Scripts in Rural Élites' Attitude as Narrative Barriers in the Hungarian–Roma Interethnic Relations in Szeklerland (Romania)

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Abstract. Relying on an interview-based research conducted in Romania's Szeklerland area, in settlements with a significant Roma population where the majority of the inhabitants are of Hungarian ethnicity, the present study investigates the non-Roma rural élites' attitude towards the local Roma population. The regional relevance of the topic is indicated by the fact that the importance of the Roma population's social integration is present in social publicity, while at the same time the three decades following the 1989 socio-political turn in Romania witnessed only a few attempts at the planning and launching of programmes aimed at the Roma population's social integration. In the course of the past three decades, the regional institutions and élites have repeatedly shuffled off the professional thematization and practical addressing of this issue, whereas in principle they emphasized the importance of social integration. This study aims to explore some of the components making up the background of the above-outlined ambivalent attitude. With the script analysis method, we intend to look into what scripts rural elite actors adopt in building the narratives on the Hungarian–Roma attitude and what role this narrative creation has in the case of the élite belonging to the Hungarian ethnic majority.

Keywords: scripts, narrative barriers, interethnic relations, Roma integration

Introduction

The present study makes use of the script analysis method with a view to investigating the non-Roma rural élites' attitude towards the local Roma population. In the rural social context we study, from the point of view of local

society, the leaders of institutions are considered élites, usually with a higher education degree (heads of institutions, teachers, doctors, priests).

Among the analytical procedures developed based on the concept of script introduced by Erwing Goffman (1959), approaches addressing the issue of individual identity building (see: Berg 2008) as well as studies in rural research (Silvasti 2003a,b; Vanclay–Enticott 2011) were considered as starting-points. Our paper relies on the analysis of interviews conducted in Romania's Szeklerland area in settlements with a significant Roma population where the majority of the inhabitants are of Hungarian ethnicity. The regional relevance of the topic is indicated by the fact that the importance of the Roma population's social integration is present in social publicity, while at the same time the three decades following the 1989 socio-political turn in Romania witnessed only a few attempts at the planning and launching of programmes aimed at the Roma population's social integration. In the course of the past three decades, the regional institutions and élites have repeatedly shuffled off the professional thematization and practical addressing of this issue, whereas in principle they emphasized the importance of social integration. This study aims to explore some of the components making up the background of the above-outlined ambivalent attitude. Drawing on interviews conducted among the rural élite (heads of institutions, teachers, doctors, priests), the attitudes towards the Roma population were investigated based on the scripts found in the narratives. Literature on rural development particularly stresses the role local élites play in local development (for example Marsden 1998, Murdoch 2000, Ward 2002, Shucksmith 2010). On the other hand, the role of the local élite becomes even more relevant upon the rise to prominence of the new rural development paradigm (Van der Ploeg 1994, Van der Ploeg et al. 2000, OECD 2006, Almstedt et al. 2014) and of the neo-endogenous approaches (see Shucksmith 2010) aimed at the utilization of local values. With regard to the region under study, the programme-based social integration of the Roma population has not even started yet, and the local élites' attitude can be of vital importance as to whether or not such programmes will be launched at all, and if so, then how effectively they will work out. In this context, we intend to look into what scripts rural elite actors adopt in building the narratives on the Hungarian–Roma attitude and what role this narrative creation has in the case of the élite belonging to the Hungarian ethnic majority.

Professional Context

Erwin Goffman (1959) called attention to the phenomenon that in situations involving interaction people often and willingly adopt procedures kept at the ready and tailored to the situation at hand. According to Goffman, this has to do

with individuals playing various roles in their social interactions, and he contends that identity should be considered as the totality of roles undertaken during these interactions. He goes on to stress that the use of scripts is not necessarily a conscious act. Goffman's approach proves to be of crucial importance in terms of our topic since it highlights that an investigation into the attitudes towards the Roma population should not place its primary focus on the explicitly appearing prejudices and stereotypes but rather on the essential elements the attitude towards the Roma population contains and the forms it takes in the specific situations arising from the relationship with the Roma people as well as in the narratives addressing these situations. Bibi van den Berg (2008) also underlines in her analysis of the issue that scripts are abstract social entities developed along the shared cultural meanings and dependent on the situation, wherefore they can be captured in the context of everyday activities.

Research has made use of the concept of script first of all in the field of gender roles and sexual behaviour (see on this: Gagnon–Simon 1973). These studies also pointed out that in typical situations human behaviour would follow a predetermined pattern, and the resulting predictability bears great significance for social actors.

The diverse applications of script theory suggest that scripts are useful problem-solving tools in the management of challenging situations, and they also play an important part in the development of both individual and group identity. In their study addressing cultural scripts, Goddard and Wierzbicka (2004) provide a description and analysis of the various groups' norms and practices. The authors argue that speech techniques and the norms of interaction are culture-specific even when it comes to a globally used language such as English. Meng's (2008) study rests on the comparison of American and Chinese situational schemata. The researcher examines the role of social scripts in everyday situations (e.g. eating in a restaurant, giving gifts, talking on the phone, etc.) and maintains that in everyday situations involving communication and interaction people use "internalized situational concept" in their discourses, i.e. scripts that are culture-specific. Analysing migrants' motivations for returning home, Benjamin Ross (2016) points out that the interview subjects' return to their home country, finding employment and starting a family there are all determined by cultural scripts. An example of such scripts that can be identified in narratives is that men are to start a family by the end of their twenties or that they must return to take care of their elderly parents or that it is much easier to buy a house in one's hometown. In their research based on focus group interviews, Aguiar et al. (2013) distinguished various ideal types according to cultural scripts and confirmed that scripts defining one's attitude to death (and the ideal types emerging along these) depend to a large extent on age, beliefs, level of education, and self-assessment. Sallaz (2016) argues that Goffman's theory on interpersonal interactions can

be used to analyse globalization processes. To confirm his view, the author discusses micro- and macro-approaches alike and lays stress on the simultaneous importance of global and local scripts.

Studies in rural sociology (Silvasti 2003a,b; Vanclay–Enticott 2011) provide a new model of scripts that proved to be useful for us both conceptually and methodologically. In relation to the topic of agriculture, these works reveal the structural role of scripts and how they can influence through these roles the development trials aimed at overriding the already existing practices. Vanclay and Enticott identified four types of scripts: (1) a socially perceived routine or expected sequence of events; specifically an understanding about how things should or will unfold; (2) a catch-phrase, metaphor or allegory that is frequently recited in response to a particular issue or situation; (3) a mini-story, narrative, or parable that has particular significance in a social group (irrespective of whether it is true or not); (4) a commonly used line of argument (thread, theme) that is widely invoked in response to a particular issue or situation. They stress the essential fact that scripts always contain a normative component, while their use is a fundamental aspect of identity production both at the individual and group level and strengthens solidarity between group members. Also, they point out the importance of concrete situations in the use of scripts (Vanclay–Enticott 2011: 260, 267). These considerations acted as decisive factors in our analysis.

Regional Context

The census (1992) taken after the 1989 regime change in Romania recorded a total of 409,723 Roma inhabitants, whereas the leaders of the Roma representative body spoke to the media about a population of 3–4 million. In this period, experts estimated a number slightly exceeding one million. A clear-cut, professionally reliable overview of the situation has not been realized to this day, while the image of the Roma population's living conditions (extremely low labour market participation, low level of education, high birth rate, standard of living below the poverty line; see in this regard Zamfir 1993) has not undergone any substantial changes either. As experts on the subject point out, it is not the ethnic but the social dimension (Achim 2001: 241) and the process of social isolation that determine the relationship between the Roma people and the majority population.

The above-described nationwide features also apply to the rural area under study, with the addition that the social distance between the majority Hungarian population and the Roma people as well as the associated social isolation – as a result of sociohistorical processes – has an even stronger presence. However, there are only case studies, micro-research, and researchers' field experiences available in this regard (Oláh 1999, Gagyi 1996, Bodó 2002, Biró et al. 2017).

Relations between Roma and Romanian population in the region are of a completely different nature than Hungarian-Roma relations for socio-historical reasons (Pozsony–Anghel 1999, Bárdi–Hermann 1999).

Over the last two decades, several analyses have been carried out about the situation of the Roma population (Pozsony–Anghel 1999; Fosztó 2009; Kiss et al. 2009; Szabó 2016, 2018; Szabó Á. 2020), but they do not deal with the analysis of the interlocking narratives.

The last thorough statistical recording of the Roma population's number and living conditions took place in the year 1893. All official censuses organized since then revealed a considerably lower number of Roma minority as compared to the situation on the ground. However, the data from later censuses (e.g. 1930, 1941, 1966, 1992; see Varga 1998[1]) differ substantially from each other. According to official data from the 2011 census[2], the rate is 4.4 percent. According to researchers on the subject, the Roma population in the region could be approximately twice as large as the census figures[3]. Statistical research conducted in the framework of the SocioRoMap programme in 2016 (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities) in 2015-2016 showed that the Roma population in the region is 9.4 percent. Experience from fieldwork based on personal participation shows that the proportion is even higher.

In terms of living conditions, we can rely on researchers' personal experiences and case studies.

Only recent years have seen a progress with respect to the various official registers including the personal, medical, etc. records of all Roma inhabitants as far as possible. In the presentation of the regional context, two professional experiences are considered: a) the first one concerns the nature of the relationship between the Hungarian population constituting a majority in the region and the Roma inhabitants, b) while the second one is related to the regional thematization of the Roma issue.

a.)

The relationship between the Hungarians and the Roma population in the region is basically conveyed by the model described as "living next to someone else/another one" and by the highly asymmetric nature of this relationship (Oláh 1999, Bodó 2002). This means that degradation, expulsion, and depreciation act as decisive factors in the attitude of the majority to the Roma population, while the social barrier between the two ethnic groups is virtually insurmountable (some typical examples are: the complete absence of mixed marriages, seeking spatial

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1   http://www.kia.hu/konyvtar/erdely/erd2002.htm.

2   Institutul Naţional de Statistică România – 2013: Recensământul Populaţiei şi al Locuinţelor – 2011. Bucharest, July 2013.

3   Hungarian-speaking Roma in Transylvania. Spatial location and residential segregation: http://statisztikak.erdelystat.ro/cikkek/magyarul-beszel-romak-erdelyben-terleti-elhelyezkedes-es-lakohelyi-szegregacio/60.

and social isolation, linguistic stigmatization) – this cultural pattern is passed down from generation to generation (Biró–Oláh 2002: 31–32), and the processes of change are slow-paced and include but a few aspects of social life (Biró–Bodó 2002, Biró et al. 2017). Our research conducted in the region suggests that for the rural élite the reference framework of the attitude towards the Roma inhabitants is made up by the above-outlined asymmetric relationship, which has developed and consolidated throughout the region's social history. Here we are dealing with a model perceivable at the local scale, wherein the Roma population is almost surgically separated within the physical and social space of the settlement, and the relations between the two groups have an implicitly codified order respected by everyone and expressed by linguistic-symbolic means. This model of the Hungarian–Roma relationship functions as a point of comparison/reference in the narrations of the élite, in the sense that this model is *the* "good" one, and should it change, reversion must be made to the state predating the change.

Of course, the practice of the relations between the two ethnic groups is undergoing certain changes these days. A major sign of this is that a complete separation cannot be applied anymore in the use of the physical and social space, the shared use of space becoming prevalent in a growing number of areas (Biró–Bodó 2002). This process greatly increases – in a mutual way – the knowledge of each other and enriches the experiences they have with each other. However, in everyday speech events, the rising number of interfaces continues to promote the asymmetry-based relationship among the Hungarian ethnic population. Interpretations generated in contact situations are formulated as oppositions (we – they, own – other, good – bad, valuable – not valuable) – with very few exceptions – on the part of the Hungarian majority; these oppositions include the Hungarian side rated as positive and the Roma side as negative. The above provided brief presentation is meant to indicate that the number of contact areas in the Hungarian–Roma relations in the region is on the rise, increasingly more segments of the physical and social space being involved in the relations between the two groups. However, this process generates oppositions rather than points of connection in everyday practice and speech events.

b.)

A second relevant feature of the regional social context is linked to the discursive practices, which have two separate levels in relation to the Roma population within the region under study. An important task in the analysis of the situation of the Roma population in the region is the analysis of media discourses, policy discourses and everyday discourses, which could be usefully applied in this region as well. Critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 2005) and analyses in different regions (Nordberg 2006, Richardson 2014, Olesen–Karlsson 2018) are good examples of this.

The Roma issue is seldom present in the public, official discourse (professional fora, policies, media) in the region; however, when it appears, it can be usually found in connection with one of the following topics: the Roma population's unfavourable social situation, low school attendance, law-breaking, infringements, conflict situations, and so on. On the other hand, the issue is a very common element of the everyday discourse (especially in informal speech situations and more specifically in speech events whose participants or opinion leaders are men), and the criticisms formulated with regard to the Roma population are – with very few exceptions – negative. The speech events, criticisms, and linguistic terms that dominate the everyday discourse are inadmissible/untenable for the public figures and the public discourse.

Experience shows that representatives of the regional élite are willing to address this issue publicly only when forced by some external factor or challenge. Such a challenge may be a speech situation when members of the majority rural elite actors are asked to give an interview for the purposes of a research programme and provide a statement on the situation of the Roma population. This is in effect a double challenge. Obviously, this is not an easy topic for the interviewed elite actors (teachers, doctors, priests, entrepreneurs, local leaders, etc.) to talk about. For one thing, the structure and word-stock of the institutional narrative associated with the interpretation of the Roma people's situation is yet to be developed, while the interviewees have certain institutional responsibilities due to their roles played within the given institution. They cannot disregard the expectations placed upon the elite (i.e. institutional) role they have, which, although do not offer any established narrative for the persons making the statement, but impose the representation of strict principles and norms (primarily in the form of "what must not be said, what is improper to say" with respect to the Roma issue). On the other hand, it is not easy to make a statement also because in an interview situation they obviously cannot take an approach or use a language that characterizes the everyday speech events associated with this issue, that elites operating in the rural environment are also well aware of, and that they can even identify themselves with in a non-official role, in their everyday personal relations.

It is in this dual context where rural élites holding institutional positions (managers/directors, teachers, doctors, priests) form their attitudes and behaviour towards the Roma population. Considering the local élites' increasing influence on the operation of local institutions, on the elaboration and implementation of development programmes, it may be an important professional task to recognize what attitudes and behaviour rural élites develop and adopt in this dual "force field" in relation to the Roma population and their social integration.

Methodology

The present study rests on the analysis of 15 interviews conducted with rural élites between 2017 and 2018 in settlements with a significant share of Roma population. In the rural social context we study, from the point of view of local society, the leaders of institutions are considered élites, usually with a higher education degree (heads of institutions, teachers, doctors, priests). These interviews aimed to outline the overall situation in every case (description of the Roma population, attitude towards the major local institutions, labour market situation, attitude towards the Hungarian population, etc.). Whenever their attitudes to local institutions came into focus, the interviewed local actors (teachers, local government leaders, priests, entrepreneurs, doctors) would always enhance the role of the institution or activity they were representing. The survey followed the semi-structured interview model, which allowed for the expression of various opinions, giving examples, or telling short stories. The script analysis drew on the typology developed by Vanclay and Enticott, who distinguished four types of scripts in their analysis of rural sociology, indicating the overlaps between the individual types as well as the importance of their combined use (Vanclay–Enticott 2011: 261). The script analysis method has been used in several areas before, besides rural sociology: for example, in the field of gender roles and sexual behaviour (see on this: Gagnon–Simon 1973), cultural scripts (Goddard–Wierzbicka 2004), everyday situations (Meng 2008), migrants' motivations (Ross 2016). Interpreting the situation of the Roma population is not an easy undertaking for the persons who have agreed to give an interview. There are two reasons for this. On the one hand, there is no standardized terminological-conceptual toolkit readily available for the local élite to formulate the institution's official position, while there is also an ambition on their part to have their position somewhat aligned with the local community's opinion. Therefore, the analyst will not find well-rehearsed, standardized, terminologically fixed scripts in the fixed narratives but will instead be confronted with statements that – implicitly or allusively – refer to a well-defined underlying content. The very same script can be expressed in several ways, but its content can always be clearly defined. For example, the content that the Roma people "are completely different from the local majority" can be regarded as a script – this content can appear explicitly, as an allusion, or in complex sentences describing actual situations (e.g.: "if they moved into a house, into a palace, I'm sure it would be reduced to a pile of junk within a month" or "they do not do any farming, just loot around"). The use of script is always connected to a concrete situation, a specific personal experience and has an interpretive/explanatory power that reaches beyond any given contact situation.

Analysis

In the following, we will provide a presentation of the scripts that can be identified in the analysed narratives. We should point out that the presented scripts cannot be treated as a standardized language toolkit of the scripts formulated by the rural élites under study – they may take several forms, and this refers to the searching, pondering nature of narrative creation. We tend to share Vanclay and Enticott's (2011) view that scripts are first of all responses to a specific challenge, which is why their primary function is the communication management of the given situation and, as a corollary, building the individual as well as the relevant group identity. We believe that it is not the dictionary meaning of script (which could be otherwise relevant for analysts of interethnic relations or for analyses of political science) that determines its importance for an analysis of development policy. What is crucial for development policy analysis is in what challenging situations a specific script is prioritized, to what extent it works well as a means for interpreting a situation, and how often this takes place. Since the mode and frequency of use strengthens or generates, on the side of the user, individual as well as group identity and the attitude to challenges, it may be difficult to initiate or implement successful development policy processes, new development policy thematizations without actually knowing the scripts of the particular topic.

It will be necessary to perform our analysis on a larger text corpus and extend it to further groups of the rural élite.

1.

One of the most common scripts is associated with the Roma population's attitude towards the local institutions. The most recurring topic of teachers' narratives is the Roma community's attitude to school as an institution. This attitude can refer to learning in general, the educational institution in general, some of the institutional rules, or the established order of the activities. Some typical forms of narratives are as follows: "they cannot be integrated into the established order"; "The children come here, but in fact they are not interested in school." "The child used to attend [the school]… could even read and count, but s/he dropped away… dropped away because s/he no longer liked first grade." Doctors' narratives also include linguistic forms conveying such attitudes: "The pregnant women… we try to identify them, which is quite troublesome because there is little willingness to show up in time…" "They announce the enrolment of their child, but sometimes they forget about it altogether because they do not get married, and the rest of them just live together." Disregarding the rules set out by the institution was again a topic of utmost importance throughout the interview conducted with the priest: "… from the point of view of the church, if approached normally, these marriages are not marriages"; "Most of the children are not baptized…"

The content that these attitudes appearing under various forms share is that the Roma people do not accept the rules set out by the different institutions. These scripts include criticism and conclusions as well: criticism in the sense that rejecting the school or the institutional rules is clearly an injurious, wrong attitude according to the speaker and conclusion in the sense that this situation cannot be changed, all the struggles and efforts are in vain. At the same time, such scripts convey opposition, asymmetric relationship, and depreciation: they indicate that while the Hungarian population complies with these rules, the Roma people do not.

2.

The interview subjects often report on situations where they encountered the unique, particular features of the Roma people's lifestyle. In situations of this kind, we can find that the interpretation of the situation is replaced by describing the peculiarity thereof. In their indication of otherness, speakers often resort to attributes, metaphors, associated with negative ratings as a rule.

The narrative forms carrying the script show a diverse picture in this case. Some typical examples are as follows: "He is twelve years old, and he has already stolen a bride for himself." "They still have this pagan thing ingrained into them." "… all they know is temporary survival"; "… they have a certain way of life, it's terrible, starting from the stench all the way to the housekeeping, the environment… it's a disaster for the neighbourhood"; "this is their way of life, but it appears that this is the way they like it".

The content that these attitudes appearing in diverse linguistic forms share is that: They are very different. This script reveals in particular the distance lying between the two groups, namely in the sense that this distance cannot be bridged. Even if there are some positive examples, it is not a general phenomenon. These scripts condense the speaker's distrust and previous negative experiences into a definite attitude and at the same time increase the distance from the Roma group as by the repetition of the expression conveying the script, the speaker is sending the message that it appears unlikely that any change may happen on the part of the Roma community.

3.

Interviewees take the view that the bulk of the initiatives concerning the improvement of the Roma inhabitants' situation are persuasion attempts aiming to help. The subject matter of these is usually that they should change their attitude towards the local institutions, or, less commonly, some form of collaboration or job opportunity is offered. Examples of the latter can be found in entrepreneurial narratives. In their persuasion, speakers always point out their personal commitment, the investment in the project, the willingness to cooperate, while at the same time they clearly formulate, as some sort of rule, that the persuasion or cooperation effort is futile.

The narrative forms carrying the script are as follows: "… there are promises on the part of the Roma families… regrettably, they haven't kept their promises"; "I'm trying to reason with the parents in my own way… they always promise they'd come, but they don't come…"; "I explain it to them; they tell me I'm right and this is the way it should be done, yet they don't act on it; it's all over once they leave the office…"

The content that these attitudes appearing in diverse linguistic forms share is that: They do not keep their promises; one cannot reason with them. These scripts do not only suggest that the initiatives were futile but also that, based on the personal experiences appearing as particularly authentic, any further attempts or persuasion is absolutely useless; it is not worth dealing with such matters as it will not yield any result. The statement as well as the attitude behind it are confirmed by the reference to the personal experience.

4.

Besides the teachers' narratives, we are encountering a similar issue with great frequency in some other narratives as well, more specifically that positive phenomena experienced among the Roma population are not really to be taken seriously since they are nothing more than casual, random incidents. These positive phenomena should not, cannot lead us to the conclusion that in terms of the specific attitude, the behaviour of the entire Roma community will change in a positive direction. The content that these linguistic forms share is that this population is not going to change.

The narrative forms conveying the script are: "This is from where the children come to us, but not all children, unfortunately…" "The children go to school, but only some of them." "There are a few who stand out, but the majority are in a very poor situation."

5.

The diverse linguistic forms convey the content that: They are out of control.

Some typical narratives are: "They have become a lot more audacious… they are much more insolent than they were thirty years ago…" "They are causing more trouble than the entire settlement." "Over time, they become more and more loud-mouthed…"

Summary

In our study, we aimed to use the script analysis method in order to investigate the attitude of the rural élite towards the Roma population. Certain scripts were identified in the narratives of the rural élite (teachers, managers/directors, priests, doctors, entrepreneurs). We found that rural élites adopt scripts in communication situations focusing on the interpretation of the Roma people's local situation, and

they make use of these scripts in responding to the challenge that the creation of a discursive form – in our case: the interview situation connected to the official-public role – presented for them. The use of scripts in relation to the Roma population redefines the oppositional as well as asymmetric relationship and the social distance.

Two further observations need to be added to this line of thought, which at the same time point to future possibilities for analysis.

1) The representatives of each area – expressly or tacitly – argue that the Roma population (their way of life) should integrate into the "system" they represent. They should have the same attitude to the functioning of the education system, healthcare, the church, the interests and life of the local community, and the economic and lifestyle-related activities – in terms of principles, norms, and practical solutions – as the majority local community has or intends to have. This expectation is not exclusive in the sense that it does not require immediate and complete identification. They would even settle for seeing/perceiving that the Roma community is making progress in this direction. They observe and appreciate the positive examples and attempts that can be encountered in the Roma community, but they always point out that these are very rare and they are much rather exceptions than signs of an actual process of change. We are of the opinion that this attitude has development policy implications on a local scale as it indicates that rural élites do not see changes among the Roma population as a real possibility.

2) The texts clearly reveal that the speakers have acquired their knowledge of the Roma community through personal experiences and they link the scripts to these specific cases. At the same time, it is also a notable phenomenon that the speakers define the Roma community's sporadic, individual manifestations as a message informing that we are not dealing with specific cases, persons, or situations but with an essential feature of the entire Roma community. The majority narrative attaches a general meaning to the concrete, occasional manifestations (e.g. school absenteeism, loud talking, non-compliance with certain rules, etc.) that covers an important segment of the Roma community's operation. Through a synecdochic association (part–whole extension), the individual attitude refers to a practice, approach that characterizes every member of the Roma community. This type of generalization of the individual, particular cases, experiences, and examples is the procedure of generating distance and strengthening individual and group identity, and the use of scripts provides a framework for the communication manoeuvre involving substitution by the general (as opposed to the individual).

Policy Implications

This study allows two conclusions in terms of development policy.

Firstly, the use of scripts indicates that the rural élite – implicitly – excludes development policy work aimed at the Roma population or finds it unnecessary. Sometimes they express that the situation of the Roma population is bad and something needs to be done, but the scripts used in their interpretation of the situation suggest that generating distance with regard to the local Roma population takes priority. Generating distance makes part of personal and community identity building, wherefore it can be established that a development policy involvement aimed at improving the Roma community's situation is likely to take place in the case of the rural élite currently performing institutional roles only if their identity-building practices undergo certain changes. Evidently, this does not rule out that the younger generation whose members have not yet moved into a local leadership role would take a different approach, but there is no research experience in this regard.

Our second conclusion conveys a more positive message. The public-official narrative concerning the improvement of the Roma population's situation is yet to be developed in the region. Our research indicates that the rural élite is facing issues of situation interpretation, definition, and linguistic choices when they need to incorporate their attitude to the situation of the Roma community into a public-official discourse. As a solution, they opt for the use of scripts. This state of affairs allows for a thematization work in the region that seeks the creation of a public-official discourse aimed at the improvement of the Roma community's situation.

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