Segregation and Exclusion of the Roma in Romanian Education

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Summary
This thesis examines educational segregation and social exclusion of the Roma in Romania from a social justice perspective. The dimensions of distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice are used as a theoretical framework in assessing how segregation and exclusion are obstacles in achieving quality education for the Roma in Romania. In the revised strategy of the government of Romania for the inclusion of the Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority up to 2020, education is highlighted as one of six key domains where measures and actions are needed (Government of Romania, 2014). Academic literature, inclusion strategies, and interviews with Romani parents, teachers, and religious leaders in Romania make up the foundation of the thesis.

The Romanian inclusion strategy claims that “education is the strongest tool in the hands of adults and children from marginalized groups which can raise them out of poverty, both socially and economically” (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 12). Despite this, there are several structural challenges within the Romanian education system and society that increase rather than mend the gap between the Roma and non-Roma. From a perspective of distributional justice, there are social and economic issues met by Roma that reduces the quality of the education through a lack of school supplies, educational staff, and transportation. Regarding the recognition of the Roma, the mismatch between the intention of Roma inclusion, and the reality of exclusion is examined through the example of Romani history, culture, and language in the national curriculum. Third, procedural justice is addressed based on the value of “nothing for the Roma without the Roma” (Gabor, et al., 2014, p. 7). Viewed as intersecting approaches, they challenge how the segregation and exclusion of the Roma in Romania should be met by transformative solutions rather than merely affirmative remedies, in order for the quality of education to be the same regardless of ethnic background.

Many challenges occur when aiming for inclusion of the Roma in Romanian education. In addressing possible solutions and challenges, specific dilemmas are discussed further. The complexity of the matter requires further extensive research. Still, this thesis can contribute to the field of human geography and critical Romani studies with an intersectional social justice perspective. It emphasizes the importance of understanding underlying reasons for the exclusion of the Roma, in order to suggest just and lasting measures for inclusion and the role of institutional actors and social policy.
Preface
Looking back at the past months, I am overwhelmed and grateful for all the people who have contributed and supported me through this master’s project. The initial plan for the project was to do fieldwork in western Ukraine, where I would investigate Ukrainian Roma’s access to quality education. The risk of having to cancel the plans of travelling was always present due to the covid-19 situation, but as the time for departure closed by, a more severe challenge appeared. The escalation of Russian military presence along the Ukrainian borders, including on the Belarusian-Ukrainian border, made the whole world nervous for how the situation would develop. This compelled me to cancel my initial plans only days before departure. A month later, the Russian invasion was a fact.

This resulted in that the first weeks of my master’s project was spent considering and testing various back-up plans. Through the swift help of good people, I was able to change my case and fieldwork to the context of Romania – which notably was named ‘plan D’. Despite the short notice, the fieldwork became better than I could have imagined. Because of close similarities between the status of the Roma in western Ukraine and Romania, there was no need of making significant changes to the research design and problem statement.

If it had not been for the help I have received at every turn, I do not know what I would have done. First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Michael Gentile, who have been available at all hours both during the chaotic first weeks, as well as throughout the project period. Your advice and specific comments and suggestions have been highly appreciated. I would also like to thank my friends in the foundations KPK-Ukraina and House of Mercy for being understanding, flexible and supportive in the facilitation and cancellation of the initially planned fieldwork. Slava Ukraini! Jemima and Maren at the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, thank you for being generous with your advice and practical solutions, including granting the financial support for my fieldwork expenses.

The process of initiating and closing the deal of the Romanian fieldwork was done in a matter of a few days. A great thank you to Runar, Thrine-Lise, Sandu and anyone else being involved in this process, prioritizing my inquiry. The month spent in Romania was not only informative, but I felt welcomed and at home from day one, all thanks to the great people at the office. I would especially like to thank Lavinia and Corina (and frankly everyone at the office and in the field) for the time invested in me and my fieldwork. I am looking forward to
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Thank you to the army of friends for proofreading the thesis and giving me useful feedback. You know who you are, and I am beyond grateful. Thank you, dear friends and family for being interested in my work, praying for me, and keeping up with me through the highs and lows. And last but not least, thank you Jesus for Your guidance, inspiration, and care. Soli deo gloria.

With love,

Hanne Hodne

Oslo, June 2022
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1. Introduction

All the citizens of Romania have equal rights of access to all levels and forms of school education and higher education, as well as to lifelong learning, without any discrimination. (European Commission, 2022a)

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the inclusion of the Roma into the mainstream society has been on the political agenda within and across European countries. In a collective action that aims to close the gap between the Roma and the rest of society, European governments declared the period between 2005-2015 as “the Decade for Roma inclusion” (from now on referred to as ‘the Decade’) (Gabor, et al., 2014). The Roma is often referred to as the largest and most vulnerable ethnic minority in Europe (Bogaert, 2018). This is why there is a pressing need for deliberate action comprising measures that are designed to lead to inclusion of this minority. Almost a decade has passed since ‘the Decade’, but what measures have been taken to mend this gap of social injustice? Have the collective European efforts and strategies resulted in change felt by the Roma in their daily lives? The issues of social justice, discrimination and exclusion are complex, and their manifestations can vary greatly over time and space. This thesis will examine the segregation and exclusion of the Roma in education, using three dimensions of social justice as the theoretical framework – namely distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice. Romania is set as the case for the research, with primary data collected among Romani parents, teachers, and religious leaders.

To understand the Roma as an ethnic minority, one should bear in mind that ‘ethnicity’ in common discourse is often coupled with nationalism, imperialism, racism, and the state (Hall, New Ethnicities, 2006, p. 448). Hall (2006, p. 447) speaks of ethnicity as acknowledging “the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual”. I acknowledge that my perception of ethnicity might influence how the Roma are represented as an ethnic group. To challenge how ethnicity might result in othering and marginalization, a new conception of ethnicity could help broaden our understanding of how different ethnicities contribute to society. Tremlett (2009) draws from Hall when ethnicity is presented as a “subjective sense of who we are”, something held by all people as we are all ethnically located and hold several layers of identities. This plurality of identities is in this thesis
referred to as intersectionality and is important to how we understand the Roma in relation to non-Roma, also in the education system of Romania.

Although the Romani people across Europe and within Romania hold a variety of cultures, traditions, nuances in language, and understanding of what it means to be Romani, there is a sense of common identity. Although the Roma are an ethnic group, they do not have a common homeland. They can rather be identified as a diaspora group as they are dispersed across borders and through the preservation of a common identity different from that of the majority society in which they live (Brubaker, 2005). Examining and analyzing the diversity among the Roma, both within and across borders, is worthy of a dissertation in itself. However, this will not be discussed in detail in this thesis. Yet, it is important to keep in mind the heterogeneity of those persons that make up the Romani ethnic group, just as any other ethnic group, would be diverse. I was regularly reminded throughout my fieldwork by informants and other contacts that this diversity has clear implications on the lived experiences of the Roma in Romania, both regarding discrimination and worldviews.

According to the Council of Europe, the Roma account for approximately 8.3% of the total population in Romania (Government of Romania, 2014). Yet, in the censuses of 2002 and 2011 the number of Romanian citizens declared to be Romani was 2.5% and 3.3% of the total population (Government of Romania, 2014). The methods of collecting the data and the definition of who counts as Romani makes the reported statistics vary a great deal. When relying on self-identification as Romani, one risks excluding those who have repressed their Romani identity due to for example direct or indirect discrimination or prejudices. A census based on official registrations such as birth certificates or other identification papers will not cover the large amount of Roma who are lacking identity documents (Crețan & Turnock, 2009). Other strategies may also be used, but what is clear is that demographic data of Romanian citizens who belong to the Roma minority is currently more a case of interpretation of definition than an objective measurement.

The discrimination felt by the Roma is deeply rooted in both the mindsets and structures of the Romanian society, and the schools are a useful illustration of this. Educational segregation exists on many levels (Farkas, 2014). Inter-school segregation is present when schools hold exclusively Romani students, or the number of non-Romani students are an extreme minority. Among the reasons for this segregation may be residential segregation or ‘white flight’. Intra-
school segregation means that Roma and non-Roma are separated into classes based on their ethnicity. Although the official reason for this division might vary, the reality is ethnic segregation within the schools. A third category is intra-class segregation, which is more difficult to prove. Yet the discrimination inherent in such segregation is serious and is felt personally for the children who experience its ramifications. Among the consequences of these forms of segregation are the maintenance and amplification of the already existing gap between the Roma and non-Roma. This includes for instance lower quality of education and a disproportional number of Romani dropouts before finished 10th grade. Statistics show that the percentage of Romani children who drop out of school before finishing 10th grade, which is the general compulsory level of education in the Romanian education system, is significantly higher compared to Romanian or Hungarian children (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 7). Possible reasons for educational segregation are addressed in this thesis and are further analyzed from a social justice perspective.

1.1 Research question
The objective of this thesis is to examine the causes of educational segregation and exclusion of the Roma, and to suggest solutions on how to move towards an inclusive education system. To accomplish this, the main research question sounds as follows:

*What access to education do the Roma in Romania have, and how do segregation and social exclusion constrain their opportunities for quality education?*

The research question assumes that the segregation and social exclusion of the Roma in Romania is an undeniable fact. Assuming this opens a space to discuss how the exclusion is manifested through policies, the education system, and the Romanian society. Although the main focus will be directed towards social policy, structures, and the role of institutions, deeply rooted prejudices towards the Roma and agency are also included as relevant elements. Each of the three dimensions of social justice applied in this thesis lead to sub-questions that will help answer the main research question:

1. What are the consequences of the unevenly distributed access to quality education of the Roma in Romania?
2. How is Romani history, culture, and language recognized in the education system?
3. How might the inclusion of Romani representatives affect decision-making in developing and implementing policies on education, and how might quota-based representation in education be problematic?

1.2 Limitations
To study the situation and experiences of an ethnic minority from an outside perspective involves inherent weaknesses, as the knowledge sought out cannot be understood solely through information and analysis. The field of critical Romani studies underscores the importance of Romani representation and self-determination in research on such topics (Central European University, n.d.). In this thesis, Romani representatives are given a voice through interviews. Yet, their answers and comments are responses to the questions I have asked, and my analysis is what represents their experiences through this thesis. Critical reflexivity is applied through conversations with supporters and contacts in this project. As an ongoing process of questioning my positionality as researcher and my own underlying worldview and assumptions, I have written down reflections both during and after the fieldwork. Although the process of analyzing my own position as researcher is a difficult one, and a task that cannot be perfected, it is a necessity in striving for a nuanced cross-cultural research project (Dowling, 2016, p. 34). This is further discussed in the methodology chapter.

1.3 Significance
Although the limited scope of this thesis reduces the impact it may have on the research community and in the lives of the Roma in Romania, I argue that the research project has several significant contributions worth acknowledging. Through the framework of social justice, social policy connected to educational segregation and exclusion is systematically analyzed. Such an assessment provides important insights on the underlying challenges that need to be addressed in order for the education system in Romania to be inclusive. As the position of the Roma in the Romanian society is one grounded in a history of discrimination and exclusion, it needs consistent attention to challenge policy makers and civil society to prioritize change. This thesis will join the likes of field research on critical Romani studies bringing perspectives from the current situation of Romania. By building on strategy documents and reports in addition to additional literature and primary data, it seeks to emphasize the importance of a multidimensional approach to social justice and inclusion of the Roma in education. Lauritzen and Nodeland (2018, p. 164) conclude their analysis of
research articles identifying two perspectives that lack from critical Romani studies: to acknowledge the Roma as a resource, where inclusion should happen with and not for them, and an emphasis on how cultural and socio-economic issues intersect. The scope of this thesis is limited, which could have led me to focus on the socio-economic, cultural, or political issues in depth. Rather, I have chosen to include them all and to stress the importance of how they overlap through the dimensions of both distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice.

Alongside this, the thesis contributes to human geography research in uncovering how the Roma do not have equal access to educational spaces of the same quality and level as the non-Roma, and how this is influenced by several scales of political structures. I aim to contribute to increased knowledge and awareness of the educational situation and challenges experienced by the Roma. As strategies have been made and reported on for several decades already, it is clear that ‘business as usual’ is not an adequate approach for change to happen. In addition to increased knowledge and awareness, a space is created for the reflection on the deep roots of attitudes, policies, and discrimination towards the Roma in Romania. When suggesting topics for further research in the conclusion, the importance of recognizing the complex reality of intersecting factors and processes is thus highlighted. The results of this thesis are not adequate to draw definite conclusions on segregation and exclusion in the Romanian education system, but they offer perspectives on systems that proves relevant in the process towards inclusion and for further research.

1.4 Structure of the thesis
Chapter two will present and discuss the theoretical framework used in the analysis. Key concepts are introduced and various perspectives on these are assessed. In chapter three I present the research design and methods used in the data collection and analysis. The thesis is built on a qualitative research method, and the strategy of data collection is introduced and argued for. An explanation of the data analysis will follow, ending the chapter with considerations important in a cross-cultural setting and an evaluation of rigor. Chapter four gives an introduction of the history of the Roma in Romania, setting the stage for the case analysis. Much of the historical, cultural, and social status of the Roma in Romania is relevant also beyond the specific national context. In this chapter, international and national strategies on Roma inclusion in education are introduced, with some reports on progress seen to date. The education system of Romania will be presented here. Chapter five contains the analysis
of the research questions, with a systematic review of a distributional, recognitional, and procedural perspective on educational segregation. The sub-questions presented in the introduction will guide the analysis, with both primary and secondary data substantiating the arguments. Then, the analysis will proceed to a discussion of possible solution to the issues discussed. The main focus is desegregation problematics and intersectional solutions. Finally, I summarize my main findings and draw a final conclusion in chapter six, ending of the thesis with suggestions for further research.
2. Theory
This chapter will introduce and examine a chosen selection of the most central ideas and concepts relevant for the thesis. I will discuss how the Roma as an ethnic minority is understood and represented, as well as how Romaphobia challenges underlying attitudes that influences the focus of social policy, such as the Romanian inclusion strategy of the Roma. Concepts like ethnicity, intersectionality, and segregation will then be elaborated, before I present the theoretical framework in more detail. To untangle the complex matters of social exclusion, discrimination, and access to education for Roma I have chosen to adapt the dimensions of social justice by Bennett, Blythe, Cisneros-Montemayor, Singh and Sumaila (2019) as my theoretical framework. This will give a multifaceted view on how the access to quality education is influenced not only of the physical presence of a school in a given district, but also on issues of distribution, recognition, and inclusion and representation in policy processes and the education system. It also shows how the lack of inclusion of the Roma in the education system enhance the systematic discrimination and exclusion of this specific group of people. Bennett et al. (2019) introduces the framework in working with just transformations to sustainability where justice is a product of just distribution, recognition, and procedures. The framework will be adapted to the context of the Romani population in Romania, informed by the social exclusion problematic introduced in Kabeer (2000) and Fraser (1997).

When approaching and analyzing social justice problematics, there is a need for critical reflexivity from the researcher’s perspective in addition to knowledge and awareness of the context one studies. Being aware of the context and the relevant actors involved, it becomes clear that there is no single actor or institution that might solve the issue of exclusion and segregation alone. That is why my analysis approaches various aspects of social justice, social exclusion, and segregation, with an emphasize on how they are deeply connected and should be integrated in the work of bringing social justice to education. The categories of inter-school, intra-school and intra-class segregation are all structures that can be found in the Romanian context (Farkas, 2014). Inspired by my fieldwork in Romania, I have chosen to focus mainly on inter-school segregation and to suggest how desegregation might play an important role in the inclusion processes of the Roma in education. The focus on inter-school segregation was chosen as a result of the emphasis made by several of my informants. They explained that the reason why there were mostly Romani children in the schools in their area,
was that non-Romani children were transferred to other schools. This is elaborated on in the analysis.

2.1 Defining ‘Roma’
In her article on Romani representation, Tremlett (2009) introduces three approaches to Romani studies presented below. There is wide consensus on the fact that the Roma minority is a heterogeneous group despite being categorized under the same name (Dunajeva, 2021; McGarry, 2014; Tremlett, 2009). What is challenging, is to stay consistent in how one discusses the Roma without generalizing them as being exactly that, one homogenous group. To deal with this issue, Stewart (1997, p. 28) chose an approach where he sees Romani identity as something dynamic and continuously remade in relations with their significant others, rather than a fixed ethnic identity inherited from their ancestors and community. This perspective contests the assumptions on the Roma as a fixed group which has been fueling stereotypes on who and what Romani people are. Through his arguments he also renders the fixation on the Indian origin of the Roma as irrelevant and exoticizing, as the Romani identity is one constructed mainly through social activity and not inheritance (Stewart, 1997). Despite Stewart’s influence and popularity in the field of Romani studies, his thoughts and claims have been criticized for being inconsistent and not to take into account the socio-economic status of many Roma (Tremlett, 2009). By decoupling the Roma from historical, as well as social, political, and economic influence, one might create a romanticized or ‘eternal’ Romani identity that does not reflect reality.

Critical to Stewart’s approach, Ladányi and Szelényi (2003) introduce an alternative perspective viewing the status of the Roma through history of social and economic inclusion and exclusion. Despite denying that Hungarian Roma all constitute an underclass, they continue using underclass as “the best explanation of changes in the social condition of the Roma since the decline of the state socialist economy” (Ladányi & Szelényi, 2003, p. 1). Similar to Stewart they convey that the Romani identity is socially constructed, although they emphasize the focus on socio-economic status rather than culture as not to decouple Romani identity from other central factors, especially of those who live under poor conditions (Tremlett, 2009). Although they strive to move away from simplifying terms of the Roma, Tremlett (2009, p. 159) criticizes their approach of “reifying a certain ‘ideal prototype’” of the Roma. She argues that they categorize practices into “good” and “bad” Romani cultures, and as a result represent the Roma in homogenizing terms.
Tremlett (2009, p. 150) answers to the approaches of Stewart and Ladányi and Szelényi by suggesting a method where one talks about Romani people based on theories from authors of the British Cultural Studies (BCS). In their research, they were mainly addressing the history and experiences of Black and Asian minorities in the UK. Despite the difference in context, some key points are still transferable when seeking a non-homogenizing and de-essentializing approach. The first point she proposes is to research the non-Roma alongside the Roma, and recognize ethnicity as something non-exclusive to minorities, but as an identity marker held by all people in one way or another. Second, she encourages to foreground context as a starting point for the research instead of first addressing Romani ethnicity and then identifying what issues they might meet. The last aspect she emphasizes is that of “letting go of the “good-Gypsy”-“bad-Gypsy” contestation” (Tremlett, 2009, p. 164). The combination of these elements intends to de-essentialize research and representation of the Roma, without ignoring or undermining ethnicity as a whole (Tremlett, 2009).

In broad terms, Stewart (1997) talks of a dynamic identity making perspective, Ladányi and Szelényi (2003) offer a socio-historical approach, while Tremlett (2009) builds on BCS for a de-essentializing approach to Romani ethnicity. These are but a few points of view that make up a myriad of reflections around this field of study. One could also add those who choose to focus on political identity (e.g., McGarry, 2014) or self-representation of Romani ethnicity as striven towards by Dunajeva (2021). How Romani identity is understood have implications for what rights the Roma are given and which responses are suggested and implemented to challenges regarding the Roma (Bogaert, 2018, p. 85). For this thesis, I have chosen to approach Romani ethnicity and identity from an intersectional perspective, where social policy plays a vital part to assure access to quality education for the Roma in Romania. Through this approach I lean on the knowledge and reflections of others, such as the above-mentioned perspectives.

2.2 Romaphobia
Racism towards the Roma in Europe is both a historical and contemporary issue. They have been racialized as different and romanticized as exotic in the European society (Vrabiescu, 2014). Another word used to address the Roma is ‘Gypsies’. This name stems from misconceptions of the Roma being of Egyptian descent and have over the years absorbed numerous negative connotations and stereotypes (Dunajeva, 2021). The last decades, the term ‘Roma’ has replaced ‘Gypsies’ in an attempt to oppose the latent prejudices it often brings
(Dunajeva, 2021). Still, to change the terms without reflecting on its consequences might create more harm than good. How the Roma have been represented over the years have implications on how they are viewed today, and how they are treated in official policies on educational inclusion. In his book on racial cities, Giovanni Picker (2017, p. 10) stresses how the removal of words such as ‘race’, only to replace it with a less politically implicated ‘ethnicity’, risk to suppress rather than solve the issue at hand. The same can be said about uncritically removing the word ‘gypsy’ without acknowledging how deeply seated this term and its associations are, for instance, within the Romanian society. In this thesis, I will use the term Roma when I speak of the ethnic minority addressed. ‘Romani’ is the adjective of the term, while ‘Romany’ refers to the Romani language. Still, I will emphasize the importance of seeing the Roma and their situation in a historical and geographical context. Although there are strategies developed with the aim of improving the social and economic situation of the Roma in Romania, this does not mean that negative attitudes towards them have magically disappeared. Institutions and social policies have a responsibility to acknowledge how social exclusion is a result of discriminatory systems of and prejudices and should not blame their marginalized situation on the Roma themselves (Vrabiescu, 2014). I argue in this thesis that racism has not disappeared in parallel with political intentions of inclusion of the Roma in education in Romania.

Several concepts can be found in the discussion on racism towards the Roma, among them are antiziganism and Romaphobia. The former can be defined as an ideology that is “founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanization and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination” (Vrabiescu, 2014, p. 144). This blatant form of discriminatory attitude has to some degree decreased in Romania, illustrated in official documents and policies where they acknowledge the Roma as an ethnic minority in which many belong to the Romanian nationality. But to challenge the assumption that racism disappears with the removal of the word ‘race’, we can use the term Romaphobia. Instead of being grounded in ideology, Romaphobia is a structural form of racism that is “built on the denial of racism against Romanis” (Vrabiescu, 2014, p. 145). The consequences of a transition from antiziganism to Romaphobia can result in that racism towards the Roma are addressed as negative while still not being dealt with in a proper manner through real structural change. This hidden form of racism can be even more damaging as it “refuses to acknowledge ongoing systematic discrimination while blaming the target group for their stigma and unwillingness to adapt” (Vrabiescu, 2014, p. 146).
2.3 **Ethnicity and intersectionality**

Romania holds primarily two ethnic minorities: Roma and Hungarians, who are the two most numerous ethnic groups in addition to the Romanian majority (Government of Romania, 2014). Because of the difficulties in establishing the exact numbers of Romani people in Romania, statistics regarding the reality of education level might also hide behind the numbers. Still, it is safe to say that Romani children hold a disproportionate low level of education compared to children of Romanian or Hungarian ethnicity (Government of Romania, 2014). To understand the different factors that influence this unequal distribution, I will highlight the perspective of intersectionality. In line with Tremlett’s (2009, p. 163) thoughts on “bringing the idea of hybridity to heterogeneity”, intersectionality offers a perspective which identifies and examines the dynamics between identity formations such as ethnicity, nationality, and socio-economic status. There are indeed many factors to include if one searches to understand the complexity of segregation and exclusion of the Roma.

In this thesis, I choose to focus on ethnicity as one out of a myriad of identity markers that makes up a person’s or group’s identity. In addition, ethnicity is not something held only by minorities. According to Hall (1996, p. 447), we are all “ethnically located”, and thus are a result of a particular history, culture, and place. How strongly one identifies with one’s ethnicity, and in which situation this identity marker is mobilized will vary across time and space. Despite the plurality of identities held by all people, the way that they are represented plays a role in how they are understood. The narrative that constructs an ethnic identity, such as the Romani ethnicity, is told not only by themselves but also by those who do not bear this identity (Dahl, 2013, p. 202). What the intersectionality perspective seeks to emphasize, is that the narrative of one identity marker should not, and cannot, be understood separately from other factors such as gender or socio-economic status. They are closely intertwined, and the combination of a person’s several identity markers is what makes up their experiences and status in society.

2.4 **Critical approach to social justice**

A rise of material inequality is found within and across countries all over the world (Fraser, 1997, p. 11). Simultaneously, an awareness of human rights, interdependency, and social justice issues are communicated on many levels of society. How social justice is understood and theorized varies greatly on the perspective and world view one derives from. According to Fraser (1997, p. 13), we can categorize matters of justice based on the distinction between
socio-economic injustice and cultural or symbolic injustice. She connects the former category with issues of interests and redistribution, while the latter is more concerned with identity and recognition (Kabeer, 2000, p. 86). This is a binary understanding that in itself does not cover the complexity of reality. Ten years later, she added the dimension of representation to her conceptualization of social justice (Fraser, 2007).

In human geography the issue of social justice first gained special attention in 1971 during a meeting of the Association of American Geographers (Smith, 2000, p. 1149). To this day, a number of researchers have contributed to the theorization of social justice. This includes David Harvey (1973, p. 117) and his notion of “a just distribution justly arrived at”, John Rawls’s thoughts on justice as “the first virtue of social institutions” (Rawls, 1971), and Nancy Fraser’s redistribution-recognition dilemma (Fraser, 1997). In other spheres of society, such as in activism and politics, there is also disagreement on what are the key aspects of social justice and how these should be addressed.

A factor central to the chosen theoretical framework is to reflect on who are the subjects in the transformations to social justice. The words distribution, recognition, and procedure require active participation from the groups, people, and institutions who have the main power to redistribute, recognize the excluded and invite actors to involvement in decision making and governance processes. These actors have to carry their responsibility while also acknowledging the agency, knowledge and capabilities of the groups who are currently systematically disadvantaged. The categories of distributional and recognitional justice, in addition to a third perspective of procedural justice, will be discussed separately before they are integrated in the analysis. The distinctions between the three are made for analytical purposes. Examining the case of the Roma and education, these factors are intertwined in complex webs that varies across space and time. By abstracting from these realities, the analysis will attempt to present a critical assessment, noting that it is a simplification of the real world (Fraser, 1997, p. 13). Afterwards, a critical assessment of how these aspects intersect will lead to a suggestion of an integrative and comprehensive approach to social justice.
2.5 Three dimensions of social justice

The definition of *distributional justice* by Bennett et al. (2019, p. 5) emphasize the “fairness in the distribution of benefits and harms of decisions and actions to different groups across space”. In light of Fraser’s (1997) perspective on redistribution, I will focus on how the interests of the Roma in Romania is met compared to non-Roma. Another key factor is that distributional justice is not only a matter of quantity, but quality. The mandatory education in Romania starts from preparatory class and lasts up to 10\textsuperscript{th} grade (European Commission, 2022c). In theory, public education is free and of equal access to all, regardless of ethnic or socio-economic background (European Commission, 2022c). This statement will be questioned through a distributional justice perspective further on in the thesis, and is challenged by the first sub-question: What are the consequences of the unevenly distributed access to quality education of the Roma in Romania?

The second perspective of the theoretical framework is *recognitional justice*. It opens up for recognition of identity politics as important to social justice through acknowledging “distinct rights, worldviews, knowledge, needs, livelihoods, histories, and cultures of different groups” (Bennett, et al., 2019, p. 4). According to both national and international policy strategies, Romania has been systematically working towards the inclusion of the Roma in education since the early 21\textsuperscript{st} century (Government of Romania, 2011; Bojadjieva & Kushen, 2014).

The perspective of recognitional justice challenges these strategies which has explicit goals of “improving the socio-economic status and social inclusion of the Roma population” (Bojadjieva & Kushen, 2014) and prioritizing “educational inclusion and equal opportunities for all children” (Government of Romania, 2011). The recognitional dimension of social justice has to seriously address the implications the marginalization of the Roma in a historical perspective has had, and how this has direct influence on the situation today.

Schools are institutions with the power and responsibility to help create nuanced worldviews of how a society is developed, governed, and shaped, and is thus an important space for recognizing the Roma. Fraser (1997, p. 24) underscores the need, not only for recognition, but transformative deconstruction of underlying cultural-valuational structures. For the Roma in Romania to experience true recognitional justice, the remedies in place should not only strengthen their cultural identity and structural recognition; it would also have to “change everyone’s sense of self” (Fraser, 1997, p. 24).
Representation is a central aspect of the third and last dimension of social justice applied in this thesis. Procedural justice is about “the level of participation and inclusiveness of decision making and the quality of governance processes” (Bennett, et al., 2019, p. 5). There is a long history of the oppression and exclusion of the Roma in Romania that also influences their positions and opportunities today (Costache, 2021). For social justice to be realized, all relevant stakeholders have to be invited at the table where decisions are made and voices are heard (Bennett, et al., 2019). It is also important to ensure that the inclusion of marginalized groups and actors is not a means of filling the quotas, but a sincere effort to respect and facilitate for cultural awareness and to value their contributions as important. In the schools, Romani representation is also relevant. Both through teachers and staff, and in the form of mixed classes of Roma and non-Roma. Through the perspective of procedural justice, the question of how the inclusion of Romani representatives might influence policymaking and questions of quota-based policies is brought forward. In addition, I will address how quota-based representation might also be problematic.

2.6 The policy dilemma
In her critical work on justice with a focus on the post-socialist condition, Fraser (1997) identifies a dilemma encompassing bivalent collectivities where issues of redistribution and recognition could be regarded as mutually exclusive. As Kabeer (2000, p. 86) explains it: “The logic of [bivalent collectivities’] situation demands both redistribution, which recognizes their right to be treated equally, and recognition, which requires respect for their specific identities.” In order to create social policies that captures this complexity and intersectionality of social categories and groups, there is a need of an integrated, transformative response. This requires not only a combination of redistribution and recognition remedies, but an approach to social justice that reimagines how the factors involved intersect (Fraser, 1997). As an alternative to the concept of bivalent collectivities, I will use the term intersectionality. The Roma in Romania illustrate an example of intersectional identities and dynamics, going even further than the bivalent categories of economic and cultural aspects. An intersectional approach that combines socio-economic status, gender, and neighborhood with ethnicity is necessary to understand the situation of the Roma in Romania. The interaction between these multiple identities is also essential when one is to create and adapt social policies towards social justice. If the solutions suggested address only, for instance, matters of redistribution without identifying and admitting the underlying structural causes, the results will doubtfully be transformational and long lasting (Kyuchukov & New, 2016). Rather, there is a need for a
holistic understanding of the issue that pursue restructuring policies which aim to transform and not only adapt (Fraser, 1997). Bogaert (2018, p. 85) suggests an approach that explicitly targets the Roma in social policies, without making them *exclusively* for the Roma. In this way, there is created a space that acknowledge the multiplicity of factors and identity markers relevant for policymaking.

2.7 Segregation
The tendency of residential segregation between socio-economic groups is growing in Europe (Tammaru, Marcin´ Czak, Aunap, van Ham, & Janssen, 2020). In this thesis, however, segregation is understood as something more than the “uneven distribution of ethnic groups over neighborhoods in a city” (van Ham & Tammaru, 2016, p. 953). Although residential ethnic segregation often reduces the contact between different ethnic groups, it is not the only relevant factor. Van Ham and Tammaru (2016) emphasize how research is important in order to also address social domains of segregation. There is an inherent aspect of discrimination in segregation, where a dominant group profit from the marginalization of a minority (Bogaert, 2018). Yet, it can be contested whether the segregation and barriers to social integration of Roma is indeed profiting the society as a whole (Farkas, 2014). When addressing the opportunities and constraints Romani children experience in school, an emphasis on how segregation is discriminatory add an additional layer of purpose to the analysis. Educational segregation might appear as ethnically segregated classes or schools, or differential treatment within a class of mixed ethnic background. The result is often sub-standard quality of education, whether it is because of sub-standard curriculum, low expectations or lacking school supplies and other resources (Farkas, 2014). To understand how educational segregation share common underlying factors with other forms of segregation and exclusion is what might help us understand the complexity of the situation of the Roma in Romania. In this thesis, educational segregation of the Roma will also be connected to a historical context of marginalization and discrimination. It will address how spatial and social segregation of ethnic minorities is problematic as it often leads to ripple effects of exclusion, othering, discrimination, and racism. Or is it the other way around? A historical perspective on segregation and social exclusion will help inform the relation between these issues and to further investigate whether and how spatial and social separation reproduce inequality and segregation.
2.8 Social exclusion and social policy
To apply the concept of social exclusion to critical analysis, it initially requires a delimitation of the concept. Summed up, social exclusion appears when:

The various institutional mechanisms through which resources are allocated and value assigned operate in such a way as to systematically deny particular groups of people the resources and recognition which would allow them to participate fully in the life of that society. (Kabeer, 2000, p. 86)

In this thesis social exclusion is perceived in light of social policies and institutions, with an emphasis on how social exclusion is a consequence of the active production of disadvantage, and not as an inherent trait or a random outcome (Kabeer, 2000). Yet, one could ask if all forms of exclusion is necessarily ‘bad’, and conversely if all forms of inclusion is ‘good’ (Kabeer, 2000, p. 83). Further on in the analysis I will approach this question through the policy dilemma by discussing how some forms of inclusion of the Roma might undermine other intersecting aspects through a form of assimilation. In the discussion of the research question of this thesis, institutions and actors in positions of power have a central place. It is not to undermine the agency of individual actors but has the intention of placing responsibility where I argue the weight of the responsibility is due.
3. Research design, data, and methods
The aim of getting a more nuanced understanding of the educational situation of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) has been central when designing the research project. The methods of data collection and analysis narrow down the scope of the research and open the opportunity of systematic approach to the given topic. Reflections on how the methodological choices have been influenced by positionality, cultural issues and ethical considerations will be discussed in this chapter. First, I will present which methods were used, and why this approach was chosen.

3.1 Qualitative research in human geography
This thesis is built on a qualitative approach to answer the research question and sub-questions. The primary data were collected during a one month’s fieldtrip to Romania, using semi-structured interviews. The reason why I chose a qualitative approach built on concepts of education, social justice, and the case of the Roma is to be able to investigate how systems and structures have an impact on people’s lived experiences (Winchester & Rofe, 2016). Through qualitative interviews, these experiences were elucidated from several points of view. In addition, this choice of approach was to some degree influenced by my interpretive community and personal interests. In being a part of the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo for five years, it has influenced which topics, theories, and methods I have come to know (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 118). According to Winchester and Rofe (2016, p. 5) qualitative research is in broad terms either dealing with individual experiences or social structures, which suits the topic of segregation and exclusion well. These categories are not mutually exclusive. On the contrary, they are closely intertwined. But by choosing one or the other, the purpose of the research is narrowed down for more detailed analysis. This project aims to elucidate how social structures prevent opportunities to the fundamental right of quality education for a specific and historically marginalized group of people. A variety of perspectives on this issue was found through interviews with different informants during fieldwork in Romania. Although I focus on social policy and institutions, I found that individuals do have agency to influence structures and their position within the system. A specific example of this is presented in the analysis, where the feedback of Romani parents opened up for their children being taught in their mother tongue. On the axis between the agency of individuals and social structures there are important power relations that influence how the education system is working. The overall purpose of this thesis is to investigate the role of social policy and institutions in the
segregation and exclusion of the Roma from quality education. A strength of qualitative research method is its usefulness when exploring the complex connections between people and place (Winchester & Rofe, 2016, p. 3). The situation of the Roma, especially in regard to segregation, makes an interesting case from this perspective. During the fieldwork in Romania, I visited three different areas. Individual experiences and opinions from each location contributes to the analysis of the research question.

Defining a research question has been a process that has involved several alterations along the way. It started with the broader perspective of social consequences of the segregation of ethnic minorities. The process of narrowing it down to a more specific question of education and the Romani context was informed and inspired by relevant literature. Prior to the data collection, the research question was exclusively addressing Roma living in segregated communities. This was partly motivated by personal observations of such communities in Ukraine and pre-existing assumptions, and partly by literature on the Roma minority in CEE. Yet, through the fieldwork and interview process I learned that this would be restrictive when seeking to understand the heterogeneity and reality of the Roma’s access to quality education in Romania. Therefore, I chose a main question that addresses the Roma in Romania as a diverse but general category, with a focus on segregation in both spatial and social terms. Building on this, sub-questions work as a way to go deeper into relevant aspect of the research topic.

A characteristic of geographical research is that it connects social realities to processes on different scales. In this thesis, policies established on local, national, and international scale are seen in relation to the lived experiences of individuals and communities of the Roma in Romania. When analyzing the distributional, recognitional and procedural elements of social justice, these levels of policymaking, and the agency of individuals and communities are used to gain a comprehensive understanding. The temporal aspect of historical influence on the current social and political situation is also taken into account. Although the history of the Roma in Romania is a topic that deserve an entire thesis, and more so, this is not the purpose here. Yet, without recognizing historical influence on how the current reality has come to be, it is impossible to understand why issues of segregation and exclusion exist, and to propose relevant, context specific solutions to the issues at hand. Another key issue is the dynamic between rural and urban spaces. Distance in both physical and cultural terms have been brought forward as obstacles that create distance between Romani and non-Romani
students. The concepts of scale, temporality, and space are inherent aspects of the research project. The qualitative approach of the research is valuable to identify relations in light of these concepts. Qualitative research offers perspectives, not only on how things are supposed to be according to policies and established structures, but also how they are experienced and decided. In other words, I will examine how social structures are sustained, modified, and opposed instead of solely identifying their form and nature (Winchester & Rofe, 2016, p. 7).

3.2 The case
The selection of Romania as the area for my case was relevant because of the significant number of Roma living there, the admission into the EU which involved requirements on minority rights, and a particular history regarding the Roma being held as slaves for approximately 500 years. In the preparations for the master project, literature on the situation of the Roma in CEE and recent international and national strategies of Roma inclusion in education was used to specify a relevant case study. Coupled with access to a network of people and organizations who work with issues connected to the educational situation of the Roma in Romania, the central region of Romania was chosen for the task. But the purpose of the case is not just to narrow down the area where participants of the data collection are recruited. It should also be able to present an answer to the question “what is the case a case of?” (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 121). The case of the Roma in Romania and their access to education illustrates the exclusion of a group based on their ethnic background. It shows how the educational and political system responds to the rights and particular situation of an ethnic minority, in addition to how factors such as long-lasting marginalization and social segregation play a significant role. The Roma in Romania and in CEE as an ethnic minority are a highly diverse group, and the explicit experiences of the participants in the project are not representative of them all. Still, the case reflects a situation which is relevant and can be adjusted to other places and people across CEE, and perhaps even beyond. The case study requires thorough processes of reflexivity, cross-cultural understanding, and humility (Howitt & Stevens, 2016). Although academic literature, policy reports and people with close ties and extensive knowledge on the case of the Roma in Romania were consulted as part of my fieldwork preparations and conduction, it was not possible to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of their situation from an outside perspective over the short time span of the research. This will be further discussed in the section on cross-cultural research and rigor.
3.3 Participants
As with the particular case chosen for the research, the participants of the qualitative data collection were not expected to be representative of the heterogenous group of the Roma in Romania, nor in CEE (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 124). They were asked to participate in order to share their experiences, thoughts, and opinions. Together this shed light on the case of the segregation and exclusion of the Roma in education beyond written academic and political papers. Collecting their experiences and opinions did contribute with insights that not only confirmed assumptions on the reasons and causes of segregation and exclusion. It also challenged the importance of existing arguments and contributed opinions contrary to what academic literature suggest on educational segregation. This strengthens the analysis in regard to valuing various representations on the matter (Dunn, 2016, p. 150).

When selecting the participants, two methods of purposive sampling were used. The initial approach of criterion sampling was applied by identifying key criterions for the three subgroups interviewed (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 124). The contact with the informants recruited through criterion sampling was made through coordinators from an international NGO with a local office in Romania. They work in several regions, many of which had significant numbers of Roma according to the national census in 2011 (Recensământul populației și al locuințelor, 2011). The groups were chosen to represent the perspective of parents who themselves are Roma, teachers who work in areas with a significant proportion of Roma in the community, and religious leaders with close ties to Romani communities. The first group was chosen to give voice and recognition to the lived experiences of Romani people. These participants were central to understand how the topic is relevant for the Roma. It would also have been hypocritical not to include them, as the framework for the critical analysis consists of recognitional justice as one of three main perspectives. To which degree the Romani parents were given a space for genuine self-representation is a topic for further discussion below. In addition, the initial contact with the Romani parents was made through the help of my contacts in the various places visited in Romania. This means that the people asked to participate were not sampled only based on the area in which they lived, but also based on their relationship with my contacts. Conscious or unconscious factors may have made these specific people seem more able to answer my questions than others. For instance, none of the Romani informants lived in clearly segregated settlements, but in neighborhoods close by to non-Romani families. This excludes the Roma who live in segregated communities from being represented, which could also represent a socio-economic group.
even more marginalized than the ones interviewed, from bringing their experiences to this thesis. The interviews with the teachers were intended to provide an inside perspective from the classroom, and to present a view of the implication of the education system. Most of the teachers asked to participate were contacted because of their connection to organizations doing social work among vulnerable and poor people, including to a large extent Roma. They represent a diverse selection of teachers, starting from preparatory classes, going through university, also including after-school teachers. Their experiences varied according to the level at which they taught, and other considerations has been made related to context and subjectivity. The purpose of approaching religious leaders was to learn from their experiences as community leaders and social justice agents. The religious leaders all had a particular role as ‘bridge builders’ between the different ethnic groups within their society. Romania is a country of which close to 93 % of the population identify as Christians (Evason, 2019). As religion has such a central role in both private and public life in Romania, it was relevant to acknowledge and listen to people in position as community leaders. The religious leaders included an orthodox priest and two pastors of protestant churches. Because of their relations and contacts with a large group of people, they worked as gatekeepers to knowledge of the broader experience of Romani communities over time (Winchester & Rofe, 2016).

The number of participants were 16 in total. Eight were Romani parents, five were, or had recently been, working as teachers, and three were religious leaders, two of whom had past teaching experience. Six of them were selected through opportunistic sampling through contact with people I met along the way (Stratford & Bradshaw, 2016, p. 124). The fieldwork entails acquiring knowledge about the context of the case, as well as conducting interviews. While learning the context, I encountered people that were either interested in participating in the project themselves or were able to introduce me to relevant participants. These participants were important for the fieldwork as they contributed with new, and sometimes unexpected perspectives. For instance, the two after-school teachers that participated in the project brought interesting perspectives as their role was somehow split between the school system on one side, and the community on the other. The number and selection of participants were chosen to represent a diversity of perspectives and experiences. As the research project had limited resources and a short time frame, this restricted the number of participants invited to participate.
3.4 Preparing for data collection
Prior to data collection, I received approval from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) based on an application presenting what types of information would be collected and which measures were made in order to ensure privacy and anonymity of the informants. This ensured compliance with applicable personal data protection legislation. The interview groups of Romani parents, teachers, and religious leaders represent three different points of view in the case of the Roma’s access to quality education. Thus, they required different approaches during the interviews (Dunn, 2016). The preparation involved creating separate interview schedules of well-formulated questions for each participant group, divided into general categories (Dunn, 2016). These were to be used to steer the interviews. As my personal experience with academic interviews was limited, developing the interview schedule was also a way of preparing myself as an interviewer (Dunn, 2016, p. 153). Before conducting the interviews, the schedules were revised in dialogue with the translator based on her feedback on cultural issues. The research schedule for the interviews with the Romani parents proved to be especially at risk of addressing sensitive issues in what could be experienced as a disrespectful way. In light of the new insights, the remaining interview schedules were also revised, although to a lesser extent. The result were more culturally sensitive interview schedules. In addition to this, my awareness increased concerning how I as a young, female researcher and foreigner would not be able to fully comprehend how some words, topics, and questions could stir up sensitive issues that should be avoided. General information was given to those asked to participate, followed by a plan for the date and time slot for the interviews. On the day of the interview, a more detailed description of the project’s purpose was provided. The participants gave informed consent to participate in the interviews through signatures. The interviews were recorded, and to ensure safe processing and storage of the recorded data, I used the application ‘Diktafon’ developed by the University of Oslo, which ensures a high degree of information security.

3.5 Implementation
The semi-structured interviews were conducted with the help of a translator between English and Romanian. Addressing situations concerning a marginalized ethnic minority should be approached cautiously, which led me to use a creative model based on creating a relational atmosphere during the interview (Dunn, 2016, p. 164). While emphasizing the formality of the visit and interview through the introduction of project, the actual conversation aimed to keep a non-threatening and empathic tone. This was particularly important when meeting the
Roma informants. To accomplish a relaxed atmosphere, I was also aware of the importance of non-verbal communication and the phrasing of questions (Dunn, 2016). When in doubt whether a question would be insulting or not, I would start the question by stressing that the informant should feel free not to answer if it felt uncomfortable.

The interviews were conducted with questions asked according to a pyramid structure. This means that easy-to-answer questions were asked as a start, e.g., addressing the role of the informant connected to the school and community. This would in turn open up for follow-up questions that facilitated for deeper reflections (Dunn, 2016, p. 156). In some cases, where the informant showed willingness to answer on more sensitive issues, the interview developed into a hybrid of a pyramid and a funnel structure. In other words, after asking the non-threatening questions and receiving their reflections, more sensitive issues were introduced (Dunn, 2016, p. 157). Regarding sensitivity, there was a significant difference between Romani parents on the one hand, and teachers and religious leaders on the other. The latter groups were asked questions regarding a topic on which they have extensive knowledge and experiences, but it was not as personal to them as with the Roma. A couple of interviews were also made in English without the need of a translator. These interviews, compared to those with the help of a translator, illustrated how the use of an intermediary hampers the flow and the quality of the conversation. The interviews were all recorded, as approved by the informants. This made it possible to stay more attentive to the informant as they spoke, while still making short notes of key topics and answers.

3.6 Challenges
During different stages of the data collection, challenges occurred that might influence the analysis and interpretation of the data. Language barriers and formulation of questions was among the challenges to the quality of the interviews. Most questions were based on key words in the interview schedule yet formulated on the spot aiming for an informal atmosphere. Follow-up questions made it possible to ask for reflections, but as the formulations were made spontaneously, their accuracy and relevance would vary (Dunn, 2016). Further, the constant need of translation made the communication more fragmented. In a situation not dependent on translation, follow-up questions would appear more naturally, and the informant’s wording could be echoed. When interviewing across languages, the message communicated between the interviewer and the informant is highly dependent on the translator’s ability to choose correct wording. This also includes dependency on the translator
to be familiar with the cultural context and his or her ability to create a bridge between the interviewer and informant if necessary. There is also an inherent risk that the translator would unconsciously slide into the role of the interviewer in the effort to make the communication swift (Kvale, Brinkmann, Anderssen, & Rygge, 2015, pp. 174-174). In an attempt to deal with translation challenges, I was mindful of the non-verbal communication of both translator and informant. Some interviews were characterized by short answers and simple responses that did not necessarily reflect the complexity of the issue. Yet, the non-verbal communication, e.g. body language and smiling, in most of the interviews was perceived as honest, engaged, and relaxed.

3.7 Secondary data collection
In addition to the primary data collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews, it has been essential to utilize academic literature, policy strategies, and reports in the analysis and interpretation of the research. A combination of geography-, education-, minority- and development studies is used to cross-check the findings of the interviews with former research. The process of collecting secondary data has evolved alongside the development of the research problem. Furthermore, political strategies aimed at Roma inclusion on both international and national scale are relevant in connecting theory to the case. The political strategies inform us on the official attitudes and priorities of political institutions. What they define as the problem will necessarily set the agenda for possible solutions. The reports that analyze the strategies offer a more critical voice to how the policies are realized. Triangulation of primary data, academic literature and policy strategies and reports is then the foundation for the analysis and interpretation offering a variety of perspectives on the research question and sub-questions (Winchester & Rofe, 2016, p. 20).

3.8 Data analysis
The method of thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. The first step of the process started when the interviews were transcribed. Through working with the data and processing the responses and reflections of the informants, I got an overview and idea of which topics were relevant and interesting. The next step involved coding. In the first round of coding the interviews were tagged with codes that reflected what the informants were stating, in light of the overall aim of the project (Cope, 2016, p. 378). The codebooks for the three different groups of informants all addressed the same issues, but the codes varied according to the viewpoint and role of the informant. For the Roma parents, codes like
“school”, “parenting” and “living conditions” were used. Teachers addressed “school system” and “curriculum” as central topics. For the religious leaders, the social aspects of “bridging communities” and “discrimination” played an important role. Further along in the thematic analysis, they were cross-checked and interpreted with one perspective nuancing and informing the other.

When all the interviews were coded according to the respective codebooks, the codes were categorized into analytical themes connected to the theoretical framework of distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice (Cope, 2016, p. 379). This was also a process of evaluation, where the importance of the various codes was decided and those which were beyond the scope of the thesis were removed. Hence, the analytical themes were used as a strategy to reduce, organize, and explore the data (Cope, 2016, p. 377). This process is not a linear process, but one that looks back and adapts to new findings and perspectives that occur along the way. Hence, the interpretation of the data continued on into the writing process (Cope, 2016, p. 387).

3.9 Cross-cultural research
A large number of studies on the Roma have been conducted from an outside perspective by non-Roma and aim to understand and represent their experiences and challenges. This has resulted in several critiques of narratives that romanticize and essentialize the Roma, rather than presenting analyses that reflect true diversity and intersectionality (Dunajeva, 2021). However, research by outsiders might also contribute as important advocates in issues related to minority rights and bring a cross-cultural perspective on the society in which they study (Howitt & Stevens, 2016, p. 61). More attention on Roma inclusion by researchers approaching the topic from an outside perspective might also help to raise international and political awareness. An important aspect of cross-cultural research is the intention and motivation behind the research. Is it to study the Roma or to learn from them? Is it to explain their way of life or to discuss the structures that surround and influence their opportunities? From having an attitude of respect and support for self-determination, cross-cultural research conducted from an outside perspective could contribute with valuable insights and reflections (Howitt & Stevens, 2016, p. 54). Regarding the Roma’s right to self-determination, cross-cultural research projects do not necessarily offer that opportunity in an optimal way. In other words, when an outsider analyzes and writes the research, there is an inherent aspect of the researcher’s positionality. This is why the main objective of this thesis is to get a deeper understanding of the Roma’s opportunities and constraints regarding education mainly
connected to structural challenges. Yet, there is an aspect of Romani self-determination by including them as informants through qualitative interviews. By sharing their experiences and opinions they have influenced how I understand the issue, and thus also the analysis as a whole.

How I as a researcher was perceived varied from one interview to the other. The dynamics and power relations in the interviews depended on the informant and the context in which the interviews were held. In the interviews conducted in English, I experienced that the distance between me and the informant decreased as the conversation evolved. The progression of ones done with the help of a translator, on the other hand, required more effort. The spatial context also varied. In one of the interviews talking with a Romani mother, she insisted on standing throughout the interview, while I was given a seat. This in part created an atmosphere that emphasized the roles of host and guest and the formality of the visit. I experienced her attitude and answers as formal, and therefore interpreted her answers in light of this context. During other interviews a more informal and reciprocal atmosphere was created through sitting down around a table and having light conversations before starting the interview. My experience of these two examples was that the latter, more informal conversation resulted in a higher degree of trust and sincerity. This underscores the importance of the personal interaction before and during the interviews and the perception of whether I as the researcher could be trusted (Howitt & Stevens, 2016, p. 65).

3.10 Positionality and rigor
In order to enhance the rigor of the thesis, I aim to be transparent in regard to the process and methodological choices made during the research project. Being aware of my own positionality in regard to the project and the participants involved is also needed to ensure trustworthy research (Hay, 2016, p. 451). I entered the field as a young, female, and foreign researcher into a society and culture that is different from my own. Through informal conversations, I was often reminded how the historical, political, economic, and cultural context have implications for the lives of my informants, and how and what they communicate. One topic that occurred several times was connected to clothing. Personally, I would place myself in a culture and socio-political group in Norway that recognizes second-hand clothing as positive, trendy, and something that benefit our society. During the fieldwork I experienced several times in friendly conversations that people were joking about having to buy used clothing instead of new ones. Second-hand clothing was also mentioned in
interviews with Romani parents as a way of coping with challenging economic situations. During the fieldwork, I was able to connect the individual instances, and to see how this was an example of a rather ordinary, yet still relevant culture clash. Recognizing how having to buy and use second-hand clothing in Romania might be experienced as humiliating and degrading, the experiences of the Romani informants got a deeper meaning. It exemplified the relevance of seeing poverty, ethnicity and social status as intertwined factors that together make up the lived realities of many Roma.

It is important to acknowledge that although some cultural differences have been identified and reflected upon, there are also those that I have not become aware of. Thus, I encourage further research on the topic on Roma and social exclusion, preferably by Romani academics and researchers that have intrinsic knowledge of the situation of the Roma. In order to increase the rigor of this research project, I made sure to discuss and listen to people with extensive knowledge on the topic of the Roma in Romania. I was not able to get to know any Roma personally during the fieldwork, and therefore did not receive any response from that perspective other than through the interviews and literature by Romani authors. I acknowledge the privilege and responsibility that follow doing cross-cultural research and I have striven towards trustworthiness of the thesis through triangulation of sources and self-awareness during the process. Although this research is limited in its scope and transferability, I do believe that it contributes to putting the segregation and exclusion of the Roma in Romania and CEE, on the agenda. To emphasize the role of institutions and governments challenges the perspective on what needs to be done to see improvement.
4. The Romanian context
In this thesis, the constrains to equal educational opportunities for the Roma in Romania stand as the main interest. Factors such as segregation, exclusion, discrimination, and racism are therefore brought into the spotlight. In Romani studies it is important to acknowledge the context of the Roma as an ethnic minority. Papers that address situation of the Roma often include in their introductions that the Roma are among, if not *the*, most stigmatized, marginalized, and misrepresented population in Europe (Andrei, Martinidis & Tkadlecova, 2014, p. 324; Bancroft, 2005, p. 1; Dunajeva, 2021, p. 8; Picker, 2017, p. 3). In this section, I will focus on how two specific historical epochs influence the situation of the Roma in Romania today. Then, the education system and political strategies are introduced as to give valuable context to the analysis.

“The chapter about the Gypsies in the ethnic history of Romania is yet to be written,” claims Achim (2004, p. 1) in his introduction of The Roma in Romanian History. Even though the interest in this topic is on the rise amongst scholars, it is still not present in contemporary discourse about the Roma in Romania. In order to understand the distinct status and experiences of segregation and exclusion of the Roma in Romania today, this ‘unwritten ethnic history’ need to make up the foundation of our understanding. Despite its relevance, the limited scope of this thesis does not make it possible to present and examine the full impact of their role in Romanian history. Instead, I will present a brief overview of two major epochs that are important to get a deeper understanding of the deeply rooted narratives of the Roma: the slavery of the Roma and the Roma holocaust. Then, reflections on how history affects policies and the situation of the Roma in Romania today are made.

For almost five hundred years, Romani people were held, bought, and sold as slaves in the area that make up today’s Romania, with its legal abolition in the mid 1850’s (Crețan, Kupka, Powell, & Walach, 2022). The Roma were categorized as property of either the state or monasteries and private people (Marushiakova & Popov, 2008). During this period the word “Gypsy” became synonymous with “slave” (Achim, 2004, p. 29). As a result of the political change of regime in 1821, vast changes were made to the Romanian society (Achim, 2004, p. 96). Although the slave status of the Roma was not the center of attention during this period, it led to the legal abolition of slavery. Yet, it does not mean that the Roma were socially emancipated as a result. Rather, policies that attempted to put an end to their nomadic way of life, tying them to agriculture, led to a perpetuation of their low social status and role in
society (Achim, 2004). In the late 1700s under Emperor Joseph II, orders were made regarding the Roma, to assimilate them into the way of life of the majority population (Achim, 2004, pp. 72-73). These requirements reflect a similar attitude as the one described by Dunajeva (2021, p. 15) in her notion on “bad Gypsies” and “good Roma”. They both refer to an attitude that see the Roma as uneducated, savage people, being undisciplined and criminals – and if not dealt with, they would be a threat to society.

The attitudes exemplified above are not exclusive to the peoples of Romania. All across Europe, there are examples of how the Roma is treated in an inferior way to other ethnic groups (Andrei, Martinidis & Tkadlecova, 2014; Bancroft, 2005; Donert, 2022; Dunajeva, 2021; Picker, 2017). The geographical and political context of exactly how this played and plays out is fundamental, but marginalization and discrimination are words that are frequently used. To give more content to the history of the Roma in Romania, the European context is important. During World War II, there was a genocide of the Romani people parallel to that of the Jews. Although exact numbers of deportations and deaths of Romani people are not conclusive, it is estimated that there were between 200 000 and 500 000 victims in Europe (Donert, 2022a, p. 2). Despite that the Roma was persecuted in Romania, such as in every other Nazi-controlled area, they suffered less quantitative losses compared to for example the Baltic states and the occupied parts of the Soviet Union (Donert, 2022b). Approximately 20 000-25 000 Roma were deported to Transnistria by the Romanian government under the dictatorship of Antonescu (Achim, 2022, p. 38; Crețan & Turnock, 2009, p. 35). Despite this being a Soviet territory, it was under Romanian military control between 1942-1944 (Achim, 2022, p. 38). Although the Roma were not victims to mass killings as the Jews deported to the same area, extreme living conditions and violence claimed the lives of around 11 000 Roma during the time of captivity (Achim, 2022). During a Soviet Offensive on the front of Transnistria in 1944, most of the remaining deported Roma made their way back to Romania (Achim, 2022).

An important reason to include the Roma holocaust in this section, is not exclusively to acknowledge the immense loss of human lives. In the decades that followed World War II, there has been little redressing of the Roma in Romania, acknowledging, apologizing, and compensating for the racially motivated persecution and deportations. An exception can be traced to the years immediately after the war, when the Roma among the returnees from Transnistria received help through food and material to get back up on their feet (Achim,
Yet, it did not last long until the Communist rule took over and the Roma were left without support. According to Achim (2022), part of the problem was that the Roma were not perceived as an ethnic minority, but rather as a socially problematic group that needed to be assimilated. This issue can also be found in Romania today. Although there is a wide perception saying that the Roma belong to a distinct and ‘different’ group of people, that does not necessarily lead to policies specifically aimed at dealing with the intersection between socio-economic status and ethnicity.

When approaching the topic of the Roma and education in Romania, this historical background remains key to understand the causes and effects of segregation and social exclusion. The marginalization of the Roma has deep roots that cross decades and centuries and is thus passed on over generations. In order to break with the tendency to teach the younger Romanian generations that the Roma are negatively different and someone to keep at arm’s length, the schools offer an arena of change. This is not done overnight and requires dedicated actors that dare speak up against discriminatory treatment and attitudes toward the Roma, in both the education system and in everyday events. If one is to reach true distributional, recognitional and procedural justice for the Roma in Romania, being aware of where the discrimination is rooted is significant. The historical aspect of the situation of the Roma in education is integrated in the following analysis. Before diving into these questions, I will first present the outline of the Romanian education system in addition to a couple of international and national political strategies aimed at Roma inclusion in education.

4.1 The education system
To be able to investigate how Romani children experience various forms of discrimination and exclusion in the Romanian education system, we have to be aware of some distinctive aspects of how it is structured. Public schools are mandatory and per definition free of charge up until the 10th grade (European Commission, 2022c). One reason why one can question whether or not education is in fact free is due to extra costs such as school supplies, food, and transportation, which is highlighted as a major challenge among the Roma (Bogaert, 2018, p. 31; Government of Romania, 2014, p.12). Included in the eleven years of mandatory education, is the preparatory class. It aims to pursue “the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of language and communication” of the children and is, as the name indicates, a means of preparing the children for what is expected of them in the following years in school (European Commission, 2022b). As few Romani children were attending
kindergarten before entering primary school, the preparatory class was included in the mandatory education by the Romanian education system in 2012 (European Commission, 2022b). Despite the inclusive purpose of the program, the experiences are divided of whether or not the result is positive. One of the teachers interviewed refers to some of the new subjects as a positive impact that came as a result of the preparatory class:

They introduced this new topic on personal development, which I love so much. I think this helps the kids a lot to cope with emotions. To learn different skills to learn. Or to communicate, to feel free to express themselves. This is something great that we never had. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

The preparatory class has also been met by skepticism and resistance among teachers that have experienced its implementation and development the last ten years. Among the arguments is that instead of spending the year in the preparatory class as it is presented officially, the amount and level of the curriculum is increased instead of being spread out to help more children to keep up:

When I started to teach, they were just shifting system. It was the first year with preparatory class. Usually it was kindergarten, and then 1st grade. And I thought, probably most teachers thought, that the preparatory class is for the curriculum to be a little bit, how to say, easy, less pressure to finish. Actually, I felt like we had to learn a lot more than normally. Because actually they add more. Not spreading it out. They actually put more. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

The preparatory class is not good. They make kindergarten shorter. And kindergarten also has its own time. (Interview primary school teacher 1 (F), February 2022)

How the curriculum and teaching methods are structured from a national scale has decisive influence on the experiences of teachers and pupils in the schools. In addition to expect more of the children from a young age through the preparatory class, it is also underscored how the education system in itself sets disproportionally high expectation for what the pupils should be able to learn over the course of a year.

“The way that Romanian system is, is that the teaching is the same for every child. Whether they can or whether they can’t [keep up]. […] The teachers are under a lot of pressure to finish the material, to finish the program.” (Interview primary school teacher 1 (F), February 2022)
As I continue to the analysis, the role of policies and institutional actors is central. Gabor et al. (2014, p. 6) goes on to call the government the “main responsible actor for Roma inclusion”. I will identify different challenges that the current education system poses for Romani pupils and parents and discuss how these can be approached in order to make it more inclusive and just. Some key issues addressed are the curriculum, desegregation of schools and classes, and allocation of resources. At the same time, one should not underestimate the agency of people at the local scale. As agents of social justice, teachers and school staff also need to recognize their role and responsibility in and outside of the classroom (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018, p. 160). Next, I will introduce two political strategies for Roma inclusion, and briefly discuss and assess their main points.

4.2 Strategies for Roma inclusion
As Romania got accepted as a member in the European Union in 2007, the requirement of equal and non-discriminatory access to education for the Roma as an ethnic minority was explicitly defined (European Commission, 2011). Romania was also among the founding member states of the international commitment named “The Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015” (the Decade) (Gabor, et al., 2014). In the declaration of ‘the Decade’, the member states commit that their governments will “work toward eliminating discrimination and closing the unacceptable gaps between Roma and the rest of society” (Gabor, et al., 2014, p. 5). To implement action toward these goals, a national inclusion strategy was made, revised in 2015 to last until 2020 (‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’) (Government of Romania, 2014). The key domains singled out for the strategy were education, employment, health, housing and small infrastructure, culture, and infrastructure and social services (Government of Romania, 2014). Under the domain of education, 22 audacious goals with associated quantitative expected results suggested how to ensure equal opportunities of quality education in Romania. It is not my intention to examine and report on each of these goals and their current status, but it is safe to say that they are far from being accomplished (Curcic, Miskovic, Plaut, & Ceobanu, 2014). In Gabor et al.’s (2014, p. 6) report on ‘the Decade’, they clearly state that despite efforts made to reach a satisfactory inclusion of the Roma, the goals are still a distant objective. In the analysis that build on the three perspectives of social justice, some selected action plans mentioned in ‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’ are connected to the experiences of the informants, and further discussed and analyzed informed by the literature and strategy reports.
5. Segregation and exclusion of the Roma

Addressing the topics of segregation and exclusion of the Roma opens the gates to an ever-growing field of academic work and activist articles and initiatives. Although it might be tempting to dive into every aspect concerning these issues, it cannot all be included in the content of these pages. The following discussion and analysis will therefore address the chosen topics by applying various perspectives on social justice on the questions introduced in the previous chapters. As a reminder, the research question is phrased as:

*What access to education do the Roma in Romania have, and how do segregation and social exclusion constrain their opportunities for quality education?*

As a central part of the analysis, the primary data is used to illustrate my claims and arguments. The interviews provide information on how the education system is experienced by the teachers who work within it, and how Romani parents and their children benefit and suffer from the same system. In addition, they address general issues on the position of the Roma in Romanian society. When referring to the interviews in the text, the informants are given a code based on their role or profession and gender. All Romani parents are referred to as ‘Roma’ followed by a number and either ‘(F)’ for female or ‘(M)’ for male like this: (Interview Roma 1 (F), February 2022). The teachers will be categorized based on more specific information regarding the level of education in which they teach. The categories relevant for this thesis are ‘after-school teacher’, ‘primary school teacher’, and ‘senior academic staff’. These are also coupled with gender. Lastly, the religious leaders are referred to as either ‘pastor’ or ‘orthodox priest’. All the religious leaders were men; hence this is not specified in the reference. This information is useful in order to get an impression of the informant’s positionality, without jeopardizing their anonymity (Dowling, 2016).

The next sections are separated into three parts based on the dimensions of distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice. It should be reiterated that this division does not reflect a reality formed by three distinct dimensions of justice. Rather they are used for analytical purposes, to show a variety of perspectives relevant for the intersectional understanding of segregation and exclusion of the Roma in the Romanian education system. Additionally, I will mention some ways in which they are intertwined and overlap, but also how they might appear in contrast to each other.
5.1 Distributional justice
Socio-economic resource distribution plays a central role as I address the challenges met by the Roma in Romania. How various forms of resources are distributed within the education system in Romania is examined by focusing on the first sub-question: What are the benefits and harms of the unevenly distributed access to quality education of the Roma in Romania? The concrete forms of benefits and harms I will highlight are schools and staff, as well as school supplies and transportation. I will take a look at how these are distributed and how they are acknowledged and addressed by social policies.

5.1.1 The school system and access to professional staff
Although there are Romani people who live in every part of Romania, the majority reside in rural areas (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 7). Some of the villages are located in the outskirts of the larger cities, which offers proximity to more job opportunities. In spite of this, factors such as financial capacity, historical ties, and kinship might weigh against searching for accommodation in the cities. This tendency of living in rural areas is relevant, as the number of schools and staff are tightly bound to the number of pupils. The official guidelines of the education system says that any class in primary education should consist of 12-25 children (European Commission, 2022b). Although there are fewer children in the rural schools than in the towns, the experiences of the teachers interviewed, is that the average is closer to 25 children per class (Interview after-school teacher 1 (F), February 2022; Interview primary teacher 1 (F), February 2022; Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022). One reason for this is that multiple teaching levels are combined into one larger class. Despite the gap between the age and level of the pupils, they only have one teacher per class.

My class now is a preparatory class combined with third grade […] It’s a challenge for me but also for the kids. Cause they don’t have, I don’t feel like they have the same start as the kids who are in just one class […] But what happened actually, in most Roma communities and village communities the system is simultaneous [several levels combined in one class]. And I feel like you just cut all the chances for that child. When you put two classes in one, three classes in one, four classes in one. Because there are places with four classes in one. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

The Romanian education system allows parents to transfer their children from their local schools to another school or class of choice (European Commission, 2022c). This opportunity is used by many non-Romani parents, or perhaps rather by those who can afford it, to transfer their children to schools of higher standard in the nearby towns. This tendency is often
referred to as ‘white flight’ in literature (Bogaert, 2018; European Roma Rights Centre, 2004; Farkas, 2014).

The Romanian children leave to go to town. … The Roma are very below in the level they are in school. But when [the non-Roma] go to the school in town they perform better, they advance more. (Interview primary school teacher 1 (F), February 2022)

Most of the villages are poor communities, and because… that’s the thing, those are the communities where the Romanians take the kids out. And left only few who stay there. Because if the Romanian would stay in [name of the village], then we would have enough to have normal classes. But they don’t stay. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

The structure of the classes, coupled with the mobility system where any pupil has the opportunity to transfer from their local school to another school of choice (European Commission, 2022c), has been shown to affect the quality of education received by those who remain in the villages. The Romanian government has formulated concrete objectives and action points concerning the socio-economic inclusion of the Roma in education. Some of these involve to design and implement programs specifically for the Romani population and to grant support in order to improve the economic condition of Romani families (Government of Romania, 2014, pp. 20-21). They also target the funding of school supplies and transportation remedies specifically, which I will further discuss shortly. Still, what could not be found in the governmental document was the mention of more investment in educational and social staff in these schools. The issue of combined classes goes beyond having many children in one class. If a healthy class environment is not ensured, the proper academic progress of the pupils becomes a challenge. Enough qualified teachers and staff is key to facilitate for such an environment. The children who attend schools with few pupils are at risk of going from preparatory class until 8th grade together with children several years older or younger than themselves. One has to assume that the level within a class of pupils at the same age also consists of different level of knowledge and abilities. In this case, however, the difference is more in that of maturity and consistency. For the teachers leading these classes, they would have to decide which group to prioritize and invest more in.

The premise for this discussion is that schools with largely a Romani group of pupils have weak school attendance and poor quality of equipment (Government of Romania, 2014, pp. 12-13). There is a need for redistributive measures that can assure just access to quality education for the Roma, which includes investment in teachers and staff. Mitigations could
for example include accepting classes of fewer pupils, allowing each teacher to prepare lectures and support for a class that consists of only one age group. Secondly, measures could be made in order to prevent the transfer of non-Roma pupils to schools regarded as offering a higher level of education. When teachers in a region apply for a position, they go through a competition where they receive a score based on their abilities and competences as a teacher. Then, based on their ranking, they can choose among all the schools with open positions in the region (Interview primary teacher 2 (F), March 2022). A natural consequence of this system is that the top schools receive the best qualified teachers, while the teachers who score lowest are sent to the smaller villages with poorly equipped schools. Although there are teachers who choose differently based on their motivations, this system of distribution facilitates the development of an elitist education system. Another factor could also be that the teachers hired for more undesirable positions would not stay in that place for long (Interview primary teacher 2 (F), March 2022). This would create a more unstable experience for the pupils, perhaps especially for vulnerable children with additional challenges such as poverty, bullying, and discrimination.

5.1.2 School supplies and transportation
The 14th action point in the strategy of Roma inclusion by the Romanian government (2014, p. 21) clearly states that there is a need for “furnishing school premises and equipping schools where there are mainly Romani students, recognizing that these schools have premises and equipment of lower quality than other schools.” In conversation with the Romani informants, they all referred to economic hardships, some connecting it specifically to the difficulty of providing school supplies, shoes, and lunch for the children.

We do what we can to help the children to go to school, to keep them in school. Because you have to pay for certain school supplies. There were times when I didn’t even have bread in my home. And I didn’t have money to buy. (Interview Roma 5 (F), February 2022)

But when the children have to go to [town for high school], they would need transport, different clothes, food, school supplies, backpacks, everything. We don’t have the best clothes, but what we have, we keep clean. (Interview Roma 1 (F), February 2022)

The lack of school supplies and lunch have several layers of implications on the children’s access to quality education. Firstly, there is the practical need for school supplies to execute tasks in class, do homework, and to have the energy and focus to be able to acquire new
knowledge and skills. The lack of school supplies also includes textbooks that cover the curriculum the teachers are to teach. A teacher teaching a preparatory class explained that despite this program having existed for 10 years, they had not been equipped with any textbooks:

In the preparatory class they don’t have books to learn from. So, I ordered the books for them. Some of the parents gave me the money, but most of the parents don’t. But I always make sure that it’s not about that. You send your kids, I have everything for it. Just come to school. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

For public school to be free, basic school supplies should be provided by the institutions responsible for the education. If this is not done, it increases the gap between those who can and cannot afford what is needed to ensure healthy learning conditions. This will influence the quality of the education the children receive. A second aspect is that of social exclusion and bullying. Not being able to afford to bring lunch to school every day not only reduces their capacity to pay attention, but has been a topic for social exclusion:

If I don’t have the bread to make them sandwiches, [the classmates] ask: oh, why don’t you have food. And if I give them money they say: oh, where did your mom get that money from. What did she do to get that money? Whatever you do, it is not enough for some people. (Interview Roma 4 (F), February 2022)

The main motivation behind social exclusion of Romani children in school cannot be narrowed down to one simple reason, as with bullying in general. And it is not a given that all Romani children experience this. Still, the intersecting aspects of being part of the Romani minority and being poor is coupled with a perception of the Roma being ‘different’ from the majority population. The racialization of the Roma is what feeds Romaphobic attitudes that perceive Romani people as a threat to what is then seen as a “non-racial and non-threatening economic, social and cultural order” (Picker, 2017, p. 9). One of the reasons why the Roma continue to experience stigmatization and exclusion that spans generations is that such attitudes are internalized through copying the people that one looks to and learn from. In addition, poverty materialized through the lack of equipment, lunch and the popular clothes and gadgets, is a common ground for bullying and shame.
Kids continue to be mean, some of them. For example, my child has a track suit of a type of brand, and the other kids have Nike which is more expensive. Things really need to change, because I was just thinking seeing my oldest kid going through the same things I did, things need to change. (Interview, Roma 4 (F), February 2022)

It is really hard with just one salary, because we have debts to the bank, and we also have four kids who want so many things. And because we cannot give them, they don’t like it, and then we have discussions. (Interview Roma 2 (F), February 2022)

Another action point in ‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’ highlights the need of “ensuring school transport for Romani students who live in marginal or isolated areas of localities” (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 22). When illustrating the need for inclusion policies specifically adapted to the situation of the Roma, the strategy refers to statistics that show that less than 25% of Romani children in Eastern Europe finish lower secondary education (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 12). These numbers are based on international findings, and this does not necessarily mean that the same percentage goes for the Romanian context. Still, it becomes clear through both interviews with Romani parents, teachers, and the religious leaders that dropping out of school before they have finished 8th grade is disproportionately common among Romani children. One factor contributing to this is that high schools are mainly located in cities and towns, and that the transportation to get there from various villages is both expensive and scarce.

If I need to pay the transportation, I will try to. … Of course, we also need clothes and other things. But to be honest, we get these from other people, and it’s not such a big problem. It is the transportation that is expensive. (Interview Roma 4 (F), February 2022)

As ‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’ reflects, this is an issue well known to the institutions responsible for ensuring quality and non-discriminatory education for all (Government of Romania, 2014). The goal of the strategy was that by 2020, transportation to and from school would be free of charge for all Romani children (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 30). This has been implemented to some degree, and in one interview, parents of a child in high school reported that they had benefited from this offer (Interview Roma 5 & 6 (F & M), February 2022). Still, it is still highlighted by both Romani parents and in academic literature as a significant issue (Interview Roma 1 (F), February 2022; Interview Roma 2 (F), February 2022; Interview Roma 4 (F), February 2022; Bogaert, 2018). This shows that there is still a need for further development and application of the action point on transportation in order to
ensure a fair distribution of resources that enhances the access to quality education for Roma as well as non-Roma in Romania.

The purpose of the distributive justice perspective is not only to identify the concrete incidences of unjust allocation of resources, but to analyze how these have extensive consequences. According to Kabeer (2000, p. 86), the distribution of resources by institutions is a matter of membership and access. When a group of people, such as the Roma, are victims of a disproportionally poor access to resources that ensure quality education, this strengthens an already existing system of social exclusion. As recognized by the Romanian government itself, “education is the strongest tool in the hands of adults and children from marginalized groups which can raise them out of poverty, both socially and economically” (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 12). An uneven distribution of harms and social exclusion is already present in Romanian society, and the degree of this varies across time and space. Roma inclusion in education therefore requires redistributive policies that might include allocation of finances from the schools in towns to the villages in order to mend the existing resource gap. One of the main issues reported on ‘the Decade’ regarding management of resources is the stable, sufficient, and flexible funding from governmental budgets (Gabor, et al., 2014, p. 22). In the action points regarding education in ‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’ (Government of Romania, 2014), the explicit granting of funds is mentioned only in one out of 22 points. In the remaining cases, the usage of words that refer to design, facilitation, and development of programs dominate. As I will discuss in the following sections, socio-economic distribution is not a stand-alone issue. It brings with it a responsibility especially to institutional actors in Romania that have pledged to ensure non-discriminatory education for all, including specific measures aimed at Roma inclusion. This includes the redistribution of resources, both in the form of school supplies and transportation remedies, as well as through a school system that prioritizes the facilitation for the needs of rural schools through staff and context-specific solutions.

5.2 Recognitional justice
In Fraser (1997) the ‘counterpart’ to socio-economic distribution is a cultural recognition of identities. One the one hand, they are put up against each other in the policy dilemma as opposites. Redistribution measures requires equal treatment for all, while recognition aims to recognize and respect the difference between groups (Kabeer, 2000). On the other hand, this thesis is built on the need of a holistic approach that reduce segregation and social exclusion,
where social, economic, cultural, and political domains overlap and complement each other. To make these perspectives co-exist, Fraser (1997) calls for transformative remedies when working with injustices as negative segregation and social exclusion rather than affirmative remedies. While affirmative remedies to economic and social injustice reflect the policy dilemma that talks of mutually exclusive measures towards justice, the transformative remedies offer a more coherent approach (Kabeer, 2000, p. 95). They challenge the underlying policies and systems that have created the injustices in the first place, recognizing that unless the root causes are confronted, the gap between the privileged and underprivileged will remain.

When I analyze and discuss the second sub-question “How is Romani history, culture, and language recognized in the education system?”, these differences form a useful backdrop. A transformative perspective will help to identify the incoherence between intentions and results regarding the recognition of the Roma in Romania. The specific topics that will illustrate the importance of recognitional justice for an inclusive education system is the representation of Romani history and language in the school curriculum.

5.2.1 Inclusion of the Roma in the national curriculum

When I asked the teachers whether or not Romani history is included in the history taught in school, the answer was no. The only exception imagined was if there was to be a school that taught in Romani language which had a stated purpose to strengthen ownership and pride of the Romani identity (Interview senior academic staff (M), February 2022).

There is no teaching of [the history of the Roma]. At least we do teach history in 4th grade and of course it’s a little bit mentioned that there are different groups living in Romania, but nothing on the history of the Roma. And I’m pretty sure it’s not anywhere in the history curriculum in high school. I don’t think so. I haven’t heard teaching on history of the Roma. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

In spite of these experiences and opinions, a comprehensive textbook analysis that identify the representation of the Roma in European curricula found that the Roma are mentioned in contexts related to the abolition of slavery and holocaust in Romanian textbooks (Spielhaus, Szakács-Behling, Ailincai, Hopson, & Pecak, 2020). There is thus a discrepancy between what is deemed as relevant by textbook authors and the priorities of those deciding the content of the curriculum. In Romania, 18 out of the 25 textbooks analyzed in the above-mentioned report have references to the Roma. Yet, the only inclusion of the Roma in the national
curriculum is in Year 8 history in reference to the Holocaust and the abolition of slavery (Spielhaus, Szakács-Behling, Ailincai, Hopson, & Pecak, 2020, p. 13). Now the question remains, how are we to understand the mismatch between the recognition of the Roma in the textbooks, in the curriculum, and in the experiences of the teachers working in Romanian schools on different levels? Although Romanian textbooks mention the Roma in both history, geography, and civic textbooks, they are only mentioned in the context of history in the national curriculum (Spielhaus, Szakács-Behling, Ailincai, Hopson, & Pecak, 2020). The history of the Roma, including the time of Romani slavery and emancipation and the Holocaust, is important as an integral part of Romanian history. Yet, a single focus on the Roma as victims of oppressive and marginalizing events might end up substantiating already existing stereotypes of otherness, where they amplify rather than reduce social segregation and exclusion. It is not enough to give an account of the history of the Roma in Romania if its repercussions for the present discourse on the Roma are not included and analyzed (Costache, 2021). Likewise, a different narrative of Romani agency and resourcefulness should be included to create a more nuanced and true representation of the Romani people as an ethnic minority as well as citizens of Romania. By applying a narrative that communicates what the majority is missing out on when the Roma are excluded from education specifically and the Romanian society in general, a new paradigm on the Roma might occur (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018, p. 164). The curricula and textbook analysis found that in all the European context examined, including Romania, there was nearly no mention of the Roma being “an integral part of the respective national society” (Spielhaus, Szakács-Behling, Ailincai, Hopson, & Pecak, 2020, p. 22). A concrete example of this can be found in 'the Romanian inclusion strategy’, where Romani history is mentioned in the objective and action plan. The specific objective says:

Ensuring and extending the study of the Romany language and, if necessary, of Romani history and traditions at all educational levels, where there is sufficient demand, including for Romani students admitted on distinct lists at high schools and universities.
(Government of Romania, 2014, p. 20)

The choice of words that defines the knowledge of Romani history and traditions as necessary only in specific contexts, implicitly where there is a sufficient amount of Romani children present in school, reflects an attitude of the Roma as a separate group that belong on the outside of the majority society. Teaching Romani history to non-Roma in Romania is an important part of recognizing how national structures and systems are to a large degree
responsible for both the historical persecution and current marginalization of the Roma. On the other hand, exclusively teaching Romani history and traditions where it is deemed necessary as a result of a large number of Romani pupils reflects an institutionalization of ignorance that structures rather than fights present-day discrimination (Costache, 2021).

The Roma are acknowledged as a national minority in Romania, which include the right to education in their own language, Romany (European Commission, 2022c). The wider discussion of how this is and should be put into practice is beyond the scope of this thesis. Yet, it is mentioned in the perspective of recognitional justice, as the use of Romany language in education brings with it a dilemma of inclusion. While the right to be taught in Romany is an important recognition of the Roma minority and their culture and rights, the practice of separate Romany taught classes feeds into an issue of educational segregation. On the one hand, Romani children who has Romany as their mother tongue might experience real difficulties attending classes in a language in which they are not proficient. Teaching in Romany would in such cases be of great importance to their current and further education. On the other hand, separating children into different classes taught in different languages hinders a much-needed space of contact and relations between Roma and non-Roma. There is a need for a multifaceted approach that recognizes the right to education in Romany without creating a division that enhances the already existing gap between the Roma and non-Roma in Romania. Thirdly, there is an issue of insufficient teaching material, teachers, and schools that provide quality education in Romany (Farkas, 2014, p. 6). In the interview with the senior academic staff (February, 2022), he explained that in certain areas in Romania where Romani parents request teaching in Romany to their children, such classes are established. Despite this, there are structural issues that hinders access to all who wish to attend those programs.

So, there are two situations. Either they don’t have money to pay the transport to go to school to study in their own language, or either there aren’t enough children to bring them all together and have this amount [a minimum of 15 pupils]. (Interview senior academic staff (M), February 2022)

In the development of an inclusive plan that recognizes the Romani language in education, the dilemma of segregation and inclusion needs substantial attention. From a transformative perspective, the deep-seated mindset that Romani people, culture, and traditions are of less importance than that of the majority has to be challenged and recognized as false.
5.3 Procedural justice
The difference between affirmative remedies and transformative approaches to educational inclusion can be purposefully illustrated through the level of Romani participation in decision making. When policymaking regarding Romanian Roma is done without the contributions of any Romani representatives, the solutions are as a consequence designed to be for and not with the Romani population (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). This is problematic if the intention is to achieve true inclusion with long-lasting results. For the first section on procedural justice, I will address this issue as phrased in the sub-question: How might the inclusion of Romani representatives affect decision-making in developing and implementing policies on education? When the Romanian government committed to ‘the Decade’, they also committed to the value of “nothing for the Roma without the Roma” (Gabor, et al., 2014, p. 7). I have not collected adequate information for this research project to give a thorough analysis on the case of Romani participation in Romanian policymaking. Still, there is a need to discuss the issue in the light of segregation and exclusion of the Roma in education. On a local scale, an informant brought forward the importance of Romani agency in order for children to receive the right of education in the Romani language.

It first started when they as Roma went to primary, and they said we want to send our children to school, but we want them to be taught in their own language. This is how it started; this was the first step. And then the second step was ok, they want us to teach them in their language, well that means that we need to have teachers who can teach them in their own language. … It all depends on the applications and what they request.
(Interview senior academic staff (M), February 2022)

When the rights of Romani children are dependent on that their parents know and employ these rights, it reflects a weak spot in the procedures connected to social policy. There has been a disproportional number of Roma that do not finish mandatory education in Romania over decades. Relying on the Roma being familiar with ethnic minority rights, and that they know how to maneuver them within the education system, is naïve at best. This is not saying that Romani parents are incapable of doing so, which is disproved in the quote above. Romani people who use their agency to fight for their rights should be acknowledged and respected. The argument here is that creating a system that relies on this agency complicates rather than facilitates for ethnic minority rights in education. An alternative view to this system as being naïve, would be that making the option of education in Romany available on request has been a deliberate attempt to avoid going to the trouble of creating the alternative educational structure this requires. In the case of Romany education in school, as well as in Roma
inclusion in general, a heterogenous group of Romani representatives should be given a voice and influence in decision-making processes. For one, it is important in and of itself that relevant stakeholders, particularly from marginalized groups, should be represented in the development of strategies and structures (Bennett, et al., 2019). In addition, the way in which the issue of segregation and exclusion of the Roma is represented, sets the direction for how solutions are developed and implemented (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). If the Roma are not given the space to communicate and problematize what they know and experience the problem to be, it is likely that the solutions also do not speak well with those it aims to help.

The second part of the sub-question on procedural justice questions whether the deliberate representation of Romani students in high school creates inclusion or exclusion. One solution to deal with the issue of few Roma attending high school in Romania has been to give them access to higher education through “special places” (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 21). This approach raises critical questions on several levels. First, there needs to be a clear definition as to who is eligible for these special places. According to one informant this is easier said than done:

They come to this issue, if they declare themselves as Roma, then the state has an educational policy which allows them to enter a high school just because they are Roma. And they will go to that high school, but they have to declare themselves as Roma. They have to bring the paper from their king or how you call it that they are Roma, and then they will be there in the high school no matter what. They have their place. (Interview senior academic staff (M), February 2022).

When he talks of the school where he works himself, this problem is further illustrated:

One single student who is declared to be a Roma, who recognize it. But there are more, fifteen. […] I know their parents who are Roma declared. (Interview senior academic staff (M), February 2022).

The reason why someone of Romani ethnic background do not want to declare themselves as Roma are many and intertwined. Still, it is not unnatural to think that it is directly or indirectly connected to the marginalization that Romani people have experienced in Romania over decades and centuries. An account of how some non-Roma in Romania view the Roma is given by the religious leaders interviewed during the data collection.

Among Romanians you can quite often hear jokes. Especially jokes. “If you are doing something with a Roma, you don’t have success”. Or “Roma will start but they will not
finish”. Roma… any kind of jokes. […] They repeat always: you cannot change Roma. This is the conclusion. (Interview orthodox priest, March 2022).

The teachers from the outside also said these negative things to the kids: “You are no good, I can teach you whatever I want but you cannot learn, you don’t have the capability, you are not able to learn anything or to do anything. We cannot raise the standards with you.” […] They have made babysteps toward changing this, not having prejudices at all. But they are not there yet. (Interview pastor 1, February 2022)

If a child is confronted with such attitudes, it is not surprising that they might want to deny their ethnic background in order to distance themselves from such stereotypes. The requirement of official recognition of a Romani ethnicity might function as a pull factor for not denying the Romani identity. However, there are deep-rooted reasons why many students would not utilize this offer despite being Roma. Secondly, introducing positive discrimination measures might only serve to increase the perceived difference between the Roma and non-Roma (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018, p. 161). The risk is that instead of including the Roma into higher education, they are brought in as outsiders that would not otherwise reach the level required to attend certain schools. Thus, an intersection between difference in for instance ethnicity, educational results, and socio-economic status could become a breeding ground for social exclusion. This being said, it does not mean that exclusion is an inevitable result of quota-based access to high school or higher education. Through simultaneous measures of social and cultural inclusion, such opportunities could create bridges between the Roma and non-Roma as the students are growing in age and maturity.

5.4 Desegregation
As a response to the gap between the Roma and non-Roma in education, desegregation has been suggested, applied, and analyzed as a concept in various contexts (European Roma Rights Centre, 2004). The ERRC (European Roma Rights Centre, 2004, p. 90) call desegregation “the backbone of governmental policies” regarding the inclusion of the Roma in an education system that offers equal quality education for all. Various forms of educational segregation can be identified, including inter-school segregation, intra-school segregation, and intra-class segregation. In Romania, educational segregation where Romani and non-Romani pupils attend different schools is a common pattern, particularly in areas with a high percentage of Roma among the population and in proximity to larger cities or towns. The cause of this segregation varies in time and space. One relevant reason is connected to residential segregation, which relies heavily on the context; whereas it is the
main factor in some areas, it would not be relevant in mixed neighborhoods. Among the informants, I could find examples of both ends of this scale. In asking two of the teachers working in different areas how the distribution of Roma and non-Roma pupils were in their classes and schools, they answered:

**Teacher:** There is always a combination of Roma and non-Roma.
**Me:** Is it 50/50?
**Teacher:** 90% Roma. The village here is mostly Roma.
(Interview primary school teacher 1 (F), February 2022)
I’m teaching in a 90% Roma community. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

From observation of the village where the first primary school teacher worked, there were mainly two categories of residences among the Roma. First, there was an area in the edge of the town’s border where an informal settlement was established. Small houses were scattered upwards on a hill, where the nicest houses were located at the bottom near the road, while the standard of the houses decreased as you moved upwards on the hill. From an outsider’s perspective, the settlement was characterized by a dense population, houses made of cheap and improvised material, a dirt road difficult to walk when wet and one well that provided the whole community with clean water. It also seemed to be as much a community as a settlement. Groups of children moved from one house to the other, and neighbors knew each other well. Secondly, there were Roma living closer to the center of the village in mixed neighborhoods of both Roma and non-Roma. Although they still lived on the edges of the neighborhoods, they had a higher standard of living than those in the segregated Romani community. The children in both places were all connected to the same local school, and although there were many non-Roma who also lived in the second neighborhood, the school was mostly attended by Romani children. In another town, the pastor who formerly worked as a teacher at the local school described the school and community like this:

The classes were mixed […] There were no problems [between the Roma and non-Roma pupils]. They were used to seeing each other all the time, because they grew up in this place, and they always saw each other. They even played together in this community, so they knew each other. Even from their families, they are starting to emancipate, with Roma marrying Romanians. (Interview pastor 1, February 2022)

In addition to residential segregation, the transfer of non-Roma pupils to other schools, referred to as ‘white flight’, is also a major issue (Bogaert, 2018; European Roma Rights
Center, 2004; Farkas, 2014). The reasons why non-Romani parents choose to send their children to other schools are often multifaceted. On the one hand, they might seek out the higher ranked schools in their area in order to provide the best opportunities for a good education for their children (Interview primary school teacher 1 (F), February 2022). On the other hand, this might also be directly or indirectly linked with the attitude of not wanting their children to mix with Romani children with perceived lower capabilities and bad behaviors (Interview primary school teacher 4 (F), March 2022). One informant reflected on where these attitudes were rooted:

There are parents that don’t want their kids to learn with the gypsy. They don’t want to mix them. It might be also that they learn bad behavior, so they are lower in education, and of course the level of the class. […] I didn’t feel like there was major conflict or discrimination between Romanians and the Roma people. Like, not very obvious, maybe in the subconsciousness, but not like there are conflicts between them. And that’s why the parents don’t want to take their kids to school. I think it’s discrimination but it’s more subconscious. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

Another informant connects discrimination and prejudices to how the relations between the Roma and non-Roma have developed and persisted over time:

This [separation between Roma and non-Roma] is it because of history. There is a lot of fighting and I’m not sure the word in English, if this is correct what I’m saying: prejudice. A lot of discussion on each other’s culture. […] We receive this because of the background of the history. Everybody was separate. We were separated by religion, by culture, by people, by denomination, by all types. (Interview pastor 2, February 2022).

Although ‘white flight’ is the most frequent tendency in the transfer of non-Romani pupils, there is also instances were Romani parents move their children to schools with a high majority of Roma (Bogaert, 2018). This might be an attempt to protect them from discriminatory experiences from fellow students or staff. Based on this, the issue of segregated education gives an example of the policy dilemma discussed by Fraser (1997). Having separate classes or schools can be argued for as a strategy for giving Romani children with Romany as their mother tongue access to education in their own language and the space to develop pride in their ethnic background. This opportunity recognizes the value of their ethnic identity and traditions and meets the requirements of the Roma as an ethnic minority in Romania. At the same time, the division challenges the distributive requirements of the same quality of education for all. Bogaert (2018, p. 61) asserts that the segregation of Roma and
non-Roma in the name of recognition does not only create a disadvantage in the quality of teaching material and education, but that it also creates a space for the Roma being labeled inferior to non-Roma through exclusion. The informants were split in their opinions on whether or not the Roma and non-Roma should be segregated. On one side, the arguments of separate classes or schools referred to teaching modified to the level of the pupils and discrimination:

The discrimination is not there anymore. You are not tempted to discriminate because there aren’t Roma, Romanians, Hungarians. This is the first aspect. And the teaching is done in their own level of understanding. Usually, the Roma are a bit below the normal level, but the teacher needs to find the balance. To challenge but still yes. The children are all in the same situation. The abandonment is decreasing. (Interview senior academic staff (M), February 2022)

In contrast, the counterargument challenges the long-term consequences of separate classes:

I think on a short term it would be a big chaos [having mixed classes], and it would be challenge. And not easy. But on the long term, this would be really good. This will be the key for the Roma community to have the chance to see something different. You know, when there are just Roma kids they do exactly what they know and what they see at home. And what they see in the community. But when they are with other with Romanians, when it’s mixed, we see different behaviors and attitudes. And the kids can choose. They see something else. They see different things. And they can choose to be different, to want more education. (Interview primary school teacher 2 (F), March 2022)

There are several points on which could be analyzed from these two excerpts, but I will stick to the topic of whether there is a need for desegregation of schools in Romania or not. First of all, we need to understand the difference between separation and segregation, as they carry different meanings while still being tightly bound. Segregation is by definition a consequence of discrimination, while separation done in the context of freedom of choice decoupled from any stigma of inferiority or subjugation would not be characterized as segregation (Bogaert, 2018, pp. 61-62). When the senior academic staff refers to Roma-only classes, he does so in the context of self-chosen attendance in schools or classes taught in Romany. He argues that this alternative facilitates for education better situated to the specific needs of the children. Yet, the counterargument underscores the need for the Roma, and might I add non-Roma, to be in contact with each other in order to be able to understand each other. Bogaert (2018) states that for the separation to be truly voluntary, there cannot exist any form for negative stereotyping associated with that of being Roma. As Romaphobia is a real issue in Romania, I
would therefore argue that at this moment separation would in fact become an instance of segregation. For this to change, a process of desegregation is necessary in order to facilitate separate and equal educational institutions for Romani children (Bogaert, 2018). Until a great deal of progress is done on the issue of Romaphobia and social exclusion, mixed classes of Roma and non-Roma students remains a useful alternative for inclusive quality education for all.

5.5 Intersectional solutions
Drawing on this discussion, desegregation remain important to the analysis. As is emphasized, the approach to the inclusion of the Roma in Romanian education should be intersectional in nature. This includes recognizing the interaction between various identity markers, the role of actors and beneficiaries, and several perspectives on social justice. Concluding with desegregation as the ultimate response would therefore be too simplistic to solve the issue at hand (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). Desegregation should be but one process in a combination of distributive, recognitional, and procedural remedies in the strategy to include the Roma into an inclusive and just Romanian education system. Desegregation is in part a distributive effort. Although this could facilitate for better inclusion of Romani pupils to quality education, there are factors such as residential segregation and varying density of Roma in different Romanian regions that still need to be acknowledged. Therefore, the redistribution of school supplies, transportation funds, qualified teachers and satisfactory school premises should be offered where these lack.

From a recognitional perspective, teaching Romani history and culture as a part of, not in contrast to, Romanian history and culture would be a central part of the solution. In ‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’ they deliberately refer to “Romanian citizens belonging to Roma minority” (Government of Romania, 2014). This acknowledges that although the Roma belong to an ethnic minority, at the same time they are a part of the national majority. Teaching the parts of history that involve the Roma as integrated in general Romanian history, rather than as belonging exclusively to the Roma, is one step in the right direction. This would acknowledge that the Roma are not a group situated on the outskirts of society, but an integrated part of Romania. In addition, it is important that the respective institutions responsible for wrongdoings, such as the slavery of the Roma, recognize their roles and responsibilities. These wrongs can only be addressed and compensated for through recognition.
Finally, the importance of inclusive political procedures should not be underestimated. There is a growing number of Romani academics and activists who continue to put the issue of Roma exclusion on the agenda. They, in addition to other Romani stakeholders, should be included in policymaking regarding education for the changes to not only being for the Roma, but instead with and about the Roma (Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018, p. 164).

5.6 Challenges

Perhaps the best advice an inclusion actor can get is that there is no magic wand to conjure up the right way to inclusion. Interventions depend on the actual context, frequently the actual situation of each individual beneficiary, combined with the complexity of the socio-economic, political, and cultural circumstances. The work is long and hard, made even more difficult by the negative attitudes of many toward Roma. (Gabor, et al., 2014, p. 6)

Behind the intentions of holistic inclusion policies and multifaceted approaches to social justice, lies a very complex reality, making Roma inclusion an issue that has been relevant for decades. As the transformative approach by Fraser (1997, p. 23) argues, it is necessary that the generative framework of injustices are restructured. An important underlying challenge for the inclusion of the Roma in Romanian education is the prejudice and discrimination by the non-Roma population. The negative attitudes toward the Roma transcend the sphere of education and must therefore be dealt with on a larger societal scale. The objectives and action points formulated in official governmental strategies require financial and political follow-up, and to engage relevant stakeholders on all levels. What separates a transformative approach from affirmative remedies is that the latter focuses mainly on the end-state outcomes, while the former aims to transform the underlying processes that create the outcome (Fraser, 1997). Being aware of the long-term perspective of Roma inclusion in education, should also affect the policies developed to deal with it. Finances would have to be prioritized over time, teachers trained, systems revised, and relevant actors involved in every part of the process.

The comprehensiveness of the matter is confirmed in what Gabor et al. (2014) points to in the quote above. In addition, there is a challenge relevant to this thesis regarding positionality and critical reflexivity. This thesis is yet an example of segregation and exclusion of the Roma addressed from an outside perspective. The main objective has been to focus on the structural challenges that both create and might resolve issues connected to segregation and exclusion of
the Roma in Romania. This was chosen in part so that I would not be trying to represent Romani experiences that I as an outsider could not possibly fully understand. Despite this focus, I have chosen to involve Romani representatives to shed light on the issue through interviews and to emphasize the importance of Romani participation in processes of policymaking and implementation. My aim has been to approach the topic of Roma inclusion with an open mind, respecting the experiences and opinions of my informants. In order to gain several perspectives, a triangulation of sources and voices have contributed to the discussion and analysis. Still, I see the need to add that the limited scope of this research project and my position as an outsider to the Romani ethnic minority can only offer a restricted perspective of the issue. In the conclusion, suggestions on further research address how these perspectives can be expanded.
6. Conclusion
The education system in Romania promises equal rights of access to education without any
discrimination (European Commission, 2022a). However, a short glance at the situation of
Romani children in Romania offers good reasons to question the system’s ability to keep that
promise. In this thesis I set out to obtain a deeper understanding of segregation and exclusion
of the Roma in Romanian education through a social justice analysis. The main research
question I have sought to answer is: “What access to education do the Roma in Romania have,
and how do segregation and social exclusion constrain their opportunities for quality
education?” By examining underlying causes of segregation and exclusion, the importance of
structural and institutional discrimination becomes clearer. The research question and its sub-
questions have been addressed through the dimensions of distributional, recognitional, and
procedural justice. Drawing to a close of this thesis, I will now examine how the analysis have
answered these questions and contributed to existing research and knowledge.

The dimensions of distributional, recognitional, and procedural justice, and the combination
of the three, have emphasized the complex reality of the Roma in Romania and the
importance of intersectionality when striving towards inclusion. The first sub-question, “what
are the consequences of the unevenly distributed access to quality education of the Roma in
Romania?” was answered through the analysis of the distributional dimension of justice. I
have identified several needs for redistribution, including that of allocation of resources to
ensure the capacity of the teachers to follow up their pupils. Many primary school teachers,
especially in rural areas with a high density of Romani residents, are forced to combine
several age groups in one class. This will often result in difficulties maintaining a high quality
of the education received by the pupils. One should not expect one teacher to be able see to
the academic and social needs of approximately 25 pupils, especially not with the additional
challenge of the age gaps between them. As a consequence of challenges sometimes
intersecting with that of being Roma, such as economic poverty, the need for special attention
on social issues might also be higher in classes with a high density of Roma. The research
suggests that measures are taken to solve this issue, for instance by allowing there to be fewer
pupils in one class to ensure the right level and progression of the teaching.

As discussed in the analysis, the reasons why some schools have a distinct Romani majority
are not exclusively due to their rural location or residential segregation. Pull factors such as
higher quality of education in the urban schools, and push factors including non-Romani
parents who want to distance their children from Romani children are also part of the causes. Although the open character of the education system is presented as a strength, it does have negative impacts as well (European Commission, 2022c). Inter-school segregation increases the gap between Roma and non-Roma in societies where they could have been living side by side. The challenges of ‘white flight’ should be addressed on a structural level, examining how these systems lead to segregation and exclusion. In addition, the system of how teachers are distributed and rewarded has an effect on the quality of education given to the pupils. If the Roma are to receive the same quality of education as non-Roma, which and how many teachers are employed at the ‘Romani schools’ is a significant factor. One should not ignore the fact that adequate governmental funding has a substantial effect on the opportunity for schools to provide quality education for their pupils. As with most other changes within systems and policies, it comes down to what is prioritized. Redistribution efforts might seem quite simple, as increased funding often one of the main solutions. Still, without being put together with factors of recognition and representation, I would argue that the chances of rural schools with mainly Romani pupils being prioritized in national and local budgets are rather low. To sum up the answer of the first sub-question, one could say that there is a clear need of redistribution of resources such as school supplies and educational staff, and an evaluating the system of educational mobility and the distribution of teachers. Without this, the gap between the Roma and non-Roma are increased through the education system, rather being a tool for Roma inclusion.

Regarding the contributions of the dimension of recognitional justice, I have emphasized the mismatch between the intention of inclusion of the Roma in education, and the exclusion of Romani history, culture, and language in the national curriculum in Romania. The sub-question I set out to answer was: “How is Romani history, culture, and language recognized in the education system?” As referred to in ‘the Romanian inclusion strategy’, the teaching of Romani history and traditions is seen as necessary only in certain occasions, implicitly when there is largely Romani pupils present (Government of Romania, 2014, p. 20). This reflects an attitude of Romaphobia, where the Romani minority is seen as a group on the outside of society, rather than as an intrinsic part of what makes up Romania. By separating Romani history from Romanian history, it promotes a division between the Roma and non-Roma in the present as well. Given the aim of equal access to quality education, and by extension better inclusion into the Romanian society, such division should be reduced, not strengthened. If conversely the history of the Roma in Romania was presented as an inherent part of
Romanian history, this could contribute to create bonds that tie the different ethnicities together.

The solution suggested is by no means a quick fix to the complex challenge presented. To close the gap between the Roma and non-Roma includes altering xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes, and instead recognize their commonalities and the equal value of both Romani and non-Romani people. Still, I would argue that it would be easier for children to internalize attitudes of everyone being equally valuable despite their differences, than to change the preconceived ideas of adults. Therefore, the school is an important arena where differences should be celebrated as a resource, not a burden. To include Romani history and traditions in official Romanian curriculum is an important step in recognizing their importance and value, not only for the Roma but non-Roma Romanians as well. The aim being a discourse that consists of a shared Romani and Romanian history, and positive multiculturalism.

This thesis has also highlighted the importance of inclusive procedures and representation. The third sub-question asked: “How might the inclusion of Romani representatives affect decision-making in developing and implementing policies on education, and how might quota-based representation in education be problematic?” In continuation of what others have emphasized before me, I have joined the call for procedural justice in Roma inclusion (Bennett, et al., 2019; Fraser, 2007; Gabor, et al., 2014; Lauritzen & Nodeland, 2018). To include Romani representatives and stakeholders in decision-making processes is critical when fighting segregation and exclusion. Their presence, knowledge, and experiences are what Roma inclusion is all about. In addition, it is important that the inclusion of Romani representatives is not a play for the gallery, but a genuine effort to reduce the gap between the Roma and non-Roma. The potential effects of inclusive procedures and decision-making are many. First, the narrative that represent the experiences of the Roma is decisive for which solutions are suggested. If this is not voiced by a diverse group of Romani people themselves, one cannot expect the results to be properly suited for the relevant context. What may seem to be inclusive measures from the perspective of certain decision makers, might not concur with the needs of the Roma themselves. Secondly, to include Romani representative in decision-making would be one step in the right direction of building bridges and relations between Roma and non-Roma. They would be recognized as a resource, and not as a passive recipient of the measures proposed. Including Roma in such processes is therefore a necessity, not
simply a potential strength. Still, as with the other dimensions of justice, there is no simple way of accomplishing true procedural justice. First of all, it requires openness to meet across groups of society that otherwise rarely meet. Openness and willingness to listen to different, sometimes contrasting, perspectives is prerequisite for change to happen.

In conclusion, I argue that for the Roma in Romania to have access to the same quality of education as their non-Romani peers, there is a need for a multidimensional approach to inclusion. One cannot see distributional, recognitional, and procedural approaches as separate strategies, but have to combine them into a joint effort towards social justice. Desegregation is frequently emphasized as an important solution to educational segregation. I have found the spatial segregation of the Roma in education to be closely intertwined with several forms of exclusion. Therefore, although recognizing desegregation as necessary, I will conclude in line with what has been the main argument of this thesis – an intersectional understanding of the Roma and a combination of approaches to social justice is needed for Romanian education to offer the same quality of education to Romani and non-Romani pupils.

More research on the topic of Roma inclusion is necessary, both in Romania specifically and in CEE in general. I suggest more and deeper analysis of how a combination of approaches coupled with intersecting identities creates a fuller understanding on what constrain or enable Roma inclusion. In addition, acknowledging the significance of historical events and developments could provide interesting and useful perspectives on how social and economic gaps can be decreased.
References


