



Communication as Performance and the Performativity of Communication

Bernhard Kils. "Aerial View of Münster." Wikimedia Commons. August 27, 2009. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Muenster_Innenstadt.jpg

Proceedings of the 2014 International Colloquium on Communication

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Aesthetic Resistance against Antiziganism Using the Example of Roma Theatres

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“Ich glaube, dass Literatur und Kunst Humanisierungsmittel sind...” (Heinrich Böll)

Aesthetic Resistance – Performance Art against Antiziganism

“Antiziganism – what’s in a word?” was the title of a conference which took place in Uppsala, Sweden in October 2013. Three very intense days of discussion about the right terms or words to define discrimination against so-called Gypsies did not produce a general answer. The controversially discussed term antiziganism (ZIMMERMAN 2007) competed against terms like antigypsyismus, antiromanismus, and racism against Roma or even Romaphobia. Terms differ from context to context – socially, nationally, internationally, and culturally. – and most terms are not based on scientific research. This has to do with the fact that scientific research about the discrimination against “Sinti and Roma” is a rather new discipline. There are a few exceptions from the late 1960s and early 1970s, but broadly speaking systematic research was not introduced until the late 1980s. At that time, political, social and civil rights movements formed all over Europe, claiming equal rights for “Sinti and Roma.” Since then scientific research about the definition for the group of people who suffer from this certain kind of hostility has been published and the topic “Sinti and Roma” has replaced the pejorative term “Zigeuner” in Germany. There are variants in different languages like “Roma” in Eastern European states, “Gypsies” in American English, “Balkan-Egyptians” as a self-designated name of a small group, differing as well from the term “Zigeuner” as from “Sinti and Roma” or from Ashkali in Kosovo (MARUSHIAKOVA & POPOV 2001). These terms are based on the common view that the former use of the term “Zigeuner” was discriminatory and belonged to Nazi-jargon. The German concept “Sinti and Roma” has a long history connected, on the one hand, to linguistic research to find a politically correct term. On the other hand, the victims of World War II began to demand reparations for the Roma genocide. Reparations were refused because authorities denied the racist reasons for the murder of more than 500,000 so called “Zigeuner” (GOSCHLER 2005, 194). Some relatives of victims from the group of “Sinti and Roma” are still waiting for reparations (STENGEL 2004). The chairman of the German Zentralrat deutscher “Sinti und Roma,” ROMANI ROSE says that the refusal of reparations for the surviving victims of the group “Sinti and Roma” by the German State prevented the

formation of cultural and educational structures for genocide survivors (ROSE 1987, 83). This means that they face disadvantages as well concerning education and housing as well as in social life in general. Indeed, only a few “Sinti and Roma” could begin university studies (85). ROMANI ROSE is one of the leading figures of the “Sinti and Roma” civil rights movement. He belongs to the group of “Sinti.” The group of “Sinti” is said to be bigger than the group of “Roma” in Germany and, therefore, “Sinti” is put in first place in the discussion of “Sinti and Roma.” In my paper, I will use inverted commas to emphasize that “Sinti and Roma,” “Sinti,” “Roma” and any other umbrella terms are fictionally constructed (BOGDAL 2011, 15; EDER-JORDAN 1999, 51). Such terms can never suit everybody and have to be seen always in their respective contexts. It is the same with the word antiziganism, which has been disputed since it was first mentioned in the 1980s (ZIMMERMANN 2007). Despite this, I use it to examine performances against these racist atrocities.

What is the current state of play of antiziganism in Europe and Germany? Right-wing populist parties and their agenda dominate more and more public discussions and media coverage, both in Europe and elsewhere, for example, in the U.S. (WODAK & RICHARDSON 2013). Traditional values and norms are - sometimes unnoticed, often intended - changed; parties with fascist and a Nazi past reach into the mainstream. Security thinking legitimizes exclusion; the “Fortress Europe” also takes on material form, for example, by building new walls (as in Greece or Spain). Let’s have a look at some recent examples. Last year, MARKUS END published his report about current antiziganism in Germany: “Antiziganismus in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit.” He researches the influence of German media on the maintenance of antiziganistic practices. One interesting aspect of his study is that the stereotypes, prejudices and stigmas concerning the word “Zigeuner” are nowadays in Germany and other European countries completely substituted by the word Roma (2014, 16). He demonstrates that media coverage in general still use stereotypes in an undifferentiated kind of way to inspire certain feelings. This is especially the case in terms of the public debates about migrants who came to Germany from Rumania and Bulgaria due to the convention of free movement of workers which was established in Europe at the beginning of 2014. Media coverage affected the image of “Roma” who came to Germany to find work (117f.). He emphasizes that antiziganism is a big part of German society and it characterizes all social areas, ages and professions. According to his study, antiziganism belongs to daily life and a survey even confirmed this.

Denn wir leben in einer Gesellschaft, in der Antiziganismus weiterhin in allen Schichten, Altersgruppen und Professionen vorhanden ist, in der antiziganistische Darstellungen eher die Regel und antiziganistische Wahrnehmungsmuster eher Konsens sind als Ausnahmeerscheinungen, und in der verschiedenen Umfragen zufolge ca. die Hälfte der Bevölkerung offen antiziganistische Aussagen unterstützt (END 2014, 284).

Against this background, the central question that motivates this paper is: Can art change society? To discuss this question, I analyze whether art can be an effective political gesture outside the context of the art world using the example of art by “Sinti and Roma.” Can performance art be considered a tool that remains sensitive to the

problematic of “Sinti and Roma” in social life? I illustrate these questions with two examples. First, I portray the artist-led initiative called “Romathan” that became engaged in responding to antiziganism in Europe. I chose the genre theater to analyze the effects of performance art by “Sinti and Roma” because “Sinti and Roma” theaters are up-to-date and are quite famous in Europe. Second, I show how far an affected community responded to atrocities by applying the tool of art using the example of Cologne’s Rom e.V. Using the example of Roma culture projects, I demonstrate the staging of an unbalanced interplay between external and self- attributions. First, I define the term aesthetic resistance, referring to linguistic and literary theories. I connect those with theses by GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK (2014) and HOMI K. BHABHA (2007,1994) to bring discussions about the current situation of “Sinti and Roma” into a postcolonial context.

Aesthetic Resistance – Performance Art against Antiziganism

What we usually have in mind when we talk about aesthetic resistance (“ästhetischer Widerstand”) are artists or writers who worked against former colonial languages like artists in Francophone or Anglophone countries in Africa (OFUATEY-ALAZARD 2011). According to SCHMELING (2004), one medium in which to perform aesthetic resistance is the mixing of languages. However, to define mixing languages as a medium of aesthetic resistance in art does not mean that monolingualism is the norm (SCHMELING & SCHMITZ-EMANS 2002; SCHMELING 200). Monolingualism is more likely to be recognized in a time when English has become a dominant world language of commerce, scholarship and art. It is actually discussed whether monolingualism in art is a by-gone “paradigm” or not (YILDIZ 2012, 1). Yet colonial perspectives imply the conception of language as a possession of a nation. Though, how does this concept work concerning languages without a nation, which is also known as “the utopian promise of a “language without soil” (204)? This is why anti-colonial writers and writers of aesthetic resistance not only mix the colonial languages French and English, but also regional and local languages like Kurdish, Wolof, South African languages, and Hebrew etc. It is the same with the language of “Sinti and Roma,” the so-called Romanes. Romanes exists without a country or nation of “Sinti and Roma.”

Analyses dealing with multilingualism coincide with questions about the term Muttersprache or mother tongue as well as with the topic bilingualism (GÜNTHER & GÜNTHER 2004). I follow SKUTNABB-KANGAS’S definition (1990) of mother tongue as a language which a person learns first through his/her parents. Mother tongues can change and can be measured at the level of command. In contrast stands the second language of bilingual speakers as the lingua franca of the community in which the speakers of another language live (BOURAS 2006). Multilingualism is, on the one hand, defined as language that is spoken at the level of the mother tongue. On the other hand, multilingualism is understood as the mastery of a foreign language. “Sinti and Roma” are supposed to speak at least two languages because they lack a community that can only speak Romanes. “Sinti and Roma” generally speak a variation of Romanes and the language of the country in which they live, which I call social language. A member of the group of “Sinti and Roma,” who grows up in Germany, therefore, speaks at least German and Romanes, but it depends on the very individual situation whether the Romanes of the social language can be defined as a mother tongue. The focus of this

paper is on how this relationship between Romanes and social language can be performed in art. Concerning literature, the following understanding of multilingualism can be useful for the general definition of multilingualism in art:

Sondern mein Verständnis von Multilingualität in der Literatur zielt auf Produktionen, die innerhalb der materiellen Grenzen eines abgeschlossenen Textes, sei es implizit oder explizit, zwei- und mehrsprachig sind. Implizit ist diese Mehrsprachigkeit dann, wenn eine bestimmte Vermittlungssprache lexikalisch durchgehend dominiert, jedoch Wirkungen sprachlicher Fremdbestimmtheit zumindest strukturell ablesbar sind (SCHMELING 2004, 222).

According to SCHMELING (2004, 222), multilingualism is defined as language switching that has effects on the whole text whereas a different language dominates the text. So this switching of languages has certain functions which have to do with the general individual, social, cognitive and emotional functions of language. In terms of art by “Sinti and Roma,” the following question is relevant for further analysis: “What is the relationship between language and identity today?” (YILDIZ 2012, 203) YILDIZ contends that the relationship between a mother tongue and social language can be very ambivalent and that this ambivalence has effects on art:

The “mother tongue” can be a site of alienation and disjuncture, as German was for Kafka; it can be the medium of chauvinist expulsion from, and endogamous self-enclosure into, identity (Adorno); the “mother tongue” can be experienced as enforcing a limiting, suffocating inclusion (Tawada) as well as being a carrier of state violence (Özdamar) and social abjection (Zaimoğlu) (204).

More than 3.5 millions of people speak Romanes the so-called Romani Chib (MATRAS 2003, 231). Romanes is nowhere established as an official language and there is no nation of “Sinti and Roma.” Romanes is not a standard literary language and the language lacks a standard orthography. Teaching material and media in Romanes are rarities. It cannot be denied that some “Sinti and Roma” believe that *their* language has to be protected. The cultural and literary creativity of “Sinti and Roma” has either been marginalized or unappreciated for a long time (MALVINNI 2004). Indeed in terms of analyzing the connection between arts and antiziganism, we mostly talk about art by non-“Romani” artists, which, in turn, shaped the present social image of “Sinti and Roma” in Germany (MAPPES-NIEDIEK 2012). So why should speakers of the Romanes believe that it makes sense to be understood by speakers of another language in the communities in which they live? Several members of the “Sinti and Roma” civil right movement of the 1980’s tried to establish Romanes as a literary language to form a common symbol of identity (260). “Sinti and Roma” artists write and perform for a wider audience so it would not be useful to use a language which few people understand. The only way to refer to the “Sinti and Roma” identity, therefore, is the aesthetic mixing of languages in form of multilingual art. The ambivalent conflict, which the “Sinti and Roma” are challenging by writing, is the topic of the following quote:

Konkret bedeutet dies die Öffnung eines kulturellen Rückzugsraumes, der bis in die Gegenwart für Sinti und Roma überlebensnotwendig ist, weil er, eingedenk ihrer Erfahrungen, bislang als einziger Ort ihr kollektives Gedächtnis und ihre Geschichtlichkeit beheimatet hat (LAURÉ AL-SAMARAI 2008, 107).

This quote makes clear that the art of “Sinti and Roma” is in a constant struggle between creating and protecting one’s own culture and making this culture accessible to a broader audience. Therefore, we can analyze “Sinti and Roma” art against the background of postcolonial theories. LAURÉ AL SAMARAI (2008) turns our attention to the similarities between “Sinti and Roma” and “Black Germans” in Germany. She begins her essay with Germany’s expulsion of its colonial history and responsibility (89). Then, she includes the “Sinti and Roma” in Germany’s “Communities of *people of color*” and connects the present situation of “Black Germans” with current politics concerning “Sinti and Roma” (92). For her, one connection lies within the fact that both groups do not take part in debates about migration (“Migrationsdebatten,”93).

Admittedly, she writes that the “Sinti and Roma” have not been colonized in a traditional way and are not considered in postcolonial perspectives but she points out that for both groups a kind of non-relationship (“*Nicht-Beziehung*”, 93) with the German majority exists and is politically wanted. To strengthen her thesis, LAURÉ AL SAMARAI (2008) mentions that the Zentralrat deutscher Sinti und Roma supported the protest movement against an exhibition with the title “*Besondere Kennzeichen: Neger. Schwarze im NS*,” which was located in Cologne in 2002. This exhibition was harshly criticized by members of the ISD (Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland/ the Initiative of Black People in Germany) because it showed the history of black people in Germany in an offensive way from a white perspective (CLAUSSEN 2006). Indeed, this connection between the political and social movement of “Black Germans” and “Sinti and Roma” in Germany cannot be denied. As I pointed out previously, most of the works dealing with “Sinti and Roma” history and culture are produced by non-“Sinti and Roma.” In this context, SPIVAK’s (2014) question “Can the subaltern speak?” becomes relevant. Her text is so important in the context of “Sinti and Roma” literature because there are certain parallels between SPIVAK’s subalterns and the “Sinti and Roma.” SPIVAK asks several times for the voice of the subaltern (93). To expose her search, she gives the well-known example of the “widow sacrifice” which shows the system that lies beyond the speaking from all perspectives except the perspective of the subject, in this case the widow. On the one hand, colonial speakers interpret the abolition of the widow sacrifice as an act of rescue and, on the other hand, the “Indian nativist argument” sees an act of paternalism. There is no historical source that represents the “voice” of the concerned women. Here is the connection between SPIVAK’s theory and “Sinti and Roma” art and culture: Germany and even Europe lack sources that represent the voices of “Sinti and Roma.” Against the background of SPIVAK’s “Can the subaltern speak?,” one must admit that this lack is there because the subaltern are speechless due to the dominant Western system.

The application of SPIVAK’s theory to questions concerning art by “Sinti and Roma” becomes even more interesting when RANDJELOVIČ (2007) raises the term “Unsichtbarmachung” (making invisible) (266). The “Unsichtbarmachung” describes the prevention of using one’s voice as a passive act. Somebody or something makes the

voices invisible. RANDJELOVIČ tries to find a way: “Wie wir die Geschichten von Menschen, die nie zu den offiziellen Geschichtsschreiber/-innen gehörten, sichtbar machen können“ (267). Written in SPIVAK’s terms, RANDJELOVIČ searches for ways to let the so called subalterns speak for themselves and not for others. By the way, RANDJELOVIČ is explicitly against a reconstruction of one “Roma”-identity. Aesthetic resistance, thus, can be seen as an effort to enter the “scene of power” (SPIVAK 1988, 71) and to make the voices of “Sinti and Roma” visible.

Now, I want to turn the attention to such efforts. In the following discussion, I show examples of “Sinti and Roma” arts using the previously discussed aesthetic forms and I devote attention to the question whether this art can influence society. First, I introduce the Slovakian theater Romathan. Second, I introduce the artist led association called Rom e.V., which is located in Cologne.

Romathan - Košice, Slovakia

It is just by chance that RANDJELOVIČ begins her essay with the reminiscence of Panna Czinka who was a famous violin player in a region of 18th century’s Hungary, which is now Slovakia. She belonged to the group of “Roma” and included herself in that group. In contrast to Germany, she is relatively notable in Slovakia. The history of “Sinti and Roma” in Eastern Europe shows how long the expulsion and suppression of “Sinti and Roma” culture and identity has taken place. As the Archduke of Austria and the Queen of Hungary, Maria Theresia implemented a policy of forced assimilation for the “Sinti and Roma” (BRIEL 1989, 14; PATRUT & UERLINGS 2007, 44). This policy is known as a first strike to settle the so called “Zigeuner” in a fixed residence, to forbid them to speak their own language, to follow their professions, to travel etc. Furthermore, their children were taken away to educate them in households of the dominant society (BRIEL 1989; RANDJELOVIČ 2007). It is now clear that Slovakia’s “Sinti and Roma” policy can be described as racist and segregating.

Let us now turn our attention to the present situation and focus on contemporary art by the “Sinti and Roma” in Slovakia, using the example of the professional theatre in Slovakia called “Romathan.” The current situation of the “Roma” in Slovakia can be described as follows. The Czech Republic has had the worst marginalization of Roma since the breakdown of communism (CROWE 2008). This is one reason for the mass migration of “Roma” to Slovakia. During a very short period of time from 1989 to 1993, the “Roma” population doubled in size in Slovakia. This migration led to several problems, which the “Roma” suffer from today in Slovakia. The first challenge the “Roma” had to overcome was housing. Several “Roma” families moved to Lunik (which means district) IX in former flats of senior members of the Slovakian communist party who had to leave their flats between 1989 and 1993. According to ZIMMERMAN (1996), entire “Roma” families moved into those relatively new apartments in Slovakia and this led to resentment by non-“Roma” residents. To get the “Roma” out of town, the “Roma” living in Kosice were resettled to Lunik IX. The non-“Roma,” who were still living in Lunik IX, left their flats due to this mass resettlement. What followed was that Lunik IX was no longer of interest to the city council; the “Roma” were forgotten as long as they stayed out of town. A process of ghettoisation began in which the “Roma” children were excluded from school and adults were refused access to work permits.

Romathan is Romanes for “Land of the Roma.” Its conception is unique because the actors, musicians and singers belong to the group of “Sinti and Roma” and they consider themselves part of this group. It is part of their concept to cast young “Roma” from ghettos to include them to their theater. “Romathan” was founded in 1992 and has produced more than 44 plays and revues since then (cf. <http://roma-und-sinti.kwikk.info>). The theatre has its own orchestra. It plays classical and modern pieces of Roma and non-Roma authors in Romanes and in the language of the country where the performance takes place. They also perform for children. What is special about the theatre is that they have their own building. The theatre house is in Kosice, which was the cultural capital of Europe in 2013. This honor led to a higher awareness level of and popularity for “Romathan.” The performances take place on the fifth floor of an old building, which is not accessible by the way. On the way upstairs, one can look at an exhibition that shows the theatre’s history. I mention this staircase because it brought BHABHA’s metaphor of the staircase to my mind:

The stairwell as luminal space, in-between the designators of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy (1994, 4).

This means that art as aesthetic resistance has to be seen against the background of the differences between the performers of this art and the political and social hierarchies surrounding the scene. In the metaphor of the “stairwell,” the hierarchic differences are visible and, therefore, people moving on this staircase are aware of these differences. The awareness of hierarchies, which might connect to certain “privilege[s]” in the sense of SPIVAK (1988, 91), is one possibility to “unlearn” these “privileges” and to create room for equality. “Romathan” travels through Europe and enters different political and social settings. Unfortunately, there is no European country in which the “Sinti and Roma” are full accepted. All the different European countries have a common sense attitude against the “Roma.” The central question then becomes: how might “Romathan” affect social and political actions against antiziganism? The answer is ambivalent because “Romathan” shows that there is an unbalanced interplay between self-attribution and the fictive image of “Gypsies.” In this context, I use the word “Gypsies” because this term is more likely to be imagined in the context of typical attributes like beautiful, wild or exotic women, travelling, horses, wide skirts etc. The female and male actors of “Romathan” appear in this typical dress. The women wear beautiful patchwork dresses with skirts that seem to fly when they are dancing. One can see a lot of the skin of the dancing women, who wear a lot of jewelry and other decorations on their bodies. The men wear traditional clothes and communicate a folklore style. They all have bronzed skin, which is extensively painted on their bodies. All this stereotypical appearance leads to the fact that one can say that “Romathan” theatre performs a cliché and, therefore, denigrates equal opportunity for “Sinti and Roma.” Broadly speaking, I disagree with this view

because one has to discriminate between a stereotypical performance by non-“Sinti and Roma” and by artists who call themselves “Sinti and Roma.” The performance of “Romathan” can be interpreted as a metaphor for the “Öffnung eines kulturellen Rückzugsraumes“ (opening a closed room, where one’s own culture is protected) (LAURÉ AL-SAMARAI 2008, 107). “Romathan” performs without special stage designs. They dance either on stage or directly in the audience. Depending on the audience’s motivation, they dance with the audience and include the spectators in their dance. The audience has to first learn the dance. Everybody knows the awkward feeling when an actor picks one out of the audience to involve him or her in the play. The actors of “Romathan” are experts in that interactive play. They open their folklore-like performance to teach others how to dance their dance and are on par with the spectators. One can say that this mirrors the lack of inclusion of “Sinti and Roma” art works into the respective “Leitkultur.” Furthermore, I am very much inclined to endorse the assumption that “Romathan” can be seen as a performance against antiziganism because “Romathan” tries to stay at the level of performance. They do not say that they perform the one and only “Roma” culture and there is no effort to bring about a sense of identity of a common “Roma” culture. In their dancing and their singing, they broach the issue of expulsion, suppression and genocide in aesthetic ways.

Rom e.V. Cologne

Since 1986, Rome e.V. works for the human and civil rights of “Sinti and Roma.” Their office is in Cologne where a youth centre, a school for “Sinti and Roma” and a multifunction room are situated. The foundation of Rom e.V. took place when hundreds of “Roma” refugees from Yugoslavia sought refuge in Cologne. Since then, many Cologners have joined “Roma” activists to build an organization and they work every day there with fellow citizens, authorities and volunteers. Their common purpose is to make “Sinti and Roma” topics visible and to have their voices heard (<https://www.romev.de/>). If you explore the documentation center, which hosts an archive and a library at Rom e.V., you will find several shelves with works including the voices of “Sinti and Roma.” The collection contains handwritten texts across all formats in different European languages as well as printed books by “Sinti and Roma” and unpublished manuscripts. Most impressive to me are the handwritten poems. Some of them deal directly with the problems of the “in-between” and some raise completely different contexts. Most of the poems are anonymous, but some of them are signed with a name, like the following which is signed by FRANCESCA:

Spiel, Zigeuner, spiel ein Lied! Spiel mit etwas vor!
Lass der süßen Töne Zauber träufeln in mein Ohr!
Erzähle mir mit deiner Geige von der weiten Welt!
Erzähle mir auf deine Weis‘ von Liebe, Macht und Geld!

Spiel, Zigeuner, spiel ein Lied von deinen vielen Reisen!
Du, der du gekostet hast so viel vom Trank der Weisen.
Erzähle mir vom grünen Wald, von Tälern und von Flüssen!
Beschreibe mir dein innigst Trieb vom Weiterziehen müssen!

Hey, Zigeuner, was sagst du, was man dir angetan?
Dass man immer dich verfolgt und dir ganz Kinder nahm?
Hey, Zigeuner, hör doch auf, das hat's nie gegeben!
Auf unsrer schönen, weiten Welt dürfen alle leben.

Sag, Zigeuner, regst dich auf? – Sei einfach wie die andern!
Musst auch was Gscheid'res tun als ständig rumzuwandern!
Du solltest leben so wie wir! Nur WIR machen es richtig!
Wir wissen alles ganz genau, sind unermesslich wichtig!

Hey, Zigeuner, wo bist du? Ich kann dich nicht mehr sehen!
Wie schlecht erzogen sind sie doch, so einfach fortzugehen!
Ja, Undank ist der Welten Lohn! Das kommt vom Helfenwollen!
Was kümmern mich Zigeuner schon, hätt' sie verzeigen¹ sollen
(WENGER 1996, 11).

The poem can be found in the archive in form of a copy of a handwritten paper. It has been published together with other copies in the volume “Pro Jenische” in 1996. Rom e.V. works together with actors who include themselves in the group of “Sinti and Roma” such as Nedjo Osman. In cooperation with Nedjo Osman, Rom e.V. performed the life of light heavyweight world champion Johann Willhelm “Rukeli” Trollmann. His championship title was revoked by the Nazis in 1933 eight days after he had won the match (WIEGHAUS 2012). Rukeli was murdered in a Nazi concentration camp. The play was performed in March 2015 during Munich's theater days. Rom e.V. serves as educational tool, informing people about the exclusion of and genocide directed against the “Sinti and Roma.” Rom e.V. offers advice concerning questions focusing on Roma social life, housing, etc. Germans, as well as people who call themselves “Sinti and Roma,” belong to the staff. They can offer help with translations in several languages and are a contact point for refugees and migrants. Rom e.V.'s efforts are highly affected by an educational mandate. After the Cologne Council decided to establish an educational option for “Roma” refugee children in Cologne in 2004, Rom e.V. developed a school model “Amaro Kher” (Our House). The intentions of Rom e.V. are based on the idea of empowerment: well-trained “Roma” work together with well-trained Germans. “Roma,” who recently come to Germany, appreciate that they can find a contact person at Rom e.V. who understands their needs and speaks the same language in linguistic and institutional ways. Within the school model, a network of social services, educational authorities and cooperation with regular schools, youth facilities and refugee organizations was built. Teachers and social workers at Amaro Kher work hand-in-hand with the parents of the children and try to organize an adequate school education for children from refugee camps, considering their difficult living conditions (www.romev.de/amaro-kher-unser-haus-familienzentrum-und-schulprojekt-fuer-roma-kinder/).

One of Rom e.V.'s leading figures is Jovan Nikolič, who is a writer from Serbia who came to Germany after the NATO bombardements. He is the author of several novels. He writes in Serbian and Romanes and joins in the translation process. His efforts and

¹ anzeigen: to bring charge into so.

works are part of my dissertation project in which I analyze literature of the “Sinti and Roma.”

These examples prove that the “Sinti and Roma” are taking actions against antiziganism. Both Romathan theatre and Rom e.V. point to their history and make their voices heard. The two examples are similar in the way that they do not allow others to speak for them. Furthermore, both do not speak for others. I recognized several events in Rom e.V. where scientists, politicians, artist etc., who do not belong to the group of “Sinti and Roma,” were invited and tried to make Rom e.V. speak for them. Every time I was there, “Roma” (mainly women) stopped this misunderstanding about working together. All this points to the fact that both examples support a view that the arts can be used against antiziganism. Understanding one’s own privilege in the sense of SPIVAK (1988) can help reveal that “Sinti and Roma” initiatives or artists challenge the position that one has to speak louder than the rest to be heard. Art against antiziganism by the “Sinti and Roma” can make a great contribution to abolishing antiziganism. This way of aesthetic resistance shows how important the equality of art works is in achieving political equality.

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