

Beyond Representation

Newspapers and Citizenship Participation in the Case of a Minority Ethnic Group

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Abstract

Processes of defining citizenship become particularly exposed in a media context, since this is an arena where a broad range of actors get their voice heard. The aim of this contribution is to explore the claims-making activities by different actors in stories about the Roma in Finnish newspapers. I want to elucidate the access to the mediated space and provide some examples of how citizenship claims are raised and contextualised. The empirical study is based on content analysis and qualitative text analysis of articles from 1990-2003 in both the largest Finnish-language and the largest Swedish-language daily newspapers (*Helsingin Sanomat* and *Hufvudstadsbladet*). While Romani voices do have the possibility to contest dominant views in newspaper stories related to the Roma, this article argues, firstly, for a diversified coverage on Romani issues and, secondly, for increasing dialogue between a broader group of actors.

Key Words: newspapers, citizenship, claims-making, ethnicity, Roma, Finland

Introduction

Citizenship, in a broad sense, is understood as the relationship between the nation-state and its members, an affiliation which is defined by a set of relations between rights, duties, identity and participation (see e.g. Delanty 2000, Lister 2003, Turner 1993). While studies of the materialisation of political, civil and social rights have been significant for analyses of the unequal distribution of resources, there is an increasing emphasis on processes of claiming rights – not solely on the legal rights *per se*.¹ There is also a subsequent empirical vacuum or tendency to avoid analysis of the “actual spaces in which citizenship is expressed” (Jones & Gaventa 2002: 19). With this contribution I want to shed light on one of the central spaces or arenas of citizenship agency – the daily press.

The content of the citizenship category is influenced by the practices of different political and administrative elites, civil society, ordinary citizens’ practices, scholarly and media debates. It is obvious that the media has a double role in relation to notions of citizenship. Firstly, the media is essential within the frame of citizenship identity work. Citizenship has been strongly connected to nation-state building. The very function of the media has always been to create shared narratives and a shared history which

promotes shared values (Kivikuru 2003: 26). For scholars of nationalism, the importance of print media for creating a sense of belonging to the national community is familiar (Anderson 1991; Billig 1995; Calhoun 1997). While instances of homogenising national identity building can be traced in the press, challenging and marginal discourses are equally salient.² Subsequently, the second role of the media in relation to citizenship is to serve as an arena for negotiation and contestation. Not only elite actors but also ordinary citizens can participate through letters to the editor and interviews. The potential diversity of voices turns the daily press into a powerful arena for empirical analysis of citizenship agency.

This study takes a particular focus on claims-making, defined by Ruud Koopmans (2004: 454) as a process of “collective and public articulation of political demands, call to action, proposals, criticisms ... which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors”. So, claims can be raised by target groups as well as by other actors on behalf of disadvantaged groups. The media, or in this context the press, only represents a small selection of the universe of political actions and statements. Yet what is interesting here are the public claims and not those claims that were not successful in reaching the public arena (c.f. Koopmans 2004). Different nation-states obviously have different traditions and languages of citizenship (Bussemaker & Voet 1998; Siim 2000).³ Koopmans concludes that the selection process by the media is a central mechanism “by which citizenship regimes impinge on patterns of public claims-making” (2004: 454). Through looking at claims-making practices in newspapers we can not only learn about the role of a particular group, here the Roma, as part of the political community, but also about the citizenship cultures of different national models.

Minority Ethnic Group Claims

During the last decades there has been an increasing concern with “the need to uncover the reality of the citizen often conceived as ‘male-white-able-bodied’, and to take action to enable minority groups to participate in social, political and civic life, defining and claiming their rights to become equal, active citizens” (Jones & Gaventa 2002: 15-16). This study takes a particular focus on claims-making activities in the press in relation to Finnish Roma, a minority ethnic group with full and equal membership rights within Finnish society, yet with a marginalised position in terms of full participation. The approximately 10 000 Roma of Finland have experienced a long history of attempted assimilation and elimination. In spite of such violation on Romani cultural integrity, they have remained a minority ethnic group with its own particular identity. As a result of various social transformations and an increasingly multiculturalist discourse, the Roma are now formally recognised as a minority in the constitution and in various international agreements. The position of the Roma within the Finnish nation-state is quite multifaceted and the construction of ethnic difference is presumably more complex than in the case of immigrants. On one hand, the Roma have continuously been defined as the eternal ‘other’. On the other hand, they have a long historical and institutional anchorage within the nation-state (Grönfors 1977; Huttunen 1997; Markkanen 2003; Nordberg 2003; Vehmas 1961).

Claims-making by different minority ethnic groups in relation to the nation-state has focused on issues of cultural rights and recognition of difference. Multicultural politics or a politics of recognition propagate a public account of differences, institutionalised

in legal instruments, policies and practices (Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). Several scholars have, however, raised critique against the essentialist stance on collective identities as a prerequisite for a politics of recognition (e.g. Benhabib, 2002). Fraser (1997: 185), in a response to pluralist multiculturalism, concludes that it “tends to substantialize identities, treating them as given positivities instead of as constructed relations. It tends, consequently, to balkanize culture, setting groups apart from one another, ignoring the ways they cut across one another, and inhibiting cross-group interaction and identification”. It is also being questioned whether claims for recognition are efficient enough means to counteract inequality and oppression. A politics of recognition potentially “diverts attention from the struggle for economic inequality and social justice”, leaving the prevailing social order intact (Parekh 2004: 202; also Fraser, 1997; Lister, 2003). A way out of the tension within identity politics is to emphasise not the identity categories as such but the process or practice of struggle and claims-making. Cultural rights involve not merely the right to be represented, but also the negotiation of difference at communal spaces in which competing positions and claims are brought together (Murdock 1999; 30). Deliberative democracy calls for the recognition of all citizens as being capable of engaging in debates about the common good (Benhabib, 2002). A focus on claims-making conceptualises citizenship as agency, giving a sound role to the citizen’s participation in defining the common good.

Aim, Data and Methods

With this contribution I would like to shed light on the claims-making activities by different actors in stories about Roma in Finnish newspapers. Firstly, I want to elucidate access to the mediated space. Who are the dominant actors, which are the dominant topics and how are these interconnected? Secondly, I want to provide some examples of how citizenship claims are raised and contextualised. The focus thus is on Romani – and other agents’ - participation and voice rather than merely representation in the press, even though the latter is highly significant for citizenship as well, in the form of the public construction of citizenship identities. The nature of the research questions calls for a combination of ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’ methods.

The access of different voices and the possibility to participate in debates on certain topics are analysed with content analysis (see e.g. Bergström & Boréus 2000; Krippendorff 1980),⁴ using only a few recording units. I chose to focus on the dominant topics and actors in each article.⁵ The content analysis is based on 263 articles, 202 articles from *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)* and 61 from *Hufvudstadsbladet (Hbl)* between 1990 and 2003.

Both of the two newspapers selected for the study are national dailies. *HS* is the dominant daily with 1.1 million readers. The paper states it is independent and non-aligned. *Hbl* was selected because of its potential to bring a minority perspective to the public debate. While Finland is officially a bilingual country, the Swedish-speaking Finns amount to only six per cent of the population. *Hbl* is the largest Swedish language newspaper with 136 000 readers. It is also officially non-aligned, but closest to the Swedish-speaking Party.⁶

As far as these newspapers’ own archives are concerned, I had access to an exhaustive database on the subject resulting in 529 articles: 451 articles from *HS* and 78 from *Hbl* between 1990 and 2003. The remarkably different quantity of available articles in these two newspapers stems from different archive procedures and accessibility. *HS* maintains

an exhaustive internet archive, which can be accessed by anyone through paying a fee. From the first search results on Roma and Gypsy -including derivatives- articles on asylum-seekers and non-Finnish Roma as well as briefs about TV-programmes or public events that were not considered as reviews, were excluded.⁷ *Hbl* does have a small-scale internet archive, but it covers only the years from 1998 onwards. The 78 articles from *Hbl* were collected on the basis of a list of articles on Roma/Gypsies from 1990-2003 submitted by the newspaper's archive.⁸ While the *HS* archive includes every text containing the word Roma or Gypsy, the *Hbl* archive predominantly includes texts with a major focus on the minority ethnic group in question. After an initial coding of the 529 articles, I decided to select for the final analysis only cases or articles where the main focus was on Roma, subsequently filtering cases where Roma were mentioned in the text but with a minor role. This procedure selected the 263 articles for the content analysis.

The qualitative analysis drew on a first sample of 186 articles: 141 articles published in *HS* and 45 articles published in *Hbl*. The sample was collected according to whether an article contained claims and arguments related to Finnish Roma or not and whether the story on the Roma constituted one of the major themes of the article.⁹ These two qualities were coded within the realm of the categorising content analysis (see Table 1 in the appendix). According to Fairclough, the data for analysing discourses can be selected on the basis of such a preliminary survey of the corpus (1992: 230; see also Pietikäinen 2000). As it was not possible to closely analyse all the 186 stories, I made a final selection of texts for a closer reading and decided to concentrate on the 60 texts from the years 1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002. Romani voices or actors are more frequently occurring in these texts. Persons of authority and politicians are represented to a slightly higher degree than in the total data and the press to a lesser degree. Since the press is interpreted as the actor in a large amount of short and descriptive news items containing no other source, it is not surprising that the voice of the press is salient more often in the total material (see Table 2 in the appendix).

The Roma in the Finnish Press – Topics and Actors

Most young Roma do not speak Romani and the everyday language among Finnish Roma is Finnish, or in a few occasions Swedish (see also Huttunen 1997). While the lack of a language barrier means that the Roma, theoretically, have the same access to the media as the rest of the population, they constitute a comparatively apolitical group and letters to the editor are, for example, very seldom occurring in the dailies. The number of illiterate Roma was relatively high only a few decades ago and the tradition of reading newspapers has remained weak (Markkanen 2003). Consequently, the agenda-setting of the media and the use of sources have a significant influence on the possibilities for the Roma to get their voice heard and to avoid a situation in which inclusions and exclusions are shaped only from above.

To gain an insight in the distribution of topics on the Roma in general as well as over time, the dominant topic of each article was coded. Thus, the article or story constitutes the sampling unit (Krippendorff 1980: 57-58). While a single article may contain several topics, the dominant one was conceived as that which gained most space in terms of mm column. It is still important to be aware of the fact that what is identified as the dominant topic is ultimately based on the interpretation of me as the analyst.

As *Table 1* shows, the early 1990's newspaper coverage was concerned with issues related to the social situation of the Roma- focusing on general feature stories and writ-

Table 1. *The Share of Topics in Articles with a Predominant Focus on the Finnish Roma in the Helsingin Sanomat and Hufvudstadsbladet*

Topic	Years				Total
	1990-1992	1993-1996	1997-2000	2001-2003	
Reviews of culture	17,4	13,2	25,0	13,1	17,5
Crime	8,7	2,9	21,6	20,2	15,2
Discrimination and racism	8,7	5,9	18,2	19,0	14,4
Political agency	8,7	16,2	6,8	13,1	11,4
Roma rights, background, general situation	21,7	5,9	10,2	9,5	9,9
Appointments	0,0	20,6	1,1	8,3	8,4
Public service and education	13,0	10,3	6,8	3,6	7,2
Other	8,7	10,3	5,7	2,4	6,1
Language and culture	4,3	11,8	2,3	2,4	4,9
Transnationalism	8,7	2,9	2,3	8,3	4,9
%	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
N	23	68	88	84	263

ings about public service and educational issues. A cultural political turn is noticeable after 1993. Linguistic rights are debated alongside political mobilisation. The public debate on cultural and linguistic rights saw a peak in 1993 with a proposed amendment of the Finnish constitution, through which the Roma, the Sámi and other groups were granted the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. From 1997 onwards the emerging agenda of discrimination is arguably a result of newly signed minority right treaties and various reports launched by international organisations. There seems to be a shift from a social to a cultural to a legal agenda. These shifts can be compared to similar findings from a study of the Parliamentary debate on Romani issues (Nordberg 2004). What is different on the media arena is the emerging emphasis on crime stories.

The most dominant topics have been reviews of culture, crime, discrimination and racism. All these topics may imply a rather reactive form of newspaper coverage. It is familiar from previous studies that the coverage in the daily press largely follows the official views and that the topics of the media correspond to the concerns of the majority, particularly to those of the political and administrative elite, rather than to concerns of the minority itself (van Dijk 1991; Pietikäinen 2000). Rather than disassociating Romani group identity from the way it is usually defined, the media reproduces a traditional conceptualisation of being a Rom through the emphasis on crime reports of different kinds and on articles on Romani musicians and entertainers.

Arguably, when looking at the absolute numbers of articles, roughly the same number of articles has been produced on the general situation of the Roma, on public service and education over time. The decreasing share of social and background reporting is not a consequence of decreasing coverage about these things but rather of increasing coverage of Romani issues in general and of discrimination and crime in particular. In 1990-1993 the newspapers published no more than 23 articles with a predominant focus on Romani issues and in 2001-2003 the number had risen to 84. It is clear that the internationalisation of politics has brought about an increased coverage of Romani issues as

part of the ordinary newspaper agenda. This follows a general trend of ‘multiculturalist’ journalism (see e.g. Cottle 2000; Raittila & Vehmas 2005). Stories on discrimination and racism as well as on crimes directed towards the Roma elucidate the oppression of the Romani people and the need to take action against discriminatory and criminal practices. Nonetheless, it potentially contributes to constructing the Roma in a rather essentialist and stereotypical way if these reports are not counterbalanced with stories about the Roma as full and equal members of society, of Roma who are not victims of discrimination or involved in criminal acts. It is necessary to more closely analyse the texts in order to trace possible contestations of essentialising identity categorisations within the stories, but from the content analysis we can learn that the agenda-setting rather reproduces than balances a stereotypical understanding of Romani identity.

Studying actors in the press potentially opened up an analysis of power and influence in public discourse. The main actor was coded in each article. When one article contained several actors the dominant one was understood as that which gained most space in terms of mm column. Instead of actors or voices, participants are sometimes coded. While being a participant “opens up the possibility to be heard” (c.f. Pietikäinen 2000: 189) and indicates presence or being mentioned in newspaper texts, the explicit objective by identifying actors or claimants, is to study the participants who actually get heard and make a statement.

Table 2. *The Share of Actors in Articles with a Predominant Focus on the Finnish Roma in the Helsingin Sanomat and Hufvudstadsbladet*

Actors	Years				Total
	1990-1992	1993-1996	1997-2000	2001-2003	
Press	17,4	38,2	45,5	39,3	39,2
Roma	39,1	42,6	29,5	26,2	32,7
Authorities	8,7	10,3	10,2	9,5	9,9
Expert	17,4	5,9	8,0	6,0	7,6
Other	13,0	0,0	2,3	13,1	6,1
Politicians	4,3	2,9	4,5	6,0	4,6
%	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
N	23	68	88	84	263

Table 2 presents the distribution of actors over time. When there is no particular source being quoted or a reader who has written a column or letter to the editor, the dominant actor is interpreted as the press.

Table 2 shows that the possibility to get heard in stories related to the Roma has relatively decreased for members of the group. There was a peak of Romani actors being quoted or engaging in the press debate between 1993 and 1996, coinciding with the ‘cultural turn’ after which there was a decrease. Also expert voices are comparatively less dominating than in the earlier days, while politicians obtain slightly more influence in the stories. The visibility of the authorities has remained quite stable. The institutionalisation of minority rights and the subsequent emphasis on the public sphere in catering for minority ethnic rights might be reflected in the more evident agency by political elites.

Table 3. *Share of Actors on Topics in Articles with a Predominant Focus on the Finnish Roma in the Helsingin Sanomat and Hufvudstadsbladet*

Actors	Topic										Total
	Reviews of culture	Crime	Appointments	Discri- mination and racism	Language and culture	Political agency	Trans- nationalism	Public service and education	Other	Roma rights, background, general situation	
Press	56,5	62,5	45,5	31,6	30,8	30,0	38,5	21,1	31,3	11,5	39,2
Roma	28,3	17,5	27,3	13,2	46,2	60,0	0,0	52,6	43,8	53,8	32,7
Authorities	0,0	15,0	4,5	21,1	7,7	3,3	7,7	10,5	0,0	23,1	9,9
Expert	10,9	2,5	9,1	5,3	15,4	3,3	0,0	10,5	18,8	7,7	7,6
Other	4,3	2,5	0,0	23,7	0,0	3,3	15,4	0,0	6,3	0,0	6,1
Politicians	0,0	0,0	13,6	5,3	0,0	0,0	38,5	5,3	0,0	3,8	4,6
%	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
N	46	40	22	38	13	30	13	19	16	26	263

From *Table 3* we can see why Romani actors are less visible during the end of the 1990's and during the new millennium. Topics with a high degree of Romani participation include background and general stories, language and culture as well as articles on appointments to different tasks and positions, whilst the increasingly emphasised topics of discrimination and racism as well as crime are predominantly or to a relatively high degree commented on by authorities. None of the articles on transnational Romani issues is dominated by the voice of the Roma themselves, rather this is an agenda controlled by politicians.

The content analysis points to an increasing interest of the Finnish press in Romani issues in general and in issues related to the legal and human rights realm in particular.

A Qualitative Analysis of Citizenship Claims-Making

Claims-making in the press in relation to Romani issues is a complex phenomenon involving Romani actors as well as various elite actors and, to a very limited extent, the general public. It encompasses a variety of topics and issues. In the rest of this article I would like to shed light on the dynamics of these practices and on some dilemmas of claims-making in relation to Romani issues in Finland, even though I would argue that these phenomena are not unique for a Finnish context and obviously not only for the minority ethnic group known as Finnish Roma. The following question governed the qualitative text analysis: What kind of claims can be found in the texts and how are these claims contextualized? The notion of claims is here understood as political demands, call to action, proposals and criticisms related to the relationship between the Roma and the majority society (see Koopmans 2004).

For the qualitative analysis it was an important aim to use a data-driven approach. I have re-organised the texts according to various citizenship claims and under each claim I have collected examples of how this claim is contextualised, *how* notions of citizenship are articulated in the various text segments (c.f. Pietikäinen 2000; Silverman 2001; Winter-Jørgensen and Phillips 2000). This re-organisation of the data made it possible to finally identify two major rationales – claims related to difference and claims related to sameness. The former of the two is a category of claims-making dominated by the Roma, while to latter of the two is voiced by various actors.

Difference

Claims-making activities drawing on difference or on a particularist citizenship identity are predominantly carried out by Romani activists. These claims-making strategies relate to the collective identity of the Roma and to claims for recognition of this particularist identity and to cultural or group rights. Cultural and linguistic rights are mentioned in different texts by different actors, but when other than Romani voices are heard they are seldom engaging in any form of reasoning or claims-making.

Citizenship theory has been concerned with the process of evolving rights. Starting from civil to political and then social rights, the new era of rights has increasingly been about the recognition of identities and difference in society – a cultural dimension of citizenship (Fraser 1997; Isin and Wood 1999; Lister 2003; Young 1998). During the early 1990s, Romani members of the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs were interviewed in *HS*:¹⁰ “Instead of social welfare for Gypsies, the new Board emphasises the promoting of Romani culture and language. Among other things, an educational and

cultural centre of our own is being sorted out” (HS, 5.1.1990). A redirection of social rights to cultural rights has been suggested by, amongst others, Pakulski (1997). Such a shift of emphasis of right claims is more clearly articulated in the Anglo-Saxon scholarly and political debate and the social dimension of citizenship rights is not totally rejected in the data of this study. Nonetheless, it is clear that the a ‘cultural turn’ traced in the content analysis around 1993 was initiated or actively propagated by Romani activists already at the very beginning of the last decade. A push factor behind this call for action was arguably the stigmatised identity evolving from social welfare claims.¹¹ Claims for cultural recognition are generally unspecific during these times, but when cultural markers are brought to public attention they are conceptualised in a rather narrow and traditional manner. Talk about the wandering Roma, for example, is not visible after this period:

The dominant reason for oppression has been the animosity of the majority population and the secret admiration of the unyielding wanderers. Their wild and free lifestyle was already a threat to the feudal society (HS, 16.8.1994).

Traditional Romani culture is seen as strongly linked to earlier days. One of the Romani representatives suggests that settling down will destroy what he depicts as Romani culture: “Romani culture is lost as people settle and work. It is the modern-time, to which everyone has to adjust” (HS, 1.2.1994). Thus, the decline of traditional Romani life is accepted as a feat of modernisation and statements attached to traditional culture are not framed as right claims, rather as claims for recognition of historical misrepresentations and for *understanding and respect*. Thus, also these claims are articulated within a counter-discourse against a stigmatised Romani identity. One of the Romani participants draws on the concept of caring when contesting the meaning of citizenship virtues, i.e. of being a ‘good citizen’:

In the Finnish society a good person is extremely productive and efficient and according to that he is measured. But when the Roma say ‘damn, that was a good man’, the content of the words are entirely different. The good man has been a warm person, who has cared for other people. The cold Finns, who feel less and less responsibility for each other, frighten Nikkinen. Caring has become a public matter, financed by taxation (HS, 16.8.1994).

While claims for understanding and respect can be rather passive and intertwined with the notion of tolerance the claims in this context do challenge dominant conceptualisations of citizenship. Nick Stevenson (2003: 152-153), in his search for cultural citizenship, calls for not merely the empowering of ‘the other’ within public conversations, but for an “understanding of the social processes that have historically promoted some views over others”.

The evolving cultural *rights discourse* is salient from the mid-1990s, corresponding to external events related to the internationalisation of Finnish politics. Cultural rights are increasingly claimed, not only for the sake of revaluing a stigmatised identity in relation to the majority society, but for the value of cultural rights for the individual’s self-esteem. Cultural right claims are seemingly raised in two different ways. Firstly, claims are raised for the *support of culture* and particularly Romni *language training*. Cultural and linguistic right claims are legitimised on ‘humanitarian’ as well as on ‘social policy’ grounds. The lack of recognition of the Romani language and culture is argued to create a poor self-esteem and a feeling of being less gifted in school. A Roma

who made a tutorial for teachers concludes that: “If schools cannot support the child’s particular identity, the child may become distressed and anxious” (HS, 15.12.1994). Linguistic and cultural right claims are predominantly articulated in relation to young people. From the point of view of social policies, the recognition of linguistic and cultural rights is argued to promote a successful education and integration in the larger society:

Roma children need more education in their own language than they receive now. Only 240 of a total of 1700-2000 Roma children going to pre-school and comprehensive school receive their education in their own language, says Secretary General, Miranda Vuolasranta, from the Advisory Board for Roma Affairs... The level of education concerning the Roma is often lower...the reason is the language handicap of the parents and low education, says Vuolasranta. Since children do not receive their education in their mother tongue, they are often classed as being less capable, states Vuolasranta, stressing the role of the teachers and the teacher training (Hbl, 4.2.2002).

In spite of full formal recognition and state policies, which are materialised in legal instruments, there is a growing debate on how to implement these rights in practice. After a decade of claims-making with no sound criticism towards the state apparatuses, we can now find more calls for action involving also openly critical voices.

According to the law Romani children have the right to their own language and culture, but in practice the law is not implemented... Only a few municipalities carry out their duty to arrange mother tongue instruction for Romani pupils... By the end of the day, the majority decides which sector of the Romani culture that is being developed. “For this reason sewing courses are offered to Romani girls. There is a feeling that something has to be done and what is done is what first slips into mind” (HS, 27.2.2002).

Secondly, while linguistic rights claims were particularly explicit from the middle of the 1990s onwards, a new form of cultural rights claims were emphasised at the beginning of the 21st century. These claims can be interpreted as *claims for presence and visibility*. Rather than claiming minority rights, the line of argumentation is now that *the majority has the right* to information about the minority ethnic groups and that schools need to include information about Romani history in their curricula. These claims were legitimised by referring to the shared history of the nation-state and to the participation in the (second world) war: “We have lived side by side for 500 years. Romani men participated in the Finnish wars but school books do not refer to it” (HS, 27.2.2002).

While scholarly debates have highlighted the risk of identity politics for cultural balcanisation – of ‘setting groups apart from one another’ (Fraser 1997: 185), the claims-making activities by the Roma do not draw on such logic and they subsequently do not threaten the national communitarian narratives. They rather emphasise the role of identity politics for integration, something which also can be interpreted as a result of the long collaboration between the Roma and the public authorities on the policy on Roma (see e.g. Suonoja & Lindberg 2000). What can be noted, however, is a contested view among the Roma on how to present Romani culture to the broader public and in this respect the newspapers have an important role in promoting a dialogue between different actors – Romani as well as other. During 1998 there was an intense debate about some TV series portraying the Roma in an arguably stereotypical way. A film-

maker with a Romani background produced the fiction with a biographical touch. In the following press debate, predominantly about the blood feuding among Finnish Roma, the Romani film-maker was heavily criticised by the Roma and accused of being a betrayer and not a genuine Rom. The debate pointed to an unsolved dilemma about the boundaries of minority group integrity and openness. The internal critique towards the film was justified in the press by referring to the long history of oppression and the fear of losing newly broken grounds of mutual acceptance and tolerance.

Now we see that this first TV-series, with all its prejudices and clichés, threatens to smash everything into small pieces. The series overflows with exaggeration, and contains very little of normal Romani life. Miranda Vuolasranta explains that the question is so sensitive simply because most people know so little about the Roma (*Hbl*, 18.1.1998).

The quote shows how loose the ends of representation are, how vulnerable the minority perceive its constructed public identity as well as the experienced importance of this identity for legitimising demands for recognition and rights. This form of argumentation could also explain the earlier lack of open critique towards state policies, a critique that is visible only after the new Millennium. A journalist interprets the dilemma:

As long as the majority of the population has the power to formulate the type of problems faced by the Roma population, perhaps it is too much...to demand an open dialogue concerning the most difficult questions concerning the minority culture. On the other hand, the question concerns what the courts, researchers, journalists etc. should do with unofficial knowledge of the kind mentioned above, if all of those concerned prefer to deny the issues rather than discuss them (*Hbl*, 18.1.1998).

I would argue that the major trends in the claims-making practices during the latter years of this study are, firstly, the emphasis on empowerment and agency from within the community and, secondly, the increasingly open discussions about new forms of intergenerational problems facing the community in contemporary society.

Traditions are vanishing. Young people are involved in drug and medicine abuse. It has taken away their identity. Among us, it is unacceptable for children to stay out after eight o'clock or to be even drunk in front of the parents. Such a respect for parents is now gone. I do not know what it will be like in ten years; it is very frightening. Too easily young Roma conform to the street life of the majority and to a bad way of living... Now the 45-60 year old must take their responsibility and talk to their young ones (*HS*, 18.3.2002).

Debates on difference and particularity and cultural rights are debates solely carried out by the Roma, and there is not really any dialogue among different actors about the nature of cultural rights.

Sameness

Alongside with claims drawing on the right to difference – to recognition, culture and language, claims are raised for equal or similar treatment. These are two rationales which are obviously interdependent. Three different notions of claims-making related to sameness can be found. Firstly, claims for recognition are not only articulated as the understanding of difference, but in another counter-argumentative way – within a dis-

course of *anti-ethnicisation* which relates to the desire for normality and the right to be 'ordinary'. Cultural features known to the broader public are argued not to be so different from those of the majority. It is, for example, stressed that the majority population has overrated the distinctiveness of purity customs:

I do think that the norms have been overrated in public. Many of them are also complied with in majority families, Helsinki-based Leila Vuolasranta notices (*HS*, 5.1.1990).

Citizen's obligations are equally claimed to stand above family obligations: 'The family is extremely important to the Roma. But prior to family ties one has to follow law and order' (*HS*, 18.3.2002). Thus, this first notion of claims for sameness can be understood as a claim for being seen as any Finnish citizen. Secondly, to *counter-act the stigmatised collective identity* calls for being seen not just as a Finnish citizen but as an individual rather than a group member. Debates on crime reports, discussed by the Roma well as by journalists in columns, are particularly drawing on such a disassociation of negative characteristics linked with the Romani people:

This is a question about just one individual who has committed a crime, and such individuals exist in all groups. We are afraid that the issue will expand to become a fact concerning the entire minority, which is often the case with the Roma, says a Rom who prefers to remain anonymous – just because she does not want to be labelled. She mentions the police murder almost a year ago that was committed by the Dane, Steen Christensen, as an example of how "good Nordic citizens" are seldom linked to their backgrounds in the same way (*Hbl*, 13.10.1998).

I would like to stress that the topic of crime in the content analysis does not merely imply reported crimes committed by, or directed towards, a Rom. There are also critical discussions about crime reports and also the press is critical towards the lack of stories about Romani everyday life. In relation to the previously mentioned TV-series, a journalist concludes:

The main problem with the TV-series...is perhaps that in spite of everything, it is not so much about the things that are shown, but about the things that are almost never shown on TV or in other mass media...stories concerning normal Romani everyday life – where someone has a job within mainstream society, another has a traditional profession, no immediate stabbing threat exists, and children go to school (*Hbl*, 18.1.1998).

A researcher completes the argument: "We are still waiting for Romani portrayals in which the individuality and difference of the characters would overshadow communitarian traits" (*HS*, 20.1.1998). The ambiguity of these statements is that "everyone" is aware of the fact that the diversity within the community and the everyday life of minority ethnic group members are hardly visible in newspaper reports, but the media logic and practices seem to be written in stone. Unfortunately this is also true for the perception of mediated messages and representations. Thirdly, and perhaps the most visible, claims-making strategies are related to notions of sameness as *equality* and as *non-discrimination*, an agenda which was increasingly emphasised during the latter years of the study. While the Roma claim equal access to housing, work and education, such claims to socio-economic justice are comparatively rare. Moreover, when claims for improved housing conditions are raised they are justified by the influence of good

housing conditions on schooling. For a claim to be successful it seems to require an emphasis on integration in the larger society, something which was salient also in the case of linguistic rights. Romani claims-making in the Finnish press predominantly draws on the benefits of cultural and social rights for integration than on the actual *citizenship* right of cultural and social equality. Equal treatment facilitates contributions to the nation building:

It would be important to find ways by which also a Romani family in very deep water would find an apartment, which, for example, makes children's schooling possible (*HS*, 11.12.1994).

Not until the 21st Century are voices raised for increasing social policy resources to the education of the Roma. Lacking equality is rather articulated in relation to discrimination and the targets of such criticisms are not the bureaucratic apparatuses but ordinary people and different representatives of the private sector. A legal discourse is dominating this anti-discriminatory agenda, controlled by the authorities rather than by the Roma themselves. Discrimination is not permitted; it implies a violation of Finnish law and is therefore clandestine.

This is about a criminal offence according to the paragraph in the penal code, which explicitly forbids such discrimination based on race, nationality, ethnic group... (*Hbl*, 22.7.1998, editorial).

The quote above is related to a report on discriminatory practices in the restaurant business conducted by *HS*. A reporter followed three Romani women to thirteen Helsinki restaurants, out of which entry was denied to seven. The report sparked an intense debate. The issue of discrimination of the Roma suddenly became an issue of national or societal interest. This case contributed to the high rate of stories on discrimination at the end of the 1990s. The discussion mobilised a broad group of actors, including various elites. It also highlights the image of reactive rather than proactive coverage of Romani issues. Minister of European Issues, Ole Norrback, filed an appeal concluding that:

...individual cases certainly do not justify a denial of entry to the premise for all Roma. According to the Minister, Finnish society still seems to encompass characteristics resembling the American South before Martin Luther King... When racism occurs it must be responded to. I respond now, besides as a Minister, as an ordinary citizen (*HS*, 14.7.1998).

In this respect Romani discrimination became a public issue. It is also one of the topics which actively engage a variety of actors in a public discussion. A closer reading of the argumentation elucidates an assumed prerequisite of referring to national or state interests, rather than to merely human rights as in rights for the individual to be protected from humiliating treatment of different kind. A representative of the restaurant business makes a statement about Finland's reputation in terms of international cooperation and competition while discriminatory practices within the restaurant industry are conceived as a result of "conflicts":

Finland cannot afford to be labelled as a state in which discrimination is part of everyday life. Alongside the unsettling of the principles of a state of law, it also makes international cooperation more difficult and weakens competition in the travel industry. Besides considering new regulations, new solutions by which conflicts can be relieved must be found (*HS*, 25.7.1998).

When a Romani representative makes claims related to anti-discrimination, also he draws on a discourse of nation-building and claims respect according to the Romani contributions to nation-state building:

I am good enough to represent Finland and the whole of Europe in the world, but I am not allowed to enter my local pub ... Also Romani men defended Finland then, when we were at war, and also now we have to fulfil the duties as Finnish citizens and also gain rights for ourselves... (*HS*, 12.8.1998).

It is a rather small group of the Roma who give voice to most articles on Romani matters, while some actually new agendas and claims are raised by a few representatives in their first and only 'moment of fame'. While the cooperation between Romani and majority elite actors seems quite successful on some matters brought to public attention, such as the case of *HS* on discrimination, it simultaneously limits the possible agendas and issues in the newspaper coverage.

Conclusions

This study takes a particular focus on the communicative space of the media and on its role as an arena for negotiation and contestation. The media, in this case the daily press, has the potential of involving all kinds of voices or agents, debating all kinds of issues. Access to the media brings about the power of influencing those claims which successfully reach the public arena.

The narrow agenda on Romani issues covered in the Finnish press reproduces the familiar image of the Roma as outsiders, as entertainers, criminals and victims. While the increasing coverage of issues related to human rights and discrimination highlights the insufficiency of the welfare state in catering for all the different forms of exclusion embedded in a formally equal notion of citizenship, writings on discrimination are still contributing to the construction of Romani identity as that of being victims. This construction is underpinned by the lack of Romani representatives debating discrimination in the press. There is also a surprising shortage of feature stories recognising the Roma not only as representatives of a collective ethnic identity, but as individual citizens with multiple identities triggered in different settings.

Newspaper representatives and other elite groups do criticise the narrow agenda-setting on Romani issues, but only through a *de facto* more multifaceted coverage of Romani issues we can learn about the complex reality and about the different realities of the Romani people in Finland. In spite of the increasing emphasis on multiculturalist journalism and the increasing coverage of Romani issues in Finnish newspapers, the diversity of stories has not increased, rather the opposite.

While the qualitative analysis of claims-making indicates that Romani actors do have the possibility of contesting dominant claims and positions, the claims-making activities are limited to issues which are rather 'safe' and typically justified by making reference to interests of the nation-state, something which is familiar also from other settings, when expressing a sense of solidarity with the nation-state rather than with a trans-national Romani community (Huttunen 1997; Nordberg 2006). Claims for social and linguistic rights, such as the right to learn the Romani language and the right to decent housing, are interlinked with the aim of integrating into the larger community. In general, the reliance upon the redistributive role of the welfare state seems quite stable and claims-making related to socio-economic injustice is rare. Subsequently, the analysis seems to support the

scholarly critique that a politics of identity may divert attention from struggle for economic inequality and social justice (e.g. Fraser 1997). Romani actors who get access to the newspaper arena do, however, constitute a minor group of activists.

It is not possible to draw too large conclusions regarding more recent trends, but perhaps the shift during this millennium towards more specific critical statements and the emphasis on empowerment from within, opens for increasing dialogue between a larger group of Roma and the state apparatuses about how to implement and transform those social and cultural rights which already exist in the form of legislation.

Notes

1. Arguably, the substance of rights does influence the capability to take action as a citizen. Contemporary writing emphasises the need to conceptualise citizenship as a bundle of rights and obligations *as well* as an active practice (Lister 2003).
2. Critical voices have, however, been raised against the increasing influence from other media on behalf of traditional print media and the impact of such a transformation on the citizenry as an active and reflexive producer of media products (Isin & Wood 1999; Sennett 1974).
3. Next to the legacy of political and economic liberalism, Finland's agrarian history has contributed to a strong influence from communitarian political and theoretical thinking (Anttonen 1998: 357).
4. The kind of content analysis used here includes the counting of certain elements in the texts. In this respect it could be labelled as quantitative content analysis. Yet interpretive elements are present also in this kind of analysis. The distinction between qualitative and quantitative content analysis is obviously never clear-cut (Bergström & Boréus 2000). Nonetheless, what distinguishes quantitative content analysis as it is used in this study from the qualitative text analysis is the focus on manifest as opposed to connotative, latent or "between-the-lines" meaning (see Riffe et al 1998: 19, referring to Berelson 1952).
5. The intracoder reliability was checked by recoding a sample six months after the first coding. Using the formula suggested by Holsti (1969), the intracoder reliability was .96 for the topic as well as for the actor variables.
6. The difference between the two newspapers in terms of the coverage of Romani issues was not very significant with regard to the diversity of actors. For this reason the reported results of the content analysis do not distinguish between the two papers. It is also problematic to focus on newspaper comparisons in the content analysis when the *HS* archive procedures possibly generated a more complete sample of articles with a larger share of short news briefs.
7. The legitimisation of immigration control in relation to Romani asylum-seekers is reported in another study (Nordberg 2004).
8. The list of articles was cross-checked against the database of Brage's press archive. This procedure revealed another three articles only.
9. The intracoder reliability was checked by recoding a sample six months after the first coding. Using the formula suggested by Holsti (1969), the variable determining whether an article had a dominant focus on the Roma, or not, had a reliability of 1.0. The variable determining whether an article contained claims, or not, had a reliability of .92.
10. The Advisory Board on Romani Affairs is a consultative body where Roma representatives and the state meet in what is nowadays a permanent institution. Half of the members are members of Romani NGOs and half of the members are representatives of various Ministries.
11. A more accurate example of an attempt to counter the social policy framework surrounding Romani issues is also salient in the repeated suggestion to relocate the Advisory Board on Romani Affairs from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to the Ministry of Education (see e.g. Suonoja & Lindberg 2000).

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Appendix

Table 1. *Articles which Include Claims-Making and has a Dominant Focus on Finnish Roma*

			Claims		
			Yes	No	Total
Major	Yes	Count	186	77	263
		%	62	33,6	49,7
	No	Count	114	152	266
		%	38	66,4	50,3
Total	Count	300	229	529	
	%		100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 2. *The Share of Dominant Actors in Articles Selected or not Selected for the Qualitative Analysis*

		Not Selected	Selected	Total
Actors	Press	44,8	20,0	39,2
	Roma	28,1	48,3	32,7
	Authorities	8,9	13,3	9,9
	Expert	7,9	6,7	7,6
	Other	6,4	5,0	6,1
	Politicians	3,9	6,7	4,6
Total		100,0	100,0	100,0
		203	60	263