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2024 ANNUAL MEETING OF

The Gypsy Lore Society

AND CONFERENCE ON ROMANI
STUDIES

**2024 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GYPSY LORE SOCIETY AND
CONFERENCE ON ROMANI STUDIES**

25-27 September
2024 Sofia

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Gypsy Lore Society is an international association of scholars, specialists, and experts, founded in Great Britain in 1888. Its annual conferences are among the most significant scholarly events devoted to Romani Studies worldwide. Each year the event takes place in a different country. This book contains abstracts of papers presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society and Conference on Romani Studies (25-27 September 2024). The conference is being held in Sofia (Bulgaria) for the first time since such important annual events have been organised on behalf of the Gypsy Lore Society.

The Annual Meeting of the Gypsy Lore Society 2024 and Conference on Romani Studies is held by the Balkan Ethnology Department, Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The Ethnographic Institute with a Museum was established in 1949 when the Institute of People's Studies (1947) was merged with the National Ethnographic Museum (1906). The Institute (now named Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) conducts research, educational and applied activities in the fields of ethnology, folkloristics, cultural and social anthropology, ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, art studies, and museology. Research is carried out in a Balkan, European, and global context.

The organisers invite contributions on various aspects of Romani Studies and encourage participants from various disciplines, including history, ethnology, anthropology, sociology, political science, linguistics, international studies, security studies, area studies, economics, geography, literature, and other fields of humanities and social sciences. Both theoretical studies and empirical contributions, including good fieldwork presentations, are welcome. Panels and individual paper proposals undergo a peer-review process by the Academic Committee.

The working languages of the conference are English and Romani.

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PANELS

Hate Speech, Racism and Xenophobia against Roma People

Panel organiser: Olga Magano, Universidade Aberta, CIES-Iscte, University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal

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Abstract: The presence of Roma people in different countries on different continents reveals the persistence of racist expressions and practices against Roma people (FRA, 2022). There have been many examples throughout history, mainly exacerbated by successive measures of repression, assimilation, expulsion from territories and attempts at extermination. This is the extreme case with the condemnation to banishment and galleys (Portugal and Spain) (Costa, 1995), social invisibility and non-effective citizenship during dictatorial states (Portugal, Spain and Italy, for example), but also in the case of Eastern European countries with submission to slavery, later to the proletariat (Romania) and the horror of medical experiments and the Nazi holocaust which victimised not only thousands of Jews, but also Roma people (Margalit, 2002). As we go through the literature on the history of the Roma, even though most of it is written by non-Roma (Fraser, 1997), the panorama takes us back to the systematic confrontation of attempts at expulsion, elimination, discrimination, social and spatial segregation, racism and xenophobia. Hatred of Roma people continues to be a current problem that exists in every country where Roma live. In other words, even though we are in the 21st century and democratic states prohibit forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, in practical terms it still happens in everyday life. This phenomenon has been fuelled by the growth of racist movements and far-right parties in recent years.

Racist practices are ingrained in societies and it is difficult to deconstruct stereotypes and negative representations of Roma people, who are usually the victims of generalisations and essentialist perspectives (Stewart, 2012). In addition, more recently, hate speech in comments on news stories in the media and on social networks has become extremely serious, threatening the human and citizenship rights of Roma people (Tremlett et al. 2017; Magano & D' Oliveira, 2023). This panel hopes to bring together contributions from researchers from different countries and contexts on hate speech, racism and xenophobia, as well as exclusionary practices and the exclusion of Roma people from the spheres of citizenship, but also in terms of (non-) access to housing, access to employment and vocational training, education and health, and discuss perspectives for tackling this social and sociological problem.

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Title: Media Power and Resistance: Roma Media Stigmatization and the Possibility of Counterhegemonic Disidentification

Abstract: Modernity, new technologies and the invention of the mass media provided an optimized version of previous mechanisms of social control, stigmatization and social exclusion of certain groups, such as the Roma, who did not fit the national project. Contemporary media, as key institutions in the capitalist order, function equally as symbolic knowledge producers, social and economic entities, which can be viewed as interconnected roles in wielding ideological, economic and political power. They apply various techniques that serve to legitimize different policies targeting Roma, denigrated as not fitting the neoliberal frame, and provide ideological consensus. Previous media research in the materialist or epistemological traditions focused predominantly on these roles separately, rarely combing the analysis of discursive, institutional or socio-economic factors in negative media representation. The presentation aims to propose an analytical framework for deconstructing media stereotypes and the negative image of the Roma, discussing a possible synergy between Discourse Studies, Critical Media Political Economy, Cultural Political Economy and Critical Media Cultural Studies. This is done with the purpose of connecting the analysis of the “micro-physics” of power in everyday media discourse with macro forms of domination, related to economic interest (Smart, 1983).

First, Laclau and Mouffe’s poststructuralist discourse theory will be discussed, who deconstruct the constant struggles over meaning of different discourses and their attempts to fix a particular view of society and identity that looks natural and convincing (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Next, the critical media political economy approaches will be presented that deal with various aspects of media ownership, production, consumption and control. The synergy of both approaches will be illustrated with examples from a two-year study of the representation of Bulgarian Roma in the online media platforms of two of the most popular Bulgarian newspapers: “24 Hours” and “Telegraph”.

Finally, the possibility of producing counterhegemonic discourse will be explored by focusing on the socio-economic conditions for access to representation and the possibility of structural change through new articulations and disidentification.

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