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## ENGAGEMENT FOR INFORMED ANTHROPOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE ON GYPSIES<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Many scholars of culture and society of Roma were more or less involved in challenging the misrepresentations of Roma. This paper describes and analyzes the author's engagement in presenting informed and accurate contemporary anthropological studies of and with Roma to different publics in Slovenia. First, the author explored different definitions of engagement within the anthropology (public anthropology, engaged anthropology, publicly engaged anthropology development anthropology). Second, the text defines different fields of knowledge about the Roma (Romology, Romani Studies, anthropology of Gypsies). The main author's point is that the engagement with accurate and informed transmission of anthropological knowledge about the Roma is urgently needed. Otherwise scholars may risk reproducing or at least contributing to current scientific racism in social science and the humanities.

**Key words:** Gypsies, Roma, Romology, Romani studies, social anthropology of Gypsies, engaged anthropology, public anthropology

**Initial definitions: engaged anthropology, public anthropology, publicly engaged anthropology ...**

Anthropologists understand engagement widely and differently. Discussion on anthropology and engagements started vigorously in last decade, but this is not a novelty in sociocultural anthropology. Sanday (2002, 2) focused on the contribution of Franz Boas, who was engaged in public discussion about "race"<sup>2</sup> and who disagreed with "racial heredity" and mental traits and ar-

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<sup>1</sup> A part of this paper was given at the *European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA)* biennial conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in August 2008, as a part of the workshop *Anthropology and engagement*.

<sup>2</sup> According to Wacquant, "Race" is a fiction that has been made real by protracted historical work of construction of social space and mental space that established

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gued for the determining power of tradition and custom". She mentioned also Pierre Bourdieu and his call for "reflexive sociology" and engagement in public and political life. According to Hannerz (2003, 173) Leach was also engaged anthropologists: Leach's attempt was to show to the wider publics or to outsiders "that anthropology can contribute to an understanding of current events and contemporary history". Hannerz himself is also inclined to show to his colleagues anthropologists, "on what we [anthropologists] might to reach out to wider audience".

Hement (2007) also wrote about "public anthropology" and "public anthropological engagement" in the field, where she connected engagement also with "activist" and "collaborative" anthropology.

The article of Gow (2002) shed light upon another notion of the engaged anthropology, in this case within the developmental anthropology. According to him, numerous anthropologists are engaged in developmental anthropology, which is understood more or less as applicative anthropology and is more distanced from academic one. Gow (2002, 2)<sup>3</sup> understands development anthropology as "a moral project" and he strives for restoring developmental anthropology from the criticisms and designation from that part of academics, who understand development anthropology as an evil twin. In his case engaged anthropology in development is a moral imperative.

Some anthropologists intervened for "a more publicly engaged anthropology" (Borofsky 2001) and they saw the role of anthropology in its contribution to human thought, "to human imagination" by going public. Sanday (2002) insists that "public interests anthropology"<sup>4</sup> is distinctive from the pu-

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complicity between similarly configured things in minds, objectified history and embodied history". "Race" resides in the full gamut of forms assumed by social action: in categories, taxonomies, and theories, but also in the objective distributions of positions and powers that make up institutions and last but not least, in human bodies shaped and inhabited by the differentiations it stipulates. (Wacquant 1997, 227-228).

<sup>3</sup> In his paper he describes first, how poststructuralism, postmodernism and post-development can constructively contribute to development anthropology; second, what anthropologists do; third, the arguments for engaged anthropology; and forth, the development ethics which are suggested as a background for engaged anthropology in development (Gow 2002, 2).

<sup>4</sup> Sanday (2002,1) defines the "public interests anthropology" as "an evolving paradigm for research and action which merges theory development with engagement in the dilemmas, inequities, and perplexities of our times. The research is interdisciplinary mixing the bifocality of ethnography and the determining power of culture with concepts such as *public[s]*, *interest[s]*, *public sphere* and *civil society* ... PIA studies the social and cultural processes by which public action enhance or threaten the common good in an increasingly destabilized world marked by environmental depletion, the tyranny of the market, and a host of divisive social, economic and political issues."

blic or applied anthropology in that that "it seeks ... to reinvent anthropology for the 21<sup>st</sup> century by developing a common theoretical discourse and an epistemology linking research with action, and engagement in the multicultural context of a globalizing world".

### Engagement and the role of anthropologists

Anthropologists had been discussing about engagement when they were rethinking the anthropology's role in contemporary world. "Public interest ethnographer sees herself as part of the world she studies not just as a participant-observer but as an engaged human being" wrote Sanday (2002).

Some anthropologists stressed the importance of transformation of the relationship with public and presented their view (Borofsky 2001) with the intention to overcome the stereotypes and images about the anthropological vocation in contemporary world (*cf* Lampere 2003, 153<sup>5</sup>; Eriksen 2006). Various anthropologists stressed the importance to change anthropologists' relations with respondents by giving the communities we work with the active role in designing the research questions (Lampere 2003). Within these discussions the role of the anthropologist and the fieldwork dilemmas were also extensively investigated (*cf* Silverman 2000).

My understanding of the engagements is inspired by Sanday (2002) investments into the discussion about engagement. Another inspiration came from Howell's (1994, 317) text, who shed light upon the postmodern debate about *Writing culture* and the fact that anthropologists and other academics in the social science and humanities overlooked the fact, "that anthropologist spend much of their time reading". Her remark, that "reading is not a neutral activity" made me think about the importance of reading anthropological monographs about Roma<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, Howell's chapter made me think about the

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<sup>5</sup> Lampere (2003) discussed "engaged anthropology".

<sup>6</sup> In this article I use the terms Roma and Gypsies. Many scholars prefer to use word Roma, as an ethnonym for people, which are now perceived as a European ethnic minority. Gypsies or Roma were described primordially as people with Indian origin, who speak Romani language and who have distinctive visual appearance. Some local expressions for these people are Zigeuner in Germany, Tsigane in France, Cigani in Serbia and Slovenia, etc. Some people use the word Roma as a self-descriptive term and reject the term Gypsy, or Zigeuner or Cigani as offensive and derogatory name. On the other hand, some other people denominate themselves as Cigani, or Gypsy Travellers or Tsiganes. Williams (1984) showed in his cognitive approach that these denominations were dynamic, and that the definition of the term given by Tsiganes or Roma depended on the question who was defining a person or a group and for which audience the definition was constructed. On the other hand, he also stressed that the term Gypsy/Tsiganes expressed colonial discourse and that the usage of this

importance for engagement in rethinking the representation of Roma in Slovenia and the role of those social science and humanities, which produced, developed and transmitted knowledge on Gypsies/Roma.

### **What is Slovenian Romology and why the necessity for engagement**

First, I need to explain what is meant by the Slovenian Romology. Slovenian Romology consisted mainly of non-academic explorers of Roma culture, who were more or less locals in particular regions of Slovenia, and their studies date in 1960's: latter their studies were reproduced, appropriated and plagiarized by some new researchers in the field. The characteristic of the Slovenian production of Romology is its regional orientation or, in other words, its boundedness to national territory and to groups of Roma living in one national state. Romology often gives partial and regionally orientated selections of texts written by folklorists, ethnologists, educationalists, travellers, and other experts. Romology's epistemology is poorly conceptualized and strongly connected with evolutionary thoughts about Roma simplicity, neo-romantic ideas about essential nomadic culture, eugenics notions of pure and half Roma etc. Romology is thought of as an exclusive intellectual territory, a parallel field separated both from ethnology and anthropology and it is presented and thought of as a separate -logy, not as a group of interdisciplinary studies (Janko Spreizer 2004). When I talk about Romology<sup>7</sup>, I address particular localized production of "scientific ideology" (Canguilhem, in Janko Spreizer 2002, 355), or an idiosyncratic all embracing and conceptually confused inventory of vaguely articulated issues. According to a Dutch social historian Wim Willems (1997) Gypsy studies<sup>8</sup> were a marginal and mainly a non-academic field of knowledge in a splendid isolation. Academic marginalisation and epistemological obsolescence contributes to the construction of an ideal archetypal image of Gypsies, who are orientalised (Said 1996) as Indian or Egyptian restless wanderers. In my opinion, the use of the term Slovenian Romology, is used

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term reflects the gaze of the Gadge, or the gaze of non-Gypsies (Williams 1989; cf. Janko Spreizer 2002, 59).

<sup>7</sup> Slovenian Romology was defined as a science on Roma, a science on Romani Issues, science on Romani Question (Tancer 1997, 95); and a science which examines features or phenomena to do with Romanies (Tancer, 1998, 23, Janko Spreizer 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Willems wrote about Gypsy studies. He analytically showed that this field of knowledge developed and reproduced many stereotypes and tropes about Gypsies/Roma: These stereotypes could be racial and ethnic difference, cannibalism and preferences for particular kind of food (i.e. buried meet), particular sexual behaviour of women, such as promiscuity, thievery, etc.; This field of knowledge would be called Romology in Slovenia, since Slovenian Romology reproduce almost same stereotypes.

for the denomination of traditionalistic and anachronistic studies on Roma or Gypsies with the folkloristic epistemology dating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its main project is searching for roots and origins of culture and preserving or conserving it.

From the very beginning of my fieldwork<sup>9</sup>, I was confronted to the misrepresentative knowledge of Slovenian Romology. During my master's I have explored literacy of Roma youngsters and while they were represented as illiterate by Romologists and educationalists I studied literacy as a social practice and I have noticed specific, diverse and creative uses of literacy amongst them. While Roma youngsters were portrayed by scholars as illiterate they were participating in several literacy practices and literacy events (*cf* Street 2003) writing hip hop and rap poetry, love letters, dairies and other written texts. (Janko Spreizer 1999).

I have analytically showed elsewhere, that Romologists are vulnerable to reproducing pseudo-scientific discourses of Roma peoples (*cf* Janko Spreizer 2002). My engagement is then the commitment for challenge of the local hegemonic knowledge, such as Slovenian Romology is, and it's regional supremacy in representation of Roma as universally behindhand bigger groups of people (Šiftar 1970) and as the restless Indian nomads (Štrukelj 2004). I also disagree with "popularization" of images about Roma, misappropriated myths about them, which is popular by some local novelists (*cf* Lainšček 2007).

### **Romani studies**

Within contemporary Anglophone and Francophone Romani studies or Gypsy studies the theorisations of topics, such as the biological origins of the Gypsies/Roma, their culture and the Indian origin of their language are critically explored as ideology yet, and these are not exclusive topics. In contrast, in Slovenia the primordial premises of the Indian origins of the Roma were being constantly mentioned in many publications, and political documents, and are also generally accepted by the Roma political elites as if the origin could explain the difficult social position of Roma.

In other words, contemporary researchers transposed or reformulated their research questions, so that the topics of their studies are, for example, the analyses of power relations in representations of Gypsies, Roma ethnopolitics and the construction of Romany ethnogenesis, mainly discussed by Romany anthropologists and sociologists. Some researchers critically reflect on folklo-

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<sup>9</sup> I did my fieldwork in 1994-1995 and in 1998-1999 for my master and doctoral degrees among Roma. Every year from 1996-1999 I also participated on 10 days Romani summer camps and I was a guest of some families for several weeks.

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ristically oriented Gypsy studies (and Gypsyorists<sup>10</sup>), dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Acton 1974, Okely 1983); others, for example Hancock (1997) (who is also a Romani activist), struggle for the deconstruction of exoticized and archetypal Gypsy or Roma images, constructed by Romology or Gypsyology and elaborated by the Hollywood movie industry. Researchers are familiar with the contemporary epistemological background of studies on ethnicity and nationalism (cf. Eriksen 1993), which is not the case with Slovenian Romologists

My reading of modern and critical Romany studies, for instance the studies of Dutch historians (Lucassen, Willems and Cottaar (1998) – and Willems' (1997) study of the history of Gypsy Studies and its epistemological issues, and the studies of social anthropologists, for example Lemon's (2000), Stewart (1997), Okely (1983, 1994)<sup>11</sup> crystallised the demand for a critical reflection on the Slovenian Romological writing.

Traditional studies on Gypsies (which are denominated as Romology in Slovenia) represent the one-sided knowledge about a group of people, perfectly similar to the model of »true" Gypsies shaped by Victorian tradition and have been characterised as a kind of scientific racism (compare with Acton 1973; 1989, 1998, also Willems 1997; Willems, Lucassen 1998). This is also the incentive for my critical research of Slovenian Romological writings.

According to my understanding, engagement for anthropologically informed knowledge strives also for the transmission of studies which was an outcome of the long term fieldwork and intensive participant observation. There are only few anthropologists in Slovenia who know writings from Romani studies in details and who carefully read publications of British (Okely 1983, 1994; Stewart 1997, Gay y Blasco 1999), American (Silverman 2000, Gropper 1975), French (Williams 1984, 1994, Formoso 1986, Pasqualino 1998 [2002], Italian (Piasere 1985, 1994.), or Eastern European (Marushiakova and

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<sup>10</sup> This term describe a group of people around the Association of Gypsy Lore Society, established in 1888, which is associated with romantic imaginary on Gypsies, created by George Borrow and his followers (cf. Okely 1983).

<sup>11</sup> Alaina Lemon (2000) explored the social construction of Gypsy culture and the importance of Puškin who was perceived as discursive authority when people defined Gypsy culture. She explored, for example, images and stereotypes triggered by the word Gypsy among several ethnic groups in post soviet Russia and she showed the tensions between experts of Gypsy culture and the Roma and their interpretations of the Roma culture. Michael Stewart (1997) studied one group of Hungarian Gypsies, the Rom in the middle of 1980s, and beside other he did research on cultivation, celebration, reinvention of cultural difference and diversity. Among other topics, Okely (1983) explored the historical origins of Gypsies and she rejected the Indian origin theory; she looked at travelling patterns, self-ascriptions, kinship and political grouping; marriage choices, pollution beliefs, and the gender divisions.

Popov 2007, Budilova and Jakoubek 2007) sociocultural anthropologists. Anthropology of Gypsies or Roma "does not represent any particular anthropological school since anthropologists involved in it have different theoretical backgrounds, they have been interested in different research questions and they have conducted very heterogeneous researches. But anthropological studies about Gypsies have also much in common: anthropologists have to conduct a substantial and long-term ethnographic fieldwork, they use participant observation as their main method, many of them become very close with their informants and they are committed to their work." (Janko Spreizer 2008)

After I was participating a Roma studies summer school in Budapest in 1999, where I met reflective and informed scholars, I have started to challenge stereotypical images of Romanies, produced by Slovenian Romologists. On the other hand, I started to inform Slovenian scholars, students and wider public about contemporary ethnographic studies of Roma. I argue that the marginalisation of this field made possible the re-invention of archaic theorisation by scholars on Roma, and the vigorous reproduction of the chauvinist and racist discourses on e.g. Romani "race", culture and religion on the other.

Engagement then may be an endeavour for mainstreaming of the current anthropological knowledge about the Roma, within academia and in education on several levels on the one hand: and within different publics and occasions, such as the public events and media interviews, TV emissions or radio broadcasts on the other.

Leach wanted to show to wider anthropological audience, what anthropology could contribute to the community (*cf* Hannerz 2003, 173). Slovenian majority population, which is less informed about anthropological vocation, imagines the work of anthropologists as an occupation which studies Roma as collection of remnants from the past of the Indian ancestors' or as accumulation of artefacts, material, spiritual and social culture of native population, mainly of peasants or any exotic group. Due to these facts, I take my engagement in the manner of Leach and I understand the engagement as the task for representation of sociocultural anthropology of Gypsies/Roma to the wider publics. In his interview with Borofsky (2001) Barth stressed the fact that anthropologist should "enter into as many discourses as possible that are already going on where there is an audience that is already engaging and knowledgeable" and that we as anthropologists should "find ways of bringing something additional into public conversation that are already going on".

I understood Okely (1994) as engaged within social anthropology when she was writing about anthropology of Europe and about studies of Gypsies. Okely published her efforts for recognition that Gypsies are accurate topics for anthropology within the British social anthropology. On the basis of her writing it is possible to conclude that specific national legacies in anthropology, its' regional specialisation and underestimation of the importance of

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anthropology of Europe and the Gypsies or Roma contributed to the marginalisation of the anthropology of Gypsies and interdisciplinary Romani Studies. This seems as a legacy of some authorities of anthropology, who saw Roma as too similar to the Westerners and yet not enough distant or different from them to be the Other (cf. Piasere 1994).

I was inspired for engagement also by the criticism of traditional Tsiganology or Gypsology and writing on representation of Roma (Okely 1983; Piasere 1994; Willems 1994). Williams (1994) convincingly showed us that Tsiganologues or Romologists were in collaboration with the oppressive state regimes when the French journal, *Etudes Tsiganes* was founded. Later anthropologists were aware of the "tyranny of the state" and they started to publish monographs on the basis of intense and extended fieldwork with Roma communities.

My engagement within anthropology of Gypsies is then to transmit the knowledge from the distinguished anthropologist in the international academia and not yet well known within the production of Slovenian academic and also local knowledge about Roma.

#### **Engagement: from volunteering to academic engagement**

During my work with Roma as a volunteer and a post graduate student of social anthropology I was differently engaged with my informants: I was a developer of the literacy programs for adults and youngsters, an occasional volunteer worker who helped to organise several activities for children, such as summer camps for Roma youngsters, or a New Year giving presents to Roma children. I was engaged when I was living with and helping them with literacy and later with trade activities. My fieldwork was also active involvement in literacy events with some Roma individuals.

First I also co-work with Romani activists, when they were preparing Summer Schools for Roma youngsters about culture, history and language. After the year 2000 I distanced myself from a newly developing Romany activism, being supported and more and more controlled from the local politics and officials of Office for nationalities at the Government of the Republic of Slovenia on the one side and from the Romologists on the other.

Now I would like to reflect another reason for my engagement in the transmission of knowledge from the Romani Studies and anthropology of Gypsies. In this part I strive for the explanation how the lack of accurate and informed anthropological knowledge and ethnography about the living conditions of Roma is reflected in the legal and governance system which regulates the minority policy.

As a doctoral student I became aware of the fact that the field of Romology and Romani activism was deeply permeated with the involvement of the local



communities, and the politicians of the state, which was lobbying for entering the EU. For that purpose the state and some Slovenian experts developed ethnic minority legislation from the 1989 and 1991 on, in collaboration with Office for nationalities at the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

NGOs started several activities of organizing Roma in the circles of the Cultural associations, and some years later the Office for nationalities and scarce Romani activists started the activities for political participation of Roma. From the very beginning these activities seemed very promising: on the other hand, the involvement and initiatives from the Gadže<sup>12</sup> part were very strong, and they patronized Roma on the basis of presumption, that they were less developed or badly educated. At the local communities where Roma had not received the support from their members or where Roma were not interested enough to organize them politically, there was a call for an outside intervention.

These actions were stimulated from the part of the state, and also from the Romologists.

At the very beginning I realised that the Romologists were concordant with the state policy, regulating the housing, education, social affairs, health, etc. for the Romani minority: they did not consider important to make a new ethnographies on housing, education and social policy of Roma: they were persuaded, as I was told, that the past was explored enough in 1960 and 1970 by Romologists and on the basis of their findings active minority policy for Roma started.

The main problem was that researchers who cooperated in politics as experts did not reflect state of the art as problematic: According to my knowledge, there were not any anthropologists among them. Scholars did not think in accordance with a paradigm which was brought by engaged anthropology: In the political field where the status of Roma as the ethnic community was being regulated and where programs for well being of Roma were framed there were mainly lawyers and they collaborated at the declarative level: they thought according to the concepts from the Slovenian minority legislation.<sup>13</sup>

Experts from the Slovenian National Question are inclined to the ideological and benevolent writings on strengths of Slovenian ethnic politics and the good will of the Slovenian state. They conducted their studies mainly in their offices, and very rarely in the field. In the best cases they gather their expertises with "professional ethnic representatives" at centralized meetings in local

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<sup>12</sup> This term denote Non-Roma in Romani language in Prekmurje.

<sup>13</sup> This inclination is specificity for the Slovenian National Question. ((This is the literally translation from Slovenian language (slovensko narodnostno vprašanje). I understand its English translation in "ethnicity studies" as misleading since it designates the field of studies, with its' own epistemology and canonical reading)).

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communities of Roma or at several meetings in the capital city. These researchers have not done a long term fieldwork by themselves and they did not do a long term research with the "grassroots" or "common"/"ordinary" people. One of the main weaknesses of their knowledge was the fact that they are inclined to the historicized representations of Roma. Because they did not have close contacts and deep relationships with people from Romani communities, they were short of reflection about the weak points of ethnic politics.

To cut a long story short they did not see the fact, that the Romany policy was based on the Romological pseudo knowledge from the 1960 as problematic<sup>14</sup>.

When the strategy for education of Roma had been prepared there were many educationalists in the working group, one of the main weaknesses was the fact that there were not any anthropologists from the very beginning and that a careful fieldwork about the educational aspirations, their experiences with education, and discrimination in schools among Roma was not conducted. Experts and politicians who accepted decisions based their judgments on the basis of the knowledge, produced from Romologists and then brought to policy

Another problem is that there is a lack of concern in involvement of engaged anthropologists in setting up commission or policies. As far as it is known, there was not any researcher or anthropologists, with my exception, who would do recently intensive fieldwork and participant observation with Roma. According to my information there was only one anthropologist who was expert for ethnicity studies and was chosen for the work in one commission for Roma. That person knew my work well and according to her claims she even recommended me as an anthropologist and expert in anthropology of Roma/Gypsies into the commission, but her proposal was turned down. Besides, her engagement was very short and the expertise of the group was abandoned.

### **Being anthropologically engaged**

I agree with the opinion of Fredrik Barth, expressed in an interview with Borofsky (2001) that "speaking out is much better than only responding to the packages that the political system presents". My last "speaking out" was in the case of the Strojjan Family, when they were removed from their land by the intervention of the state.

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<sup>14</sup> Another fact was that I applied twice or three times at the national research agency for a project of engaged and ethically committed reflection on politics, and on the question, how Roma people see the work of several institutions, but my project proposals were turned down. Some experts from SNQ got the project where they were describing Slovenian ethnic policy for Roma minority from the part of legislation and without any analysis of social processes in local communities and in different institutions.

The Romani family Strojan was expelled from their proper land and moved to a detention centre in Postojna on the 29th October 2006. Local villagers of Ambrus gathered and requested that his family of around 16 adults and 14 children should be resettled and removed from their local community. This happened as a consequence of the supposedly insufferable life and conflicts of Roma and inhabitants of Ambrus, and moreover, with the support of the police, the former Minister of Internal Affairs, Dragutin Mate and also the former Prime Minister Janez Janša. The incident happened after a physical attack: On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2006 a Slovenian homeless man, who lived with Strojans, beat a villager and he was in coma and taken to the hospital. Since there were already strong tensions between the Strojans and the locals, police was not able to protect to the family from the mass of locals who mobilized themselves and who gathered in front of the Strojans site. Instead of being prevented from the physical violence of 200–500 inhabitants of Krka, Ambrus and some other places, the Strojans were displaced and temporarily moved to former refugee centre of Postojna, where they were under the surveillance of criminal police.<sup>15</sup>

The entire family was without delay criminalized by the media, and all of the Strojans, as well as their new born baby, were blamed as being collectively responsible for the alleged crimes and the physical attack on the local man. Over the course of the following days a new location in Dolenjska and latter also in other regions had been sought for the family: municipal council of Ivančna Gorica decided, that the Strojans should not go back to local community and the government of Slovenia decided, that the new site should be found in concordance with inhabitants of local municipality. This decision was considered as highly problematic, since the inhabitants of local communities can decide who is going to settle in their neighbour (cf. Dedić and Kogovšek 2006). Furthermore, people in several parts of Slovenia, not only Dolenjska, organised themselves into the so-called "village guards" and prevented the Strojan family from coming back to their own home. Among other activities "vigilante watches" had been stopping police cars looking to see whether they were secretly transporting the Strojans to a new location. (Janko Spreizer in press).

At this occasion I was directly engaged in public discourses and I spoke for different audiences that were not made up only of anthropologists (cf. Borofsky 2001). When this ethnic riot culminated, I was "discovered" by journa-

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<sup>15</sup> I visited the Strojans for several times and I saw persons who were sitting in a car in front of the Postojna refugees' Centre. I was told by the Bosnian inhabitant of the Centre that the persons are police. After my last visit of the Strojans the police car stopped my Volkswagen Transporter several km from Postojna when I left the Strojans. It was obviously not the coincidence that I was stopped and that the policemen carefully look in the interior of the van.

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lists and I accepted a newspaper interview with Ranka Ivelja, a journalist, after quite long conversation with her. In this interview I was talking about scientific racism and I repeated my thesis which was already published in my book (Janko Spreizer 2002) that Romology itself would need critical reflection, since it contributed to the stereotypes about Roma.

With some other journalists whom I knew personally (Lea Širok) or through my family connections (Slavka Brajković Hajdenkumer) I did extended work. With my friend's partner we conceptualized two different radio emissions: we conducted one interview with my students and one hour radio transmission with me.

On the first we talked about an undergraduate student project of engagement, when students and I visited the Strojans for several times. We report about their living conditions at the former refugee centre. Since students were not sure to talk about racism, we read appeal which was written and published: We appealed for a tolerant attitude to the Roma. Students reported about their public engagement: they read this appeal at the Faculty events Days of humanities in public at the Tito square in Koper, where they distributed leaflets, which were engagedly created under my mentorship. In the emission called Actuality they told the radio audience about the action, which continued up to the Christmas and to the next May, and in which we explained why the event might be racist and we criticized racism. This engagement was not welcomed even among some colleagues of ours: Indicative was the fact that we were blamed by some of student colleagues, lecturers and administration at the faculty that we are discriminative, because we did not collect presents also for the Slovenian children. I personally was attacked by my colleague anthropologist who understood my engagement for civil rights of Roma as that I romanticized criminals (because some members of the Strojans had already had criminal records and they were already known as ex-prisoners) etc.

When students, journalist and I were at the Radio Koper in November 2006, we were told that during our conversation journalist's colleagues and listeners were calling to the redaction and many listeners were impressed by our project of engagement and by the facts from the Romani studies on history and anthropology of Roma.

I also advised to Slavka Brajković Hajdenkumer in her engaged journalism on the TV<sup>16</sup>: she studied ethnicity studies and was deeply aware of the fact of the discrimination of Roma. She was looking for my professional advice to address the public with informed knowledge. She constantly consulted me and

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<sup>16</sup> I also replied on two invitations for a book review at the TV broadcasts (with Dražen Dragojevič and Katja Šulc): First we discussed the Isabel Fonseca book. At the second broadcast we discussed *The Untouchables* by Feri Lainšček, where I deconstructed the myth about the Gypsy non-work and about the promiscuous Gypsy women.

with the support of my knowledge about anthropological writing she was able to show the racist attitudes of some local politicians, who at that time, intended to start urbanizing the spaces where Roma lived. Consequently, Roma would be removed from their settlements. With my help she was able to deconstruct ideological notion of the Spanish integration model for Roma: this model was celebrated as one of the most successful models. On the basis of scholar's article she described the weakness of Spanish integration policies which in fact contributed to isolation and marginalisation on Gypsies (cf Gay y Blasco 2003).<sup>17</sup>

When the violence in Ambrus outbroke I accepted also an invitation from ambitious and sensible teachers of the Grammar School in Ptuj and I prepared a lecture for the forth class of pupils about the discrimination of Roma in Slovenian society on the case of the Strojan family. It was a speech about the anthropological vocation and the criticism of representation stereotypic images of Roma as Indian nomads, since in Slovenia the majority was sedentarized in 18<sup>th</sup> century by the enlightened emperor Maria Theresa. I explained them why I considered some reactions of public as racist, and on the case of the word Gypsy in Slovenian dictionary I showed them how racism is structuralized in the Slovenian language.

I contributed to a round table which was tributed to International Romani Day, and I advised to organisers (Ralf Čeplak Mencin) to invite some critical and yet engaged Romani activists, such as Darko Rudaš and Nataša Brajdič, at the Slovenian Ethnographic Museum where we chose to discuss actual events of racial discrimination, ethnic riots, sedentaristic exclusion and the role of stereotypic knowledge about Roma. At this occasion we did not celebrate "ancient myths" and folkloristic representation of Roma as "ancient Indian nomads". At the same occasion there was a press conference on behalf of Slovenian translation of Isabel's Fonseca book "Bury me standing" and I dared to criticize her misrepresentation of Romani history and stereotypes about Roma culture. I openly reacted publicly on romanticized introduction of the book where it was said that Roma are living outside the history and that they are careless wanderers. I intervened with the explanations that "nomadism" is in many cases stimulated by forced displacement: Since Roma were presented as peoples without history I underlined the fact that Roma has their history

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<sup>17</sup> Her concise criticism deconstructed political demagogy and made local politician substantially nervous. Finally she was threatened by Ljubljana's mayor that he was going to prosecute her after she challenged differential racism and asked him, on the press conference on urbanisation of Ljubljana's Romani settlement, why Roma were considered as so extremely different from the rest of Slovenians. Consequently to mayor's threat, and as a freelance journalist, she lost her work at the Ljubljana local Radio station. Finally she was disappointed about the non-response from the part of Roma and she stopped working on this topic.

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which is orally transmitted and could be told when someone spend a long time with them. Latter I talk to the person who uttered the above mentioned misconception of history and she regretted to be undereducated about Roma. I a private conversation I told her not to take my intervention exclusively personally since the misrecognition of Roma is a structural feature of the Slovenian majority. I advised her to consult scholars who studied Gypsies or Roma. And at the beginning of the new school year I had noticed her in the classroom of last year's anthropology students at the University of Ljubljana.

### Conclusion

Within these media and round table activities my intention was not "popularization of anthropology": With popularization of the anthropology I would take a risk in representation of imaginary about Roma on the one side and of romanticised fantasy about the anthropological vocation. Instead of explaining complex concepts from anthropology of Gypsy such as pollution code is or gender based roles are I decided to openly speak about the Slovenian mainstream and scientific racism from the part of some public, role of Romologists and the Slovenian National Question scholars. For several times I underlined the fact, that the lack of reflexivity in the relationship amongst Roma and non-Roma in several local communities in Slovenia is extremely problematic in the time of crisis, when racism escalates. When I appealed that scholars should start to rethink their own role in reproduction of stereotypes I took a risk for criticism from the part of scholars who are inclined more to the tyranny of the state than to the critical reflexive thoughts. I did not expect that my explanation and intervention would be accepted within scholarship or more laic public. I took my risk because I was persuaded that the explanation of the principles of racial domination (Wacquant 1997) is one the most important tasks of engagement within anthropology.

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**ANGAŽMAN NA EKSPERTSKOM ANTROPOLOŠKOM  
ZNANJU O CIGANIMA**

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**Ključne reči:** Cigani, Romi, romologija, romski studiji, socijalna antropologija Cigana, angažovana antropologija, javna antropologija.