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6 Dynamics of Recognition: Minority Ethnic Access to Transformative Power in the Nordic Welfare State

6.1 Introduction

Groups facing social injustice have rather successfully addressed issues of access to public institutions and policy-making, as well as to various welfare services. Hegemonic cultures and institutional practices themselves have, nevertheless, remained relatively uncontested. Newman and Clarke (2009) call for an increasing acknowledgment of the distinction between citizenship as expansive and citizenship as transformative, where the latter is concerned with challenging the social, political and cultural orders and the larger architectures of inequality and subordination.

In this article I turn to the notion of citizenship as being closely linked to its political-institutional context and to human agency. I assume that we need to open up for topological analyses of the various ways in which minority ethnic agency is enacted in particular localities in order to explore the contestation and challenging of hegemonic power structures in contemporary societies. I am particularly concerned with the ways in which the political-institutional framework enables or constrains citizenship agency and, subsequently, access to transformative power. The research draws on the social category of Northern European Roma and Travellers, faced by a long history of oppression. It aims at highlighting the ways in which a legacy of misrecognition interlinks with certain patterns of participation in a certain cultural and political-institutional context. Empirically, it uses interview data from a study on Finnish Roma activists, contextualised with a discussion on politics targeted to Roma and Travellers in Sweden and Norway.

The theoretical point of departure is the redistribution-recognition divide in citizenship, most notably Nancy Fraser's two-dimensional conceptualisation of justice and her more recent emphasis on political representation as an additional dimension to those of cultural and economic disadvantage (Fraser 2008). Whereas the welfare state has been reasonably successful in reducing poverty and socio-economic injustice at the level of social class, it is increasingly being debated whether minority ethnic groups are equally included in an ethos of egalitarianism (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012; Kivisto and Wahlbeck 2013; Kvist, Fritzell, Hvinden and Kangas 2012). This paper argues that a strengthening of the recognition paradigm of citizenship in the mature Nordic Welfare States is precondition for an all-citizens-encompassing, participatory egalitarianism. Firstly, I will outline the (mis)recognition paradigm of social justice and its transformative potential, that is, its relation to acts of citizenship by individuals and groups in their efforts to make change. Secondly, drawing on in-depth qualitative Roma activist interviews,

I emphasise the value of researching the lived citizenship of people when we want to understand of the complex nature of agency and subordination in contemporary welfare states. Finally, exploring policy-making targeted to Roma and Travellers in Finland, Sweden and Norway, I discuss the ways different trajectories of nation-state building have shaped differentiated political claims-making practices and outcomes for misrecognised groups.

6.2 Recognition of social injustice

Nancy Fraser has, for two decades, worked on the development of a normative theory of justice. She initially departed from a dualist framework which allowed for analysing the position of subordinated groups with regard to the redistribution of material resources, as well as the recognition of difference. Her argument was that we need to acknowledge the intersection of recognition and redistribution in our analyses of social injustice (Fraser 1995). To focus on the counteraction of stigma is, for example, not enough as long as publicly raised stereotypes about unemployed ethnic minorities reflect an actual structural disadvantage. Ruth Lister has showed how the recognition paradigm is helpful for understanding the contemporary politics of poverty, usually associated with redistribution (Lister 2004; also Parekh 2004). Nevertheless, starting in the 1990s, there was a strong tendency towards a cultural turn in politics as well as in theoretical debates (Taylor 1994; Kymlicka 1995). The shift from a socio-economic to a cultural paradigm of justice has given rise to critique against a politics of recognition which sees group-specific justice claims primarily as self-realisation.

Fraser was also critical to the ways in which the recognition paradigm was linked to identity politics. She subsequently suggested a distinction between affirmative and transformative approaches to a politics of recognition. While affirmative approaches seek to valorise devalued identities, transformative approaches seek to transform the symbolic order (Fraser 1995; see also Newman and Clarke 2009). Later Fraser more explicitly conceptualised her view as a 'status' model of recognition (Fraser 2000) and elaborated her thinking in exchanges with Axel Honneth, Iris Marion Young and Judith Butler (Fraser 1997; Young 1997; Butler 1998; Fraser and Honneth 2003).

According to Fraser, recognition is to be understood as a normative concept referring to respect, social status and the absence of cultural domination. The lack of recognition is subsequently a *systematic and institutionalised* form of status subordination, constituting a form of oppression. Fraser calls for a 'parity of participation', recognising all social actors as full partners in social interaction, able to participate 'as peers' (Fraser 2003: 28). Fraser is very clear in her view that recognition is a response to social injustice and not to a generic human need. Nevertheless, different contexts and cases of subordination require different remedies

to promote status equality and participatory parity. Some forms of misrecognition, related to denying the common humanity of social actors, require a universalist form of recognition, that people are ‘unburdened of excessive ascribed or constructed differences’. When misrecognition is about denying the distinctiveness of certain social actors, they may indeed need recognition of their unacknowledged differences. Social actors may also request a deconstruction of ‘the very terms in which attributed differences are currently elaborated’ (Fraser 2003: 45-47).

Whereas a plurality of approaches needs to be developed and implemented in a politics of recognition, a focus on structural subordination will arguably always require an analytical gaze which acknowledges the importance of power and agency. Absence of cultural domination is essential for transformative citizenship, yet remains a passive rather than active commitment to power redistribution in the polity. The normative demand for absence of cultural domination thus needs to be accompanied by an active commitment to redistribution not solely of socio-economic goods but also of power relations.

6.3 Institutional and cultural constraints to agency

The ways in which people effectively can participate in claims-making practices subsequently become fundamental for enhancing social change. Minority ethnic groups are not to be understood as objects of oppressive practices and structures, but as potentially active subjects engaging in an array of encounters with other social actors (Isin and Nielsen 2008). The focus on agency is arguably manifold. Critical welfare state researchers have brought attention to the current shift in welfare policy from a normative emphasis on structural equality to the objects or subjects of policies themselves. This shift has featured a stronger emphasis on notions of exclusion, inclusion, empowerment and social cohesion, i.e. to the individual (Kettunen 2011). As was discussed in the previous section, a politics of recognition should be seen as a response to systematic and institutionalised forms of inequality and injustice to be considered legitimate; agency and participation should then also be discussed in relation to inequalities of representation and voice rather than as an independent welfare policy aim *per se*.

Iris Marion Young (2000) makes a normative argument about the democratic inclusion of people from a broad range of social positions in decision-making. She is critical to the fact that some proponents of deliberative democracy tend to privilege argumentative forms of communication, assuming order and consensus (Young 2000). In developing a democratic society, there is a need to attend to socially differentiated positions and perspectives in decision-making. Individuals have ‘particular knowledge that arises from experience in their social positions’. The inclusion and recognition of such knowledge is important ‘not only as a means of demonstrating equal respect and to ensure that all legitimate interests in the polity

receive expression', but also to motivate participants to transform their claims from expressions of self-interest to appeals to justice, as well as to maximise the 'social knowledge available to a democratic public, such that citizens are more likely to make just and wise decisions' (Young 2004: 25-26).

Nevertheless, hegemonic cultures and institutions structure people's possibilities to act as citizens. Young distinguishes exclusion from decision-making as external and/or internal exclusion. By external exclusion she refers to the lacking access to fora for decision-making, including political domination by the socially and economically powerful. By internal exclusion she refers to instances whereby others ignore, dismiss or patronise ones statements and expressions. Internal exclusion demonstrates how people 'lack effective opportunity to influence the thinking of others even when they have access to fora and procedures of decision-making' (Young 2000: 55).

James Tully (2005) has also made a useful contribution to the understanding of different forms of exclusion from the public sphere. He shows how political exclusion and political assimilation work together to block processes of citizenisation in which citizens can deliberate freely over different shared and contested rules of recognition and distribution. With relations of exclusion Tully refers to 'the various ways citizens are excluded from initiating and entering into practices of democratic negotiation...' (Tully 2005: 214-215). With relations of assimilation Tully refers to subjects being 'encouraged to participate in democratic practices of deliberation yet are constrained to deliberate in a particular way' (Tully 2005: 213-214). If citizens wish to have their voice heard, they must act in compliance with the dominant practice of reasoning. That is, the emphasis on formal socio-political citizenship rights does not account for instances of internal exclusion from decision-making (Young 2000) or political assimilation (Tully 2005).

Returning to Nancy Fraser, she initially saw her dual perspective on recognition and redistribution as also embodying the political dimension of social justice, asserting that the very aim of recognition claims is to 'deinstitutionalise patterns of cultural value that impede parity of participation and to replace them with patterns that foster it' (Fraser 2003: 30). In her later work, she started to ask herself about whether relations of representation in themselves can be unjust, outside the influence from misrecognition and maldistribution. Her concern is first and foremost the meta-level of political decision-making, the (nationally) bounded frames of decision-making structures, which leave certain poor and pariah groups outside of the possibilities to confront, usually, transnational injustices (Fraser 2005; 2008). The Roma constitute a visible example of an ethno-cultural minority with universal, global, experiences of oppression and persecution, yet with a strongly heterogeneous position as claimants in their respective localities.

6.4 The local context of agency: The 'universalist' welfare state and its ethno-cultural others

Notwithstanding the normative ambition of challenging the hegemony of the nation-state and its exclusionary decision-making practices, there is still a *de facto* reality of imperative nation-state institutions, which makes the state an important category of analysis (Bloemraad 2006; Favell 2010). The materialisation of social rights and the redistribution of resources are still predominantly enacted within this bounded unit. At the level of every-day life, a 're-nationalisation' of politics is occurring in a Europe where populist political voices currently draw on primordial rhetoric of morality and the boundedness of national cultures. Simultaneously, global transfers of money, people and ideas, bring about new demands for analytical reinterpretations of social reality. Rather than using predefined understandings of the tenets of re-nationalisation, globalisation and trans-national agency, there is a call for a critical assessment of the actual transformation of the political-institutional framework the local level.

In Northern Europe, the scholarly debate on a politics of recognition has been marked by its contextualisation within a 'welfare state' framework. The welfare states of this region have typically been portrayed as egalitarian, redistributive, universal and solidarity driven (Kildal and Kuhnle 2005; Greve 2007). However, researchers have begun to question whether the Nordic welfare states actually can fulfil their egalitarian ambitions and respond to the needs and rights of an increasingly diverse population (Kvist, Fritzell, Hvinden and Kangas 2012; Lister 2009; Siim 2013). Empirical studies of the link between a particular welfare regime, or particular welfare arrangements, and their actual implications for people with a migrant and minority ethnic background are, nevertheless, quite unusual. The very conceptualisation of the welfare state has also often been overlooked in the analyses of obstacles to equality and social justice for people with a migrant and minority ethnic background. Each welfare state has its own language and legacy of nation-building which impinges upon the ways in which migrants and minorities are structurally subordinated.

We know that the migration issue has been a dividing policy line in the Nordic countries. Sweden and Denmark have, in particular, drifted in different directions, in spite of their similar welfare political structures (Brochmann and Hagelund 2012). Increasing fine-grained analyses of the lived citizenship and local practices of people are needed when we want to understand the complexity and consequences of ethno-cultural subordination in contemporary welfare states. While not supporting David Miller's hierarchy of solidarities, that we have primary ethical obligations to co-nationals, it is a valid argument that: 'Rather than dismissing nationality out of hand once we discover that national identities contain elements of myth, we should ask what part these myths play in building and sustaining nations. For it may not be rational to discard beliefs, even if they are, strictly speaking, false' (Miller 1997: 36).

6.5 Dynamics of Roma activist participatory encounters in Finnish society

The second part of this contribution is based on empirical research on Roma activism in the Nordic welfare state, with a predominant focus on Finland. My normative argument is that transformative approaches to citizenship are fundamental if we want to move beyond an affirmative politics of recognition and enhance effective claims-making by systematically subordinated groups. In their efforts to challenge the hegemonic order the Roma risk facing different modes of political assimilation or exclusion from the public sphere (Young 2000; Tully 2005). The dynamics of such mechanisms will be discussed below.

Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with Roma activists, this contribution explores contemporary constraints of the political-institutional framework to transformative power for a minority ethnic group marked by a strong and continuous legacy of social injustice. The Finnish data is contextualised through a discussion on Roma and Traveller activism and state policy in Sweden and Norway. The analysis focuses on the ways in which Roma activists make sense of and account for their agency and participation in the Finnish public sphere. The data constitutes 17 in-depth interviews. Ten Roma activists were interviewed in 2003 and 2004, seven of which were re-interviewed in 2009. The participants are men and women of different ages and regional backgrounds. 'Political activist' is used in a broad sense referring to individuals engaged for example in various advisory boards, NGOs as well as in the mainstream or minority media. Due to the very small number of activist Roma in Finland, I have not included any descriptive information in the quotes (for more details, see Nordberg 2006a; 2007).¹

Despite an increasingly active trans-national Roma movement, Finnish Roma activism has traditionally been featured by a seemingly tame civil society, strongly intertwined with state bureaucracy. Notwithstanding a continuous marginalisation and oppression of Roma, more radical claims for justice have rarely occurred in the public debate (Nordberg 2006a, 2006b). The Roma arrived in Finland via Sweden and from the east in the late 16th century. Since that time their position has been marked by disengagement, persecution and oppression - not different from the situation in most other countries (Hancock 1987; Fraser 1995). The late 19th Century era of nation-state building was preoccupied by the shaping of a moral and decent citizenry. The Roma were placed in work camps and their culture and language were generally the targets of strong assimilationist policies (Vehmas 1961; Grönfors 1977; Pulma 2006). National bard Zacharias Topelius included within the Finnish citizenry the Swedish-speakers,

¹ Within a larger research project, studies were also conducted from a top-down perspective, analysing parliamentary and media debates on boundary-drawing related to Roma citizenship (Nordberg 2007; 2006b).

Karelians, Lapps, Russians, Germans and the Norwegians, while explicitly excluding the Jews and the Roma (Häkkinen and Tervonen 2005: 8).

Not until the 1960s with the general radicalisation of politics, did the harsh policies gradually begin to change. The housing situation was still alarming, authorities routinely took Roma children into custody and the Roma 'lifestyle' was still conceived as problematic. In society at large the Roma were typically seen as non-working and non-contributory, although they occupied significant positions in various 'dirty' segments of the labour market (Nordberg 2010). The Roma nevertheless got their own representation in the Advisory Board for Gypsy Affairs (later: the Advisory Board for *Romani* Affairs), a result of increasing activism within the young Roma movement. The Advisory Board was established as an institution with members representing different Ministries and Roma NGOs. Over the years there has been an increasing share of Roma members and today they constitute half of the Board. Notwithstanding a comparatively large number of Roma NGOs, they have been organised around specific issues, such as the elderly, children and religion and none of them have been very successful in mobilising members more broadly. Roma NGOs are not particularly political nor have they to a large extent engaged with non-Roma political and welfare institutions or the dominant media. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health launched a new National Policy Programme on Roma in 2009 with the specific ambition of targeting participation and agency.

The next section of the article uses interviews with Roma activists to highlight the ways in which activists acknowledge the hegemonic political-institutional framework in their claims for justice. I want to draw particular attention to the micro-level of Roma claims-making as articulated in research interviews and to the specific claims made by contemporary Roma Activists.

6.5.1 The rationales of political agency

The interviewed Roma activists articulate demands for social justice within a redistributive paradigm, hyphenating issues of poverty, unemployment and interrupted educational paths. These concrete markers of a subordinated citizenship have been acknowledged by public authorities and policy-makers since the birth of the welfare state, in various initiatives to improve the position of Roma in Finnish society and to prevent social exclusion and marginalisation. Furthermore, and to a larger degree, the Roma bring attention to a paradigm of respect and recognition, and to a justice rationale.² According to Roma activists, experiences of second class

² A comparatively less accentuated focus on socio-economic claims-making in the interviews is not necessarily due to a lacking concern for redistributive issues. It can be interpreted as a desire to counteract earlier social problems based connotations to Roma identity (Nordberg 2006a).

citizenship among the Roma people and a subsequent low self-esteem are seen as detrimental not only to the capacity to participate in the culture and the institutions of the dominant society, but also to the motivation to do so:

The Roma really have that strong basic belief, like they do not really believe that they actually could have an impact on anything. It is like a kind of - and that is largely due to our history - distrust in others, in other than our own people. It lives on and is still effective. While today, starting in the 1990s, we see a breaking point, there is very little that actually has changed.

Parekh, in his argument for integrating a politics of redistribution with a politics of recognition, concludes that long-oppressed groups need confidence, a sense of self-worth, to make change and escape their economic predicament (Parekh 2004: 206). Axel Honneth (1995; 2003) in particular, has brought attention to group-specific recognition as creating a basis for self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, a dimension which is less strongly emphasised in Fraser's (2003) work. The participants in the interview study are particularly concerned with the effects of a subordinated citizenship status on the agency of the group of young Roma who are not participating in the dominant society, neither in the Roma community.

Some of our young people are really badly marginalised, involved in drug abuse and those things. And it is no longer about a sound Roma culture but they relate to some really ancient traditions and customs and confront the majority in a very aggressive and arrogant way. It seems to have increased during the last decade or so, like 'this is the school of the gadje, it is not our school'. In that group where those bad things are happening, that is where they look for recognition. If one is not accepted in the dominant society...

People who do not have access, or do not prefer, to participate in established institutions or political fora usually find other ways to resist their subordination. Particularly socially excluded and 'non-Finnishised' Roma with weak access to dominant cultural codes have been closed out from participation. While many Roma would not even choose to participate in the different decision-making structures available, such as the Advisory Board, the consensualist institutional culture nevertheless narrows the potential scope of differentiated positions and perspectives (Young 2000), and, has become an obstacle to transformative power. A particular feature of Finnish civil society has been its close connection to public elite institutions (Stenius 1983). Previous research has identified a strong similarity in the language of claims used by Roma activists and that used by the majority background policy makers when making claims for social justice (Nordberg 2006b, 2007), even though the majority elite, substantially, has been almost exclusively concerned with issues of redistribution and not with recognition, belonging and emotional notions of citizenship.

Potentially more radical, often young, grass-root activists are excluded from arenas of public negotiation. Some of the more critical activists also ask themselves

whether the Roma NGOs are democratic and open enough to take young non-established Roma onboard:

Can Roma organisations really attract the young? Very easily the middle-aged keep all the strings to themselves. On the other hand, this access to power, to all of us it is still quite new/.../ we have acquired a position /.../ Easily one thinks of oneself as more important than what would be necessary. Well, maybe we are not good enough in providing space for the young ones. But for us it is somehow easier as we have been around these circles and we speak the same language...

As the quote suggests, the institutionalised collaboration between Roma NGOs and authority actors has made it difficult to access power for people who do not ‘speak this same language’, subsequently increasing the hierarchy between elite activists and those who have not transgressed the ‘cultural and communicative codes’ (Armstrong 1982). Although Finnish rather than Romani is the mother tongue of Finnish Roma, the Finnish used by the Roma in every-day life differs from that of the majority grass-root activists. While similar linguistic barriers are familiar from political mobilisation more broadly, the language constitutes an additional challenge for the Roma. The Finnish spoken by the Roma differs from the majority Finnish in terms of phraseology, as well as sentence structure (e.g. Borin and Vuorela 1998):

Well, I do think that while many Roma have lots of needs /.../ they do not necessarily bother to bring them up, because a so called ordinary Rom does not have the skills to justify things, to make a proper case about what it is all about, and the Roma identity is still really stigmatised.

The experience of not having access to an efficient voice with which to express one’s claims, has arguably been constraining for what Fraser (1997) calls a parity of participation. The group of activists are increasingly middle-class Roma with comparatively weaker connections to the every-day life of the most subordinated Roma citizens (see also Trehan 2009)³. The narrow political representation constitutes an escalating problem of legitimacy. One of the activists who has been working closely with Roma families at the grass-root level concludes that the remoteness of the elite activists from the grass-roots makes it less likely that they will identify ‘real issues’ and bring them forward in different political bodies:

It really is a problem, like I know for instance how much racism and other form of abuse people experience here at the grass-root level, in their every-day lives. And then, when nobody does anything, takes things forward, they may never change.

³ Nidi Trehan (2009) has analysed the ways in which an ‘NGOization’ of rights discourses in Europe can act to silence grass-root voices in preference for elite voices.

The Roma activists draw attention to the ways in which misrecognition in the form of status subordination has contributed to a three-fold mode of inefficient agency, with an elite being assimilated into the dominant structures of Finnish society, with the mass remaining outside public policy-making and with a growing sector resisting in a non-tolerated way. All these obstacles to transformative power relate, in various ways, to limits of the public sphere, something which will be further elaborated in the subsequent section.

6.5.2 The limits of the public sphere in Finland

Institutional cultures and practices are constantly transforming, but the strong legacy of consensualism seems to be continuously effective within Finnish political institutions, not the least in majority-minority collaborations (Kettunen 2008).⁴ Finnish Roma activists in general valorise their close companionship with authorities, arguing that it is the only way to take things forward and to substantially get access to power and decision-making. When explicitly asked, activists strongly object to the idea of a more autonomous civil society:

There is really no point in messing around on our own. When authority actors waken and we do things together, then it starts happening, then we can actually have an influence.

Suvi Keskinen (2009) has raised concern about the exclusive mechanisms of the welfare state, suggesting that a strong commitment to universality, similarity and an 'implicit' majority perspective, together with a consensual ethos, result in little space for discussion and questioning of nation-building in the Nordic countries. The mobilisation of nation-building rhetoric has been particularly evident in Finland due to the legacy of a young and vulnerable nation-state with a rather recent history of violent internal political conflict (Stenius 1983). In such rhetoric also the Roma minority has created its own space.

We should not forget that the Finnish state /.../ has taken exceptionally good care of the Roma people. Regardless of all the prejudice and attitudes, we have created this independent country together. Strong values are coming from that and those values have always had an impact on decision-makers in their decisions. Finnish decision-makers have really had a positive attitude towards the Roma.

⁴ Pauli Kettunen (2008) has argued that compared to the other Nordic countries, it has been less legitimate in Finland to see the state as being 'shaped and used as instrument according to changing political power relations' (p. 5). Rather, politics in Finland has been assumed to put into force the agency of the state – 'the instance defining and meeting national necessities' (p. 6-7).

Rogers Brubaker (2001) in his study of changing rhetoric on assimilation in France, Germany and the U.S, has argued that assimilation has been transformed from seeing immigrant populations as moldable, meltable objects to active subjects. Assimilation is then not something ‘done *to* persons, but rather something accomplished *by* them, not intentionally, but as an unintended consequence of myriad individual actions and choices in particular social, cultural, economic and political contexts’ (Brubaker 2001: 543). The case of the Roma in Finland illustrates how less than two decades of formal recognition has contributed to a fear of losing these newly broken grounds, limiting the scope of more radical struggle and negotiation. Contemporary Roma activists are generally the first generation to collaborate with public authorities and it has mostly been a beneficial partnership. During the last decades the position of the Roma has significantly improved, in a comparative perspective.

Activists have, using Tully’s (2005) conceptualisation, been assimilated into a public sphere shaped by institutional consensualism and a broader communitarianist framework emphasising the common history and the values attached to the Finnish nation-building project.

6.6 State policy and Roma and Traveller mobilisation in Sweden and Norway

With the emphasis of this contribution being on the social category of ‘Roma’, it is understood as encompassing the various groups identified and/or identifying themselves as Roma, Romani and Travellers in English. There are groups with different historical legacies and contemporary political trajectories in the different countries. Nonetheless, a common denominator has been the stigmatised and subordinated position within society at large. Social policies, and later the emerging welfare state, have strongly influenced policies and legislation on Roma and Travellers in all Nordic countries.

In Finland, as well as in Sweden and Norway, the state set about its aim of exterminating Roma and/or Traveller culture, conceived as a threat to the social and moral order. In Sweden and Norway, policies have more clearly been targeted at vagrancy and poverty, due to the presence of ‘Travellers’. Policy-makers in Sweden and Norway have been preoccupied with placing different groups of Roma and Travellers in different social categories. Authority measures and policies have been adapted to these categorisations. ‘Swedish Gypsies’ arrived in Sweden around the turn of the 19th Century. During the 1940s they were divided into *zigenare* (Gypsies) and *tattare* (Tatars, Travellers), the latter being considered a social group formed by individuals who did different kinds of stigmatised and ‘dirty’ work (Montesino Parra, 2010). Travellers are also a distinctive group in Norway, organised as the Romani people (Halvorsen 2002), whereas a Travelling population has not been as visible in Finland. Another element of social categorisation policies implies the post

World War II, differentiation of ‘foreign Gypsies’ from ‘national Gypsies’ in Sweden. (Montesino Parra, 2010). The final section of the paper shows that, in spite of the different histories and the different social categories of Roma and Travellers, the logic of assimilation has been similar in Finland, Sweden and Norway. Roma and Traveller policy has been part of a larger social policy project aiming at creating order, stability and homogeneity through controlling vagrant and socio-culturally ‘deviant’ groups.

6.6.1 Social policy, education and subordinated agency in Sweden

In Sweden, the Travelling population was the main target group of such socio-political inventions during the first half of the 20th Century. The aggressive politics culminated between the 1920s to 1940s when Travellers and other vagrant groups became the objects of harsh racial and sterilisation policy initiatives (Hazell 2002; Pulma 2006). Two decades later, after the Second World War, there was a shift in focus from the category of Travellers to Roma/Gypsies, which generated a specific and restricted field of state intervention. There was also a shift in policy emphasis from exclusion to inclusion, which was to be advanced through strategic assimilation targeted to the education of children and the young (Montesino Parra 2010). The majority driven *Stiftelsen svensk zigenarmission* (the ‘Gypsy Mission’) was a dominant actor, actively engaged in the maintenance of ‘camp schools’ for the Roma. The poor conditions in the Roma camps were a key incentive to the activation of Swedish Roma mobilisation (Montesino Parra 2002: 120-122). In the early 1950s, a government committee concluded that education and improved (settled) housing conditions had to be the main targets of Roma policy; there was a clear objective to assist the Roma in their transformation into decent working citizens who could adapt to modern life. Not until the 1960s did the housing conditions improve and the Roma moved from camp sites to city apartments. At this time a social welfare apparatus emerged, maintained by consultants and social workers working with individuals and families (Pulma 2006: 133, 224).

Eventually, the Roma family Taikon gained increasing influence in promoting the rights of the Roma in Swedish society. As in Finland, with the leftist radicalisation of politics, Roma activists were increasingly involved in a movement aiming to improve their own situation. An important breaking point was the 1962 publication of the biographic novel *Zigenerska* (‘Gypsy woman’) by writer and activist Katarina Taikon. She and her sister Rosa managed to give a public voice and a face to the Roma. They nevertheless collaborated closely with majority Swedish activists through the *Zigenarsamfundet* (the ‘Gypsy association’). The level of organisation among the Roma in general remained weak. Together with Professor Arne Trankell, Katarina Taikon brought attention to the need to improve and intensify Roma adult education,

bringing about a change in Roma policy from ethnologic assimilation to an ideology of social pedagogy (Montesino Parra 2002; 2010; Pulma, 2006: 138).

Policy-makers and activists became aware of the importance of a recognised minority ethnic status. In the 1970s politicians and authorities ultimately declared that the focus should be on strengthening the voice of the Roma and involving them in decision-making (Pulma 2006: 145-149). Nevertheless, recent research indicates that Roma in Sweden are still subordinated to a second class citizenship. For example, a study by Rodell Olgac (2006) showed that Roma children still feel insecure in schools. Since more thorough research about the lived citizenship of the Roma is scarce, established presumptions about the Roma have remained influential for contemporary policy paradigms and grass-root perspectives have not been taken into account. Interventions are claimed to still be rooted in aims of adaptation and normalisation and social authorities have been accused of relying too much on a patronising stance with little result (see particularly Arnstberg 1998). Montesino Parra (2010) concludes that the Roma continuously have been categorised as a group requiring special measures based on special knowledge about the group. She is critical to the fact that the agency of the Roma themselves has been undermined in Swedish policy-making. The implementation of state policy is argued to have become a segment of employment predominantly for non-Roma during the decades of welfare state expansion.

6.6.2 Control, discipline and emerging resistance in Norway

While education and social policy have been in the forefront of Swedish assimilation and integration policy, the Romani Traveller (*Tater*) population in Norway was more strongly affected by measures to discipline families and children by family based labour-colonies and aggressive attempts to take children into public custody. The aim was to force the Romani to settle. Sociologist Eilert Sundt set off these policies in the late 19th century, followed by the priest Jacob Walnum and later in the 1940s, child protection became the target of the *Norsk Misjon blant hemløse* ('the Norwegian Mission among the homeless'). The mission continued its activities until the 1980s (Minken 2009; Pettersen 2005). The Finnish equivalent to the Mission was predominantly concerned with taking Roma children away from their parents. The public image of the Romani as socially disabled, work-shy, irresponsible, non-reliable and criminals legitimised the assimilation policies of the Mission (Hvinden 2000). The policies culminated in legal measures to sterilise Romani women in the 1930s as part of the attempts to exterminate Romani culture and ways of living (Haave 2000).

The assaults have gained substantial public attention during the last two decades, something which has mobilised individual Romani and Romani organisations around compensation claims targeted to the Norwegian state. Compensation has successfully been claimed for example for forced sterilisation and lost schooling opportunities,

even though it has been challenging for the Romani to acquire the bureaucratic capital required by decision-making bodies. The Romani have also been critical to the fact that the number of successful compensation claims has been low due to strict demands on documentation (Halvorsen 2004: 42).

Rune Halvorsen found similar difficulties facing the Romani people in mobilising the grassroots as in the Finnish and Swedish case. Contemporary activism has been constrained by distrust within the group and a lack of a common agenda for claims-making other than that of the demands for compensation. He concludes that 'raising lawsuits against the state became an important part of the social mobilisation as this served to unite Travellers against the government' (Halvorsen 2002: 222). Recent attempts to strengthen the recognition of Romani culture have been chiefly concerned with broadening the image of what it means to be a Romani but also with strengthening the Romani language (Halvorsen 2004: 47).

6.6.3 Diverging trajectories?

With the emerging Nordic welfare state in the late 1970s, ethno-political civil society started to lose its meaning and minority politics became part of the state machinery. Welfare state expansion drew on the presumption that the state was responsible for the welfare of the individual and being an ethnic minority was increasingly seen as a status entitling one to particular social rights. At the same time the grass-root movement lost much of its importance. When minority ethnic status is too closely linked to socio-political benefits, it risks narrowing and weakening the potential for societal participation (Pulma 2006: 202). Having said that, Roma and Traveller activist claims-making has partly taken different turns in the different countries.

Even though the Finnish Roma have not been victims of systematic sterilisation as in Sweden and Norway, there is enough evidence of oppressive policies and practices to legitimise activist mobilisation around compensation claims for previous injustices. While the homogenising and disciplinary logic of the welfare state has framed Roma policy-making in rather similar ways in all countries, activist claims-making is additionally conditioned by the relationship between civil society and the state. In Finland, the strong connection between Roma civil society and state institutions has made the Roma reluctant to make claims against the state (Nordberg 2006a). In Finland civil organisations became organic parts of the consolidation of the nation. The civil war in 1918 accentuated the divisions between social classes for decades and the ruling bourgeoisie elite had to reunite the nation by the creation of a loyal and unified civil society (Stenius 1983: 119-121). Finnish political-institutional culture has evolved out of a legacy of conflict and compromise with less socio-democratic dominance than in other Nordic countries. There has been a stronger emphasis on instrumental necessity rhetoric and a tendency to depoliticise the social policy agenda (see Kroll 2005, for an empirical analysis). While Swedish Social Democrats claimed

a Third Way political position between Communism and Capitalism, Finland's geopolitical situation between Sweden and the Soviet Union emphasised a pragmatic discourse on social reform drawing on rhetoric of functional needs (Kettunen 2006).

In Norway, the Romani have not only made claims for compensation but also been more critical to various politics of recognition, including being granted minority status. Formal recognition was understood as a form of forced categorisation and as a disciplinary measure which could reinforce social differentiation (Halvorsen 2004: 56). Halvorsen concludes that the stigmatised position of the Romani people in Norway does not seem to generally have had a negative influence on the resistance towards state policies and initiatives, but the strong sense of vulnerability and shame has still, like in the Finnish case, weakened the mobilisation of a broader group of grass-root claimants (Halvorsen 2004: 106).

The disciplinary and controlling elements embodied in the architecture of the Nordic welfare states have arguably contributed to the continuous injustice and oppression of Roma and Travellers. However, these structures do not independently explain the limited access to transformative power. The different trajectories of nation-state building have evidently shaped differentiated political claims-making practices and outcomes. Moreover, the joint experience of misrecognition has evidently been constraining for broader grass-root driven struggles for social justice.

6.7 Conclusion

Social justice should not be reduced to the level of distribution nor recognition. This may be particularly true with regard to a welfare state setting that emphasises a minority policy closely linked to socio-economic rights and redistribution. Whereas non-recognition and maldistribution are interdependent and intertwined in the everyday experiences of subordinated groups, it can be concluded that for analytical reasons, it is valuable to separate recognition issues as a distinct category when addressing social injustices. A dualist approach helps us to identify spheres of status subordination which would not be evident in a unifying theory of justice (Fraser 2003). Within the recognition framework, public policies have in particular been concerned with a re-evaluation of the Romani language in the Nordic countries. Finnish Roma activist narratives showed how self-respect and self-esteem have been fundamental obstacles to 'participatory parity'; the emotional or psychological dimension has not effectively been conceptualised as a social justice claim in welfare state policies. A lack of attention to the recognition paradigm in general and to the emotional dimension in particular, has simultaneously been the result of and reinforced a rather narrow 'political expert' agenda focusing on social rights, education, housing and welfare. It has been particularly detrimental to the fact that issues of contemporary racism have received fairly little attention. While redistributive issues are fundamental for the capacity to act as a citizen and are far from being solved, they are at least enacted in

the public sphere. 'Participatory parity' in itself is not necessarily enough to influence institutionalised inequality and subordination and to address difficult structural problems such as racism. Enhancing transformative power for Roma and Traveller actors in the Nordic public spheres would require a political-institutional framework which allows for more radical forms of agency and is open to a broad range of actors, including grass-root actors, with different perspectives and experiences.

In this chapter, I have discussed the structural obstacles to transformative citizenship among Nordic, particularly Finnish, Roma today, arguing that the public sphere has either assimilated or excluded the Roma from effective political claims-making that could challenge the social and symbolic order preventing the Roma from equal citizenship. Structural constraints to transformative agency have been activated in the dynamics between a disciplining and homogenising welfare state culture and consensualist political institutions. The Finnish Roma elite does hold a strong position in decision-making, or at least advice-making, on Roma issues, particularly through various public institutions such as the Advisory Board for Roma Affairs. Nonetheless, the participatory structures seem to have reproduced power-hierarchies between the elite actors and grass-roots. Class based social ordering is accentuated in a setting within which Roma elite activists collaborate in close companionship with state bureaucracy. There has been a substantial focus on the agency of citizens but not on the structural obstacles to agency.

The Roma issue at large is developing into one of the most severe, trans-national human right issues in contemporary Europe. In many post-communist countries, the Roma minority has been trapped in a vicious circle of collective expulsion with enormous difficulties to live an ordinary life, to settle, work and educate oneself. Escaping from poverty and persecution, Roma are increasingly using their right to free movement (see e.g. Sigona & Vermeersch 2012; Nacu 2009). The Roma 'beggars' are on a daily basis reminding Europe about one of the momentous moral issues of contemporary times. Nancy Fraser (2005; 2008) subsequently raises a valid question of whether the nation-state is the right 'frame' for the political representation of issues which are global and universal as to their roots. There is a case for a need to develop plural strategies targeted to exclusionary mechanisms on the local as well as on the trans-national level.

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