environment. It discussed the problematic and inappropriate perception of Roma identity as a biological category (the lay identification of Roma identity with a specific anthropological type), which is not in line with the current state of social science research and is rather associated with stereotypical expectations. The second model of Romanipen, often present in social discourse, presents Romanipen as a cultural category, where Romanipen is often linked to language and specific culture (the study outlines the topic of traditional Romani culture as one of the possible frameworks, which may contribute to the form of Roma identity, especially in relation to a collective identity derived from belonging to a specific family), or the socio-economic life situation of Roma families or individuals. The study also raised the issue of the conflation of national and ethnic categories that often occurs in the area of Roma national identity. Along with this, it opened

up the issue of the conflation and confusion of national and civic identity, two levels that may differ in the context of Roma national identity.

The study continued the more general topic of Roma identity in the second thesis, which dealt with the reasons why Roma do not claim Roma national identity. Not being aware of, or not experiencing, the national level of Roma identity may be an important aspect of this issue, but it is far from being the only reason why Roma do not claim Roma national identity. Along with that, fear of publicly declaring Roma national identity or a misunderstanding of the national category, which can manifest itself in confusion between national and civic identity, is not the only possible reason for not declaring Roma national identity. There are multiple reasons for non-declaration of Roma national identity and it is important to respect and not overlook the multiplicity of these different reasons. At the same time, the actual reasons why Roma do not declare Roma identity as their national identity in the Censuses deserve deeper research attention, research attention, without which no conclusions can be drawn about the reasons why Roma people do not declare their Roma national identity in the Census.

The last thesis established the topic of ethno-emancipation movements and their possible contribution or negative impact on the life of the Roma and the identities they experience. Some authors hold the opinion that the Roma ethno-emancipation movement has the potential to improve the position of the Roma in society, both at the level of integration and at the level of strengthening the self-confidence of the Roma and thus also their role in their own lives and the society in which they live. Others, on the other hand, argue that this movement deviates from the life situation and potential problems of ordinary Roma and represents only the ideological opinion of the Roma elite, i.e. better economically and socially educated people, who, according to them, participate in the artificial construction of the Roma national identity, which is passed off as the identity of all Roma, although it touches the everyday reality of only some of them. Along with this there is also a discussion on the issue of how much the construction of national identities and the associated rights of the Roma as members of a national minority does not leave aside the important level of individual civil rights that unite all the inhabitants of the state and social actors should strive for their fulfillment regardless of the form of their national awareness.

In the context of the topic of civic identity and its intersection with national identity, it is important to note the important fact that national identity itself is a complex social concept that is not easy to capture within the social sciences. It is not a universal phenomenon that takes the same form in all contexts, times and cultures for all its holders. The nation is linked to nationalism, which as a modern phenomenon first took shape in Europe, from which it spread to other parts of the world. In Europe, the nation was typically formed as

an abstract cultural value[83] and both objective and subjective elements played a key role in its construction. Objective elements were involved in the construction of the idea and category of the nation, which turned not only to language and culture, but also to political ties and the idea of the 'blood' bond. Subjective elements then include the awareness of belonging to the nation, the desire to belong to it.

Due to historical circumstances and geographical context, the Czech Republic, which is located in Europe, was characterised by a distinctly ethnic form of national identity at the time of its founding.[84] At the time of its construction, the Czech national identity was shaped as a distinctly cultural and ethnic category based on the Czech language and the promotion of its position in society (the aim was to elevate Czech to an official language).[85] The prevailing ethno-cultural concept of the nation was based on a common language and culture rather than on the self-evident unity of the nation with the state. The nation was perceived as a community of people with a common language, history, traditions and cultural belonging. The national builders first of all sought to strengthen the sense of Czech belonging and to re-establish statehood within the federalised Habsburg monarchy, and only then could they think of building an independent Czech state. This was then to defend Czech national interests, i.e. to protect the Czech language and culture.[86]

The ethno-emancipatory movement supporting the strengthening of Roma awareness of their Roma national identity is based on the same elements - the protection of the Roma language and culture and their deeper reflection by both Roma and non-Roma individuals and groups. As such, it can be perceived as a belated national revival of the Roma in the Czech Republic (but in reality only of certain Roma individuals and groups[87]) based on an ethnic principle

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[83] Hroch, M. (2021). *Evropský národ vs. globalizovaný nacionalismus*. Kulturní studia, 2021(1), pp. 2–18.

[84] The combination of nationalism and ethnicity is not unusual. According to Eriksen (in Eriksen, T. H. (2008). *Sociální a kulturní antropologie*. Portál.) most types of nationalism are a special case of ethnic ideology, which is associated with defending the ancient origins of one's nation.

[85] See more in Gellner, E. (2003). *Nacionalismus*. Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury.

[86] Fore more information see Kohák, E. (2009). *Domov a dálava: Kulturní totožnost a obecné lidství v českém myšlení*. Filozofia.; Rak, J. (1994). *Bývali Čechové... (české historické mýty a stereotypy)*. H & H.; Holý, L. (2010). *Malý český člověk a skvělý český národ: Národní identita a postkomunistická transformace společnosti*. Sociologické nakladatelství.

[87] Not all members of one ethnic group have to share a common vision of the emancipation of that ethnic group or identity. Eriksen, *op. cit.* draws attention to the fact that if some members of a group desire independence (in our context, rather ethnic emancipation, since the Roma ethno-revitalization movement underway in the Czech Republic is not about creating its own nation-state, but rather about empowering and improving the position of the Roma ethnic minority in society) and others are satisfied with having their rights within the existing state, the respective group may appear as an ethnic group depending on who is

rather than a civic principle, similar to the Czech national revival. However, perceiving national identity only through an ethno-cultural basis can be problematic and, from the point of view of contemporary social science, slightly outdated. The category of ethnicity itself is now problematized by social science as a concept that conflates cultural, racial and other categories that are not a priori related. Moreover, it is now recognized that the rigorous ethnic conception of the nation, as compared to the civil one, is more charged with the potential threat of ethnic and other conflicts. According to Heywood[88], ethnic nations, which often derive from a primordial conception of the nation, are more inclined towards exclusivity, which is associated with conservatism and can result in extreme positions (we know the example of fascism from history), while civic nations are more inclusive and thus more likely to lean towards liberalism and multiculturalism in the political sphere. Civic nationalism according to Heywood[89] highlight the importance of civic consciousness and patriotic loyalty. From this perspective, nations may be multi-racial and multi-ethnic.

Therefore, I do not see it as desirable to overlook the civic dimension of Roma national identity. Indeed, a potential negative of an ethnically anchored movement may be that by being based on ethnic identification coupled with an emphasis on shared ethnic ties (rather than shared inhabited territory) and shared cultural traits that are viewed as objective, the movement participates in the process of differentiation.[90] Such a movement can then reinforce the process of group differentiation in society into 'us' (our ethnic group) versus 'them' (the foreign, different ethnic group"), which can lead to the reinforcement of boundaries between ethnic groups rather than their mutual understanding and harmonious coexistence. The question remains how, within the ongoing ethno-emancipatory movement, not to overlook this civic level of identity and strengthen its potential positive elements, together with preserving the possible benefits of other levels of this movement, which may be the strengthening of a positive (self-)perception of Romaniness from the position of both Roma and non-Roma social actors.

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currently speaking for the group. An individual may alternately be a member of an ethnic minority or a nation.

[88] Heywood, A. (2017). *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*. Palgrave.

[89] *Ibidem*.

[90] Smith, A. (1991). *National identity*. Penguin books.

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