



Exploring the Long Journey of Sinti Resistance And Identities with Musical Narratives

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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List of Acronyms

CHR	Commissioner of Human Right
CoE	Council of Europe
EC	European Commission
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
SIM	Social Inclusion Monitor

Abstract

Roma, Sinti and Travellers have lived like outsiders in the countries they were born. In The Netherlands the Sinti are a small non-recognized minority group. The Dutch process of integration has leaved loop-holes or discriminatory policies toward Sinti/Roma. In this context it is interesting to see the dynamics that Sinti have to maintain its existence and culture. To understand Sinti culture, and analyse more closely Music can be a way to move away from prejudice and discrimination.

This research analyzes music and the life of the musicians, as an embodied experience and practice that speak about places and bodies. Using music as a valid source of knowledge I analyze how they are expressing their identities, and how it may be used as a mechanism or element of resistance. Music as the material representation of culture, a moving legacy that travels through space and time.

Relevance to Development Studies

The contribution of this research to the field of development is the acknowledgement of the different sources and knowledges when talking about injustices and marginalization. It hopes to be a contribution to a different dialogue with the people development thinkers and practitioners claim to work with. Is about questioning our own role in development and the multiple perspective we can consider, in the academia and on the ground.

Keywords

Music, Sinti, Identities, Resistance, Body and Place, Musicians

Chapter 1

Introduction

“We are a nation that is always travelling. Not to get anywhere, but just to go. [...] In contrast to our brother nation, the Roma, our people have always lived in wagons, migrating from place to place. The destination is not important; the journey is the goal.”

Zoni Weiss ‘The Forgotten Holocaust’

My research starts with a meeting in Utrecht. It was the end of our study trip and a group of us decided to meet an association of Roma, Sinti and Travellers based in Amsterdam. Sabina¹ a *sintezza* living in a camp outside Amsterdam sat next to me; we talked about their struggle in The Netherlands and Europe. Due to the discrimination that they face for being Roma or Sinti, she was worried about what was happening with the new law frameworks. She was tired of the ethnic profiling, she wished things could change, finally she remembered her family members who she lost in the Holocaust and how there is still not a full acknowledgement of what happened and what still is happening in The Netherlands. The conversation with Sabina made me think of the possibility to get to know a different local reality, one far from the general idea of The Netherlands and that involves Europe as whole, what struck me most of that conversation is when Sabine talked about music, she dreamed about telling the story of her people through music. She just wanted to take a caravan and travel around Europe playing her music. This made me think of the message music can bring and how powerful it can be; the connections it may bring from the past and the questions it can foresee to the future. Baring this in mind, I wanted to know all about their history, and about what is happening to them today, to whom it seems to me, to be a forgotten group.

Roma, Sinti and Travellers have lived in a segregated Europe; living like outsiders in the countries they were born. Europe, the promise land of human rights and justice, has broken its promises to the Roma and Sinti communities, the largest transnational minority of the European Union (Marinero & Sigona 2011, Picker 2012, Stewart 2012). The notion of ‘Europeaness’ plus a lack of national belonging has created an image of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers as ‘ethnic outsiders’ or ‘cultural deviants’, excluding them from society as whole, a socio-economic and cultural exclusion. According to their culture and traditions, they are nomads who live and travel in their mobile homes; as a result and because of their untypical traditions they have been stereotyped, stigmatized and discriminated against. The Netherlands is no exception, according to several reports (CHR of the EC 2016, Risbo 2015, ECRI 2013) the Sinti are a small non-recognized minority group, the Dutch process of integration has not been consistent, leaving clear legal loop-holes or active discriminatory policies.

¹ To see her views on Roma, Sinti and Travellers in The Netherlands in the following Hague Talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQEJ7RCA99A>

The more I talked to people and researched the topic, the study of the Roma and Sinti, I realized everything about them was either forgotten or disclosed, first it was their story and origin, but even that was obscure, therefore little by little I tried to reconstruct an idea of this particular group. The Holocaust showed how many years of persecutions could affect a community and although, there is an extensive recollection of what happened in World War II there seems to be very little on Sinti and Roma, even less if we look on something written about them. If we do remount to one of the darkest moment of European history against the Roma and Sinti, years of discrimination and exclusion culminates in their extreme persecution. In The Netherlands “[g]ypsies and a number of Dutch caravan-dwellers were picked up [...] and taken to Westerbork. [...] Of the 245 Gypsies sent to Auschwitz it is believed that 145 died or were killed there. Of the 100 sent on from Auschwitz to other camps only 30 survived.” (Kenrick and Puxon, 1995:61-62)

The words of Zoni Weisw, holocaust survivor and activist, can express better the history of his people in a better way. According to an extract of his autobiography ‘The Forgotten Holocaust’, he states:

“But my story is more than just a story about war and persecution. The history of my people is so great that Nazi Germans cannot and did not overshadow it. [...] My people came once, long before the beginning of time, over the mountains and along the mighty rivers of India. We were peculiar people. When we arrived to a city, it was always a feast. That came as no surprise, because music and dance always traveled with us. My ancestors were so virtuous that they even played in the palaces of the powerful Maharajas. [...] Europeans call us gitanes, zigeuner (gypsies), or manouches. We call ourselves Sinti.”(Weisz, 2016)

Today in Europe the subject is still an issue, acts of discrimination are still talking place. The Commissioner of Human Right Nils Muižnieks in a conference given in Oslo, last year, expressed his deep concern about this. Between the topics he mentioned, he highlighted that there was a mystification around the Roma, Sinti and Travellers; stating that the prejudice was embedded in European history and this preconception just increased their vulnerable livelihoods. His emphasis was on the need to really understand the past and the different perspectives. (Muiznieks, 2015:2)

The Report on Human Rights by the CHR, Nils Muižnieks (2015) emphasizes the following points regarding the situation of Roma and Travelers in Europe: “anti-Gypsyism, hate speech and hate crime; police violence against Roma and ethnic profiling; sterilization of women without their free and informed consent; school and housing segregation; forced evictions.” (2015:30) It is important to take into account that Roma are mention in this report in several occasions, when talking about women rights and gender, also combating racism and intolerance, trafficking in human beings and statelessness. “[N]o European government can claim a full successful record in protecting the human rights of the members of these minorities.” (Council of Europe, 2012)

When analyzing The Netherlands’ context in regard to the Sinti and Roma population it is important to understand their legal framework to see the general terms of how governments and authorities deal with the issue, and how they affect the livelihoods of the Roma and Sinti population.

1.2 The Research Problem: Music as Resistance to Discrimination and Exclusion in The Netherlands

The Netherlands have signed the CoE Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, doing these it only makes reference to the Frisians, excluding the Roma and Sinti as a minority in The Netherlands. (Medda-Windischer, 2011). Although the Dutch government does not recognize Roma and Sinti as ethnical minorities, still uses ethnic classifications for targeted policies. As Zwart (2012) explains

“[t]he Dutch state maintains a redefined system of ethnic classifications that is used without restraint to support ‘integration policies’ [...] membership in ethnic groups is unilaterally defined by the state on the basis of de-scent. Ethnic minorities thus demarcated are targeted with an array on group-specific policies, whether they want it or not.” (Zwart, 2012:303)

Regarding the living situation of the Roma/Sinti it is important to mention the Caravan Act and the new policy scheme for caravan parks. The Caravan Act [Woonwagewet] was abolished in 1999 and replaced by a decentralized policy that gives responsibilities from a national level to the local government. (Rodrigues and Matelski in Van der Welle and Blommersteijn, 2011:9). This was not the solution they hoped for; the possible reason was that there is a shortage on halting sites that were not in the general budget of the municipalities, therefore there is no money to maintain or provide them. The second probable reason was, there has always been a negative response from the general public to a halting site in their municipality. (Davidović and Rodrigues in Van der Welle and Blommersteijn, 2011:9). This makes the living situation for Roma, Sinti and Travellers harder and more vulnerable.

In a context of exclusion and social discrimination it is interesting to see the dynamics that the group has to persist in existence and culture, in particular, the situation of the Sinti, a group that arrived in Europe centuries ago. For academics, especially anthropologists, is truly fascinating the “sociological puzzle that Gypsy persistence presents” (Stewart, 2013:418) is truly fascinating. They are described as a group that lives inside larger populations (majorities), these majorities are likely to “despise them”(the Roma and Sinti); they are close to their dominant context, still they manage to “reproduce their communities with apparent ease; and they do so without shared religion, without any form of ritual or [apparent] political leadership, and without over-arching or underpinning political organization.” (Stewart, 2013:418)

In addition to understanding how in a conflictive context they can remain strong, understanding their culture and the asset they could be to society it may be a way to change the stigma. As Romeo Franz (2013) says, “the Roma culture is facilitating the dialog between the Roma and Sinti and the social majority and fighting the new forms of anti-gypsyism.” (Franz in Kyuchukov, 2015:4)

Culture has a socialization component in its communities and societies, as does Roma and Sinti cultures.

“All forms of culture such as oral folklore, paintings, dance, and music play an important role not only for the members of the Roma community, but also for the majority societies. The Romani Theater in Moscow, Romathan Theater in Kosice, the “Gypsy Kings” group, Joaquin Cortez as a dancer have

influence on the cultures and cultural life in European societies.” (Kyuchukov, 2015:4)

As Vicente Rodriguez², a Roma Youth activist from Spain, acknowledges: “Roma history is far from irrelevant to our current challenges. Indeed, our history showcases our strength as a culture that has survived decades of relentless adversity, and is today poised to rise once again.” (Open Society, 2016)

For that reason, it becomes relevant to really understand who the Sinti are, what makes their collective identities and how they struggle and resist after everything that has happened in their history in Europe.

1.3 Why this topic? Justification

Music can be understood as an embodied experience and practice that speaks about places and bodies, that recognizes different kind of relationship and that can become alive through the bodies. The body according to Harcourt and Escobar “is the site for many struggles over different identities, ways of thought and daily practices.” (Harcourt and Escobar, 2002:8) Identities relate to places and people, it is a relational process, it connect us to collectives, cultures and societies and at the same time it speaks to our emotions and feelings of belonging.

Identity and music relate, they communicate through feelings, emotions and relations. Hence when talking about music we are not making simple assumptions we are talking about an artistic construction that goes beyond “just sound that is passively listened to, but a sonic force that acts on bodies and minds and creates its own life rhythms; rhythms that power recognizes and tries to monopolize through a relentless domination of societal noise. But, because of its unique properties music can be employed as a powerful counter-hegemonic device that goes beyond thought to being.” (Balliger, 2005:433)

Following Ballinger’s argument, Frith consolidates the argument by joining music and identity when he states “music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives.” (Frith, 1996:124). Finally, music and identity join in emotions and relations, “[...] to enjoy music of all sorts is to feel it.” (Frith, 1996:115).

“Through songs, a collective can objectify itself and its history, making itself visible to others, as well as creating and establishing a sense of continuity. At the same time, such cultural expressions, texts and other material artifacts permit the representation of the collective’s view of events free from censorship of the dominant culture.” (Eyerman, 2002:447) If nobody is willing to hear, maybe the music is a way to let the Sinti be present or heard. It may also be a way to connect, or to celebrate, in a way, their culture. In many ways, music can be performed to give a sense of belonging and recognition of a group.

As Balliger and Gilroy mention, music can be a site of “collective memory”, the ongoing construction of a “community by symbolic and ritual means” (2005:432), where the rhythms, lyrics, language, instruments all make synergy

² Roma human rights activist, screenwriter, and cartoonist, wrote an interesting article on how Rome are erased from popular culture.

to acknowledge their own culture. Music as the material representation of culture, a moving legacy that travels through space and time.

1.4 Research Objectives and Questions

My research paper attempts to explore Sinti music and the lives of the musicians in The Netherlands. In a context of historical exclusion and discrimination, I will analyze how Sinti musicians experience their identities through music. I attempt to comprehend the importance of music, and contribute to its understanding as a valid source of knowledge. In doing so, I explore how they are expressing their identities, and how it may be used as a mechanism or element of resistance.

Research Question:

In what ways do Sinti musicians use music as a tool to resist and to construct their own identities?

Sub-questions:

- a. How do we re-construct a ‘forgotten history’? What is the context of musicians living in The Netherlands?
- b. How can we theorize Sinti narratives in a political context?
- c. What are the kind of dialogues Sinti musicians are having about Sinti music? How is it related to their lives? What are their own struggles?
- d. How are they re-claiming their identities through music? How are they re-connecting with the past and the Sinti culture?

1.5 Methodology: Researching Identities and Music

This is an exploratory research on music and the stories of the musicians; the methodology used is qualitative and based on an ethnographic approach, using participant observation and interviews. Is an interdisciplinary approach to identities and different forms of resistance; bringing in analysis on identities, gender, cultural studies and musicology. In general, when speaking about ethnography in practice, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) it means; you are studying the field, an actual place and its people, you are engaging in participant observation, therefore you engage in informal conversations, and there is special attention to a small number of cases. One of the main characteristics involves “data interpretation of meanings, functions, and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local, or maybe wider contexts.” (2007:3) Therefore analyzing in a practical way my research has to do with examining and studying the Sinti music scene in The Netherlands, the first approach was through participant observation. I followed Sinti musicians around, got to know the type of music and the places they performed. Through informal conversations I got information on the type of music they play, the different ways they learned and understand music, and I even got to know about some of their personal backgrounds.

When starting to discuss Sinti identities and Sinti Music it is relevant to incorporate Mignolo and Tlostonova’s (2006) ‘critical border thinking’, through an acknowledgement to the “other” as a source of knowledge, amplifying the

voices of the others. Bring out the value of knowledge that speaks of ‘side-stream’ knowledge, “den[ying in a way] the epistemic privilege of the humanities and the social science [...] it shifts toward geo and body-politics of knowledge. The theory emerged “from and as a response to the violence (frontiers) of imperial/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity” towards this “other”, this notion of inferiority of the “other”, that perpetuates the oppression and exploitation. (Mignolo et al, 2006:206)

In line with a feminist post-modernism epistemological stand, my research includes the voices of Sinti throughout the whole paper³, they talked about themselves, I moved away of this tendency of talking for them and let them be part and protagonist of this research. Considering this starting point, an ethnographic approach “[...] provides a process of data collection and an epistemology that allows one to better understand human agency in the context of social and institutional dis-courses and that can attend to the influence of history.” (Cerwonka, 2007:14). For that reason, to understand the importance of situated knowledges (see Haraway 1991) and understanding the co-construction of knowledge in the research process, the methods used in ethnography provide a useful engagement. As Rose explains, “situated knowledge is negotiated between different knowledges, and that negotiation both resist the authority of the academic and recognizes the knowledges of both researcher and researched.”(315:1997) I think this is an important recognition of the process of research itself, it is quite influential to the result; the type of interviews and what kind of knowledge and processes we would like to move forward with. Additionally as mention by Rose (1997) it is important to acknowledge the meaning-making process, in the pursuit of understanding different meanings in the communities, there can be gaps in the way you are opened up to differences, recognizing the “diverse knowledges addressed by any project.” (Rose, 1997: 318)

I decided that the research would need to place great importance on the stories told by the musicians. After getting the big picture of the (Sinti) music scene in The Netherlands through conversation in festivals and different events, I decided to highlight two life stories, where they emphasize their self-search and show different ways of re-claiming their identities through music. Using life stories is a way to “make use of a collection of narratives that allow some insight into the specific and localized life worlds or discursive spaces and material conditions of a small number of people.” (Goodley et al., 2004:59) The two stories were chosen because of their unique search for their Sinti identities, the importance of music in their lives and the many connections they had. (Please refer to figure 2)

Talking to the musicians in the Gipsy Festival in Tilburg was one of my first entries into the Sinti music world, where I got to know their connections, understand their strong family ties, saw different kind of instruments, understand that Balkan music is different and it may also use different instruments. I realized that music can be enjoyed in different languages, and for the first time I realized that it can build certain atmospheres, even evoke emotions in the audience, as I was experiencing it myself. I felt nostalgic with the music from the

³ To do so, I include Roma/Sinti authors, activists, academics and musicians.

Czech Republic, and felt like dancing with the Bohemians Betyars⁴. I was able to understand the different meanings of their musical performance, and in the course of doing this, I think it was important to acknowledge the learning process.

Hammersley and Aktinson (2007) point out that there are other ways to make our results valid, and that is to accept certain limitations we can have, and embracing them in the research reflexively. As mentioned before, throughout the research process there is a need to put in perspective the co-production of knowledge. This methodology stresses subjective experiences from situated knowledges that share a communality and that may vary from generation to generation or may be expressed in different manners. The ethnographic approach allowed me to draw a more dynamic perspective to the construction of Sinti identities, due to the importance of oral history in Sinti culture. Therefore, interviews with different actors of the music community from different backgrounds brought out their own perceptions and experiences. All interview material (as well as Sinti words) and all song lyrics will be highlighted in italics in this study, to distinguish them from other quotations, for instance from academic sources, reports etc.

Ethical Challenges and Limitations: An Outsider View

My position as an outsider to the community, where I do not share their roots, history, or codes, nor even the same language clearly created a space between the informants and me. I think that being an outsider to the Dutch society did also work as an advantage. I am similarly as an ‘outsider’ to the Dutch society and the European Union, therefore I am not used to all the prejudices and stereotypes. My position as researcher can generate asymmetries of power between the informants and me.

I also think is important to mention why did I choose to study music, and it has to do with my Chilean background. In Chile there is important movement of protest music. Music that during the dictatorship became very powerful and hopeful, and for me it still is. ‘La Nueva Canción’ the movement around protest music, combines Andean traditional music and Chilean folklore; in this fusion it references injustice and hope for a better future. The songs spoke out in a way that nobody could the time, their lyrics becoming powerful tools for protestors and also source of strength. (See Inti-Illimani, Quilapayun⁵, Violeta Parra, Victor Jara).

The Roma and Sinti are a very close community that have lived through years of lost promises, consequently their perception of outsiders may be compromised and not positive. The contact I made at the beginning of my research helped me enormously and with time I became a regular assistant in Roma and Sinti events. An important limitation along the research was the language barrier; I do not speak Dutch nor Romani. Therefore, most of my interviews and

⁴ To see the Bohemian Betyars: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j54lJq1BXyI>

⁵ I took great inspiration from the documentary ‘Quilapayun, más allá de la canción’. To watch the synopsis of the documentary please watch this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zU5cyyyn4g4>

conversations were with English-speakers, which reduced my scope but allowed me to interact more with the participants that I could interview.

The following research paper will attempt to address the importance of Sinti music and the life and stories of musicians. Trying to understand the musical message of a marginal group. To do this I will first try to reconstruct their origins and history, explain their musical history and the musical scene in The Netherlands. In the following section I will introduce the theoretical journey of music experience, body and identities. Later, chapter 4 will introduce two Sinti musicians' life stories, based on the conversations we had together. Finally, chapter 5 proposes an in-depth analysis of the music and lives of Roger and Lisa, using the above described theoretical framework. To bring everything together chapter 6 will conclude and reflect on the research process and future research.

Chapter 2 Exploring the Context through Interviews and Documents

To do an in-depth analysis of the lives of Sinti musicians the following chapter will describe the social background in The Netherlands today, will try to bring pieces of their history and the importance of music in their life and history. In order to reconstruct their history, origin and context in The Netherlands, the sources were diverse to do justice to the lack of unified Roma or Sinti sources. Also the last section of this chapter will discuss the musical scene of Sinti music in The Netherlands.

2.1 Understanding today's context in The Netherlands

An overview of the European context discussed previously sheds light on a generalized discrimination against Roma and Sinti population, although there are differences throughout Europe, everywhere we can see marks of past exclusion. The Netherlands is no exception and it is something spread in the general public opinion and made more concrete in loopholes in their legal frameworks, as mentioned with the extinction law and the non-inclusion in a minority law framework. The next section discusses the Roma and Sinti situation according to a newly implemented impact policy analysis.

The Social Inclusion Monitor (SIM) (2015) compares the effects of public policy on specific populations, in this case the Roma and Sinti living in the Netherlands. The report analyzed the living conditions of Roma and Sinti, through different areas of life, based on interviews and online surveys. The findings show no change concerning the labor market, the report states that there is labor market discrimination and that they do not always apply for jobs under their own name, or they origin. (RISBO, 2015) With regard to the living conditions, specifically housing, the report concludes that: "Municipalities pursue different policies with regard to the housing of Roma and Sinti, [... also it explain that] the desire to live in a caravan or chalet is largely connected with the desire to live as a community." (RISBO, 2015:23) It also discusses that Roma/Sinti groups live in different ways, Sinti show a bigger desire to live in caravan sites, close to their family members. They also acknowledge the 'phase-out policy' or extinction policy; they showed concerned on the shortage of sites. Some Roma live in council or social housing, but claim that they usually fall back on rent. According to the report only a small portion of Roma (old Roma) are living in caravans. (RISBO, 2015)

When talking about stereotyping Roma and Sinti they are usually associated with non-violent or theft crimes, the report shows no changes on crimes seen as common to some Roma/Sinti. It also describes stereotypes describing this notion that 'all Roma as criminals'. Many believe that the media create a negative image, giving Roma/Sinti a bad reputation." (RISBO, 2015:22) Related to this the relationship with the authorities it is relevant that "[m]any Roma and Sinti are said to feel that 'outsiders' don't want to listen to them. They feel particularly distrustful of the authorities and civil society organizations, and they often feel that they are not being heard." Although there are improvements,

there is still a long way to go for the policies to have a positive effect on the lives of the Roma and Sinti. (RISBO, 2015).

2.2 Trying to trace the lines of Sinti History and the role of Music

Sinti and Roma have a shared myth of origin ‘the journey from India’, it has been a debated subject, but by now there is a general consensus on this. “North India was the cradle of the Romany Gypsies and their language.” (Kenrick and Puxon, 1995:8) There are no account on their travelling to Europe, however a Persian poet Firadusi accounts: “ten thousand musicians sent from India to Shah Bahram Gur to entertain his people with their music.” (Ibid, 1995:8)

“The Sinti are the oldest Romani people living in Germany and Austria[.]” (Polak, 2013:82) According to a recent project from O Lungo Dorm⁶ (2016) there are an estimated 4,000 Sinti and 500 Roma living for many generations and even before the Second World War in The Netherlands. Still Sinti are the biggest and oldest Romani group living in The Netherlands, therefore this research will be centered on how the oldest group deals with music, identities and resistance or resilience. This brings us to the differences in numbers from diverse sources, no one seem to coincide on.

The general literature tends to talk about Sinti and Roma indiscriminately, according to the Report of the Anne Frank Foundation, they share many traits or characteristics (Rodrigues and Matelski, 2004:12-25). Correspondingly, Roma and Sinti share: a myth of origin, a history of travelling, a history of persecution, a common language (Romani), an oral tradition and finally they are stigmatized in the same way. It is stated that Sinti have lived in The Netherlands the longest, they usually live in the countryside and are very attached to their community, in that way it is said that they are more attached to their traditions. (Rodrigues and Matelski, 2004:12-25)

2.3 The Importance of Music in Sinti and Roma History

Stories of music in the concentrations camps can show the history behind music, and tell stories of resilience. “In Auschwitz, people were not treated as humans anymore, but reduced to a number printed on their skin - music enabled them to keep a human identity.” (Weissbach, 2015:53)

According to Anne Merle Weissbach, music played an important part for Roma and Sinti in the concentrations camps: they included entertainment for SS officials, in this case to survive; but also as a way to resist, and to cope with their everyday suffering in the camp. Weissbach states in her paper: “[s]inging

⁶ O Lungo Dorm in Romani, means the “long road” . O Lungo Drum is foundation working in The Netherland for the understanding of Roma and Sinti culture, with mutual respect and trust.

itself was an expression of resistance against the destruction of human identity. It was expressing the will to survive and not to give up in the misery. In correlation with musical activities, people developed resistance against the aggressor, the protection of self-respect, solidarity and decidedness.” (2015:53)

Weissbach likewise analyzes how music, specifically songs also had a purpose after the camps, it did not only help them survive and resist, it became memory, an act of commemoration. The songs spoke and still speak today to and of the lives of Roma and Sinti in the concentration camps, the author speaks of an active commemoration through music that may facilitate ‘consolation and support’. Weissbach correspondingly discusses how songs also “have their function for the identity and the cultural being of the people. Singing in a group gives a social bonding [...] is an expression of identity within the Roma-community as well as an expression of Roma-identity to the outside world. Due to this, it is also an expression of cultural resistance towards assimilation.”(2015:56) Weissbach brings out the importance of music in the context of the Holocaust, it condition Sinti and Roma in a certain way but also it made them free, it was a creative expression that give them hope, energy and memory, it let them tell their story in a different way.

2.4 The Start of the Music Journey

Music can generate meeting spaces, festivals, celebrations, commemorations, among others. These meetings can be opportunities to recognize each other, give a broader sense of collectivity. In addition, music can talk about a groups’ history, their sorrows, their traditions, past events, like the previously mentioned references to the *Baro Porrajmos*.⁸ It can be reminiscence to share experiences; some that can lead to collective action.

In general, Roma music shares particular similar features but it may vary throughout the different locations in Europe. When people think of “Gypsy music” they think of folk and oral music, what they maynot know is that it is unwritten, and that it feeds into the “gypsy performance style” of playing music, one that relies on emotions and improvisation. (Malvinni, 2004:7) The commonality comes with an “experience of discrimination, the shared or common enemy, [...] the Romani language. But Romani is spoken in many different variants, influenced by many different languages on the long way from India to Europe.” (Hemetek, 2006:50) As with Romani language music has seen diverse influences from its long way and from its years in Europe, “[...] the music styles have been very much influenced by surrounding cultures because there has always been a tradition of professional Roma musicians performing for the majority society.” (Hemetek, 2006:50) It is important to understand the music may vary from the different styles and locations of the Roma and Sinti population, that merged with different societies that has created variations, but may unite them is their struggle, for acceptance and recognition.

⁷ For further examples of translated songs created in the camps and for commemoration see Weissbach, 2015. One of the commemoration song is rap by Purse & T-MOE, it talks about Auschwitz, but also sings about the discrimination that happens today. You can watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFIw1Yw7jwc>

⁸ Romani word for the Holocaust, which means the ‘great devouring’ of human life.

Music is a key instrument for the Roma and Sinti identities and is a quite faithful representation. When talking about its history, a history where one of their many crafts was music, where one of their myth of origin talks about the 1000 musicians that came from Northern India, and when almost every member has in his family a musician (according to the conversation with musicians along the way). Among the many contribution to the West, music style and instruments are fundamental. Instruments like the cimbalom, some think even the guitar was first introduced to the Europeans by the Roma. (Hancock, 2005) Music was one of the most common ways to subsist. "Playing music has always provided a successful form of self-employment for the Roma and Sinti. Those practicing this as a profession unmistakably portray themselves as interpreters of 'Gypsy music' and jazz in the tradition of Django Reinhardt (1910-1953)." (Rodrigues and Matelski, 2004:29) This final characteristic of music is a clear characteristic of The Netherlands, but not exclusive. "Although a musical career is not set aside for everyone, music does provide a good source of income for diverse families." (Rodrigues and Matelski, 2004:30)

One of the great inspirations for Sinti Music is renowned jazz artist Django Reinhardt. His music has inspired an entire generation, who is continuing the legacy of this singular way of making music. Many artists around The Netherlands refer to their great inspiration, the men that made Gypsy Jazz happen in Europe. Reinhart was born in a "traveling Manouche gypsy [family of] entertainers", spent most of his childhood in a caravan camp in Paris. His first instrument was a violin; he experimented, until the guitar was the instrument of choice. He was available to mix swing and jazz to traditional Manouche, he had a great technique and could easily improvise. Reinhardt's unique style is praised by musicians and musicologists everywhere. (Eimers Guitars 2015, Givan 2010). As described by Aho (2013): "Fully in keeping with his gypsy heritage, his pyrotechnics were largely based on pre-learned motor gestures, highly guitar-idiomatic 'licks', some of which were so rapid that they were quite unanalyzable by ear alone." Everywhere with his improvisations he managed to take it further and make the legend bigger.

In The Netherlands, the Gypsy jazz scene is quite important and the most well-known, the core of this type of music is situated in Zuid-Oost Brabant and especially the city of Neunen. (Van Beurden⁹)

"In the tradition of the Dutch School of gipsy-swing, making this type of jazz is a group-thing, where the standards are always the same, but by playing these standards on-and-on, in the end a high musically level is reached. Despite this, almost encoded, way of expressing, a very creative process has been put to work in which their own feel and emotion find a great balance. Today, more Sinti musicians compose their own songs, but Django is still their hero and his work will always be the standard by which their songs are measured." (Sinti Music, 2016)

Zuid-Oost Brabant is known for the gifted Sinti musicians. Sinti from Neunen are famous worldwide. Wasso Grünholz, a recognize Dutch Sinto native from

⁹ Manger of a record label called Sinti Music Records, based on Eindhoven in his words "located and founded right in the centre of the habitat of Sinti music." Interview done by email.

Zuid-Oost Brabants, whose style is known around Europe, the mentor many well-known artist, like Stochelo Rosenberg and Paulus Schäfer.¹⁰ (Sinti Music, 2016)

When Van Beuren made reference to the musicians and the style of Sinti music he said the following:

“Music has been the language of the Sinti for ages. Their language and music has never been written down, but [it] will be heard forever. Music is given through by father to son, uncle to nephew and so on. Al-most everything is done by ear, and their talent is a gift from Mother Nature. Artistically Sinti have a big potential regarding musical qualities and instrumental skills. The fast pace, improvisations and the virtuosity are very special and this is why their music has an almost untouchable authenticity on stage which cannot be taught, it is in their veins.”

With these last thoughts of Henk Van Beuren, on the powerful musical culture of Sinti, it talks of a way of doing music, it brings improvisation and emotion, history and identity traits, it brings back the notion of collective history and the transcendent characteristic of music. It also brings this union of a group, which is only experienced and lived. In the next chapter the notions of Henk will be theorized further in order to really understand the construction and resisting element in Sinti music culture.

¹⁰ To see a video of Paulus style of playing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-Glhe1Mahk>

Chapter 3 Analyzing Music and Musician through Identities in Resistance and Body Politics

This section introduces theories on resistance, identities, body and embodiments and musicology. It explores music resistance, bodies resisting and re-claiming identities. This theoretical journey has been used as a tool to explore Sinti music and musician in The Netherlands. In order to give a different view on musical knowledge and re-claiming Sinti knowledge and its power to survive. Later on it will be directly linked to the context in The Netherlands and the lives of Roger and Lisa.

3.1 Cultural Politics

The term 'Cultural politics' is a starting point when analyzing identities and music. It makes reference to acknowledging who has the power to create 'meanings of social practices', "it also concerned with subjectivity and identity, since culture plays a central role in constituting our sense of ourselves." The subjectivity we embrace becomes very relevant to the contestation to power. When excluded groups build 'new and resistant identities' it talks about a stronger struggle in the society." (Jordan and Weedon 1995:5-6 in Alvarez et al., 1998).

'Dominant projects' impose certain way of understand of the world, it produces meaning, therefore the ones outside have a possibility to collectivize in a common struggle. Consequently, the construction of identities in this common 'set of meanings', inevitably establishes a close tie with culture. (Alvarez et al., 1998:6). The importance of culture and politics in the construction of identities is crucial, there are meanings that have been created in this joint venture.

Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar when analyzing culture and politics, emphasize the notion of public politics and how these arenas can be transformed, and that we can analyze new non-traditional "public spaces". To study the concept of public is a good way to analyze the nexus between culture and politics in social movements. Jean Franco suggests, "We must examine public spaces rather than conventionally defined public spheres so as to identify zones of action that present possibilities of participation to the subordinated groups who use and move through these spaces." (1998:19) Hence, the need to explore resistance and music, understanding music as an expression of identity, cultural heritage and expression of the way of living.

3.2 Resistance of Music

When talking about resistance an important starting point is James Scott. In 'Weapons of the Weak' he acknowledges the significance of the different forms of resistance. He addresses the specific issues of peasants, emphasizing that the different forms of resistance are "...not directly to overthrow or transform a system of domination, but rather to survive [...] within it." (Scott,

1985:301). Following Scott's (1985) argument, it is important to understand from the community the different 'informal' mechanisms they could use in their everyday life live with the dominant structures, that not necessary have to make sense with this very coordinated and formal way of resistance. Following Scott arguments resistance is not black and white, nor dichotomist; it has different forms and takes place in different places and times, in different forms and means. The different forms of resistance are made by all of the expressions against the dominant structures, even the "less visible", in Scotts (1985:241) words: "open collective protest [are] rare."

Subsequently to talk more specifically about music, Robin Balliger's notion of music and resistance helped me understand how Sinti musicians use their music, see the different expressions of their cultural heritage and how these different forms of oral history maybe used as a tool of 'less visible' resistance, to be more specific a way to keep their culture alive. According to Balliger "[m]usic is situated in particular in social relationships and locations that are a product of complex intersections of culture, class, gender, etc. in lived experiences. Music and representation of music are contextualized activities that have social and political meaning." (Balliger, 2005:423) The cultural politics of it, the importance of meaning making. Following this argument, I approached the research of Sinti through their relationship with music. "Music is neither transcendental nor trivial, but in-habits a site where hegemonic processes are contested." (Balliger, 2005:424). Is it possible to analyze different spaces where structures or/and hegemonic culture is contested? The Dutch context is where Sinti music is perform every day, the structures maybe not be all welcome to a different way of life.

To stress the previous argument, she also adds, "the experience of music for composer/performer and listener alike, gives us a way of being in the world, a way of making sense of it." (1996:114) Through the whole process of music we can see peoples points of view, in different forms; meaning that there will be times where is all about the music and what it generates and sometimes it can be all about the music industry and what this generates or the survival economy and what musicians need to survive.

In the particular context of the Sinti, orality or oral history is a key way of expressing their own history, "orality has played a major role in contesting the universalizing discourses. Locating a position of vocality and self-representation is central to creating a counter-narrative, and in critically attacking the legitimacy of 'objective' knowledge and truth." (Balliger, 2005:424) Music as a way of feeling free of domination, as an escape of the dominant culture, as an expression of their own culture in private and public spaces, through a different form or forms of oral history.

Balliger takes the discussion further by discussing the British punk scene, Paul Gilroy links it with reggae and black culture, he states that "is a site of collective memory, perception and experience in the present ... the construction of community by symbolic and ritual means ..." (Balliger, 2005:432). Therefore, the spaces go beyond power, a space where they could go to the past through music or build the future with notions of the past.

Analyzing music as a totality the lyrics, sounds, spaces, performance, audience, emotions can give you the expression of a culture or a group, how it interacts with the dominant culture, how groups find identifiers, or express their own

culture, or how they use the different musical scenarios, spaces or other to tell a story of resistance. “Sound has remained a potent weapon, a force that disturbs through the fact that it is unhinged from the visual or the knowable and symbolically acts on the imagination, infiltrating and destabilizing power.” (Baliger, 2005:433)

Therefore, resistance is the main theoretical framework. The analysis of Sint Musicians and their music will entail an everyday and music resistance perspective. Thinking of resistance as the “big umbrella”, I propose to analyse the findings through different resisting elements: identities, belonging as a way of reclaiming their identities, body politics and finally, as part of the findings, Romani feminism.

3.3 Identity, Body Politics and Music

The debate on identity, identification and identity formation has been lasting long in the literature. It will depend on the ontology of the author the different elements that he or she identifies as important where the definition can take you. Some stress the importance of discourses; others constructive process; the importance of the ‘otherness’, of being, of selves, of collectivity, of history, of performance and of power. The debates have moved the concept of identity far from a fixed, singular or unchanged; actually “increasingly fragmented and fractured, not single but multiple constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions.” (Hall, 1996:4) Therefore, when talking about cultural identity Hall (1996) argues that the identification is a construction, “a process never completed- always in processes.” (Hall, 1996:2)

According to Simon Frith, identity “is a process, an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music. Music seem to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, or the subjective in the collective.” (1996:110) In Frith’s analysis music is an experiential process by nature, it is something you feel.

Frith’s critical argument when talking about music is not whether “a particular piece of music or performance reflects the people, but how it is produced by them, how it creates and constructs an experience –a musical experience- that we can only make sense of by talking on both a subjective and a collective identity.” (1996:109) By making this analogy on music and identity Frith wishes to explain how the experience of music is similar in a way of how you can experience your different identities. Following his argument he further explains how “[m]usic, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind; identity, like music is a matter of both ethics and aesthetics.” (Frith, 1996:109) Music is a bodily matter as well, something that can be experienced directly in the body.

“[M]usic gives us a real experience of what the ideal could be.” (1996:123) Music is the material in this journey toward what we hope to become. The imaginary self, what I want to be and not just what I am. Music can entail broader spaces not just language, therefore is not just what is it saying, it may also be how it is performed and what it generates. Consequently, Frith expresses:

“[m]aking music isn’t a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them.” (1996:111)

DeNora in her paper argues that music is “a resource to which people turn so as to regulate themselves as aesthetic agents, as feeling, thinking and acting beings in their day-to-day lives.” (DeNora, 2003:173) She adds “music is a medium within which consciousness comes to be framed,” (2003:173) “Music, in short, is good to think with.” (De Nora,2003:174) Music as this inner voice that helps understand the own identity.

“Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives.” (Frith, 1996:124). The construction of self through the mind and the bodily experience are a very relevant way to study music. As Finnegan recalls “we should welcome this multiplicity of musical experiencing’s, interfused overlappingly with thought, embodied affect, and personal creativity.” (2003:191) He states that this perspective on music will widen the analysis, giving it a more “realistic appreciation of music and a richer model of beings and human culture.” (Finnegan,2003:191)

Harcourt and Escobar bring the notion of place-based politics, incorporating the struggles of women (or vulnerable) usually labeled as the other, the other to the dominant culture or politics. Making reference to women, they speak of a place-based perspective, where the body is the first place of “political struggle”. (Harcourt & Escobar, 2002) “The body is the site for many struggles over different identities, ways of thought and daily practices.” (Harcourt & Escobar, 2002:8) This struggle can be linked to survival, “issues of livelihood, justice and quality of life.”(Harcourt & Escobar, 2002:9) Emphasizing Body Politics, Harcourt and Escobar discuss how “[t]he body itself is a political site or place that mediated the lived experiences of social and cultural relationships.” (Harcourt & Escobar, 2002:10) ‘We are our bodies’, is where we experience everything, our experiences are also ‘bodily experiences’. As they argue: “[w]e need to understand the body not as bound to the private or the self –western idea of autonomous individual- but as being linked integrally to material expressions of community and public spaces.” (Harcourt & Escobar, 2002:10) A place where decisions are being made for us, where others may be deciding.

According to Frith “[m]usic is thus the cultural form best able both to cross borders and to define places; we are only where the music take us.” (Frith, 1996:125) Making reference to this “weapon” (Balliger, 2005) that goes beyond the limits, a cultural element that allows to go beyond, to push boundaries. Linking it directly with place-based politics and the embodied experiences of identities and music.

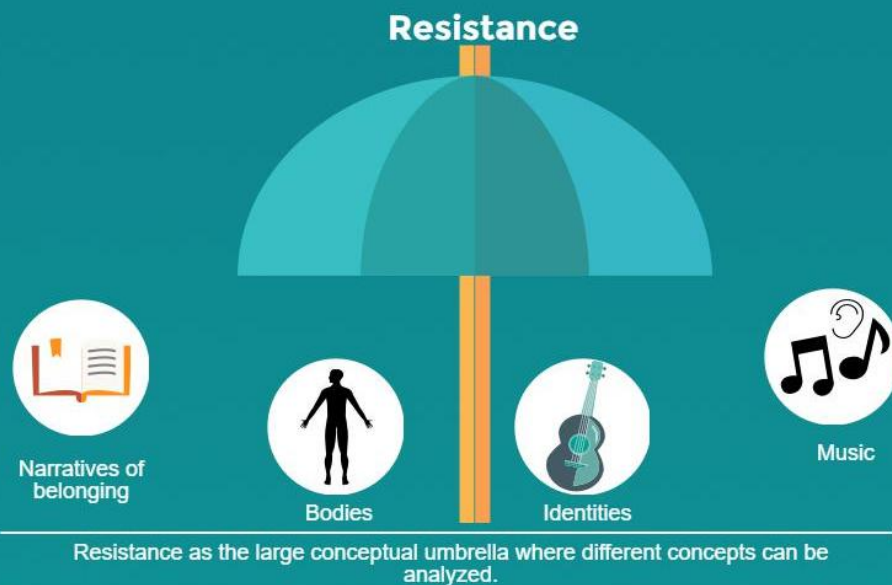
3.4 Identities: It is all about places and belonging

When analyzing identities and histories of certain groups it is important to understand their identification towards themselves and others as a sense of belonging. It can be associated with many things, but usually carries an emotional meaning. According to Yuval-Davis “Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling ‘at home’ and as Michael Ignatieff points out, about feeling ‘safe’. (2006:197). She also adds, “belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others.” (Yuval-Davis, 2006:199)

Consequently, identities, as stated by Yuval-Davis and connected with Hall (1996) are a changing process, constantly in construction; “are narratives, stories people tell themselves and others about who they are (and who they are not). [...]The identity narratives can shift and change, be contested and multiple. They can relate to the past, to a myth of origin; they can be aimed at explaining the present and, probably above all, they function as a projection of a future trajectory.” (Yuval-Davis,2006:200)

Resisting processes are involved in the embodied experiences of identification. As music in the experiential process of identification is a struggle that you live in the body. The different elements of music and identification are in constant struggle, they are determined by context, history, gender, class, and ethnicity. They relate to feeling and emotion, what I am and what I want to be. The next chapter, presents the musical narratives of two Sinti musicians, who talk about music as a way of being.

Analytical Framework



Discuss and Unpack



Sinti Music

Through the narratives of musicians



Figure 1: Analytical Framework

Chapter 4 *Lungo Drom* of Sinti Music

“Music will stay with me as a continuous inner undercurrent.

Even if life has obstacles and is troubled,

The river of music continues to flow over these obstacles.

The butterfly flaps from on the music from note to note.”

Lisa Weiss

The long way travelled by Sinti Music and musicians will be told through the stories of two self-made musicians in The Netherlands. My journey through Sinti Music begins with different musical encounters, discovering on the way; who played Sinti music and where, and what exactly was Sinti music. First, I learned about gipsy jazz, a very popular style inspired by everyone’s idol Django Reinhardt. The more I get to know the style, the more I understand that it required technique, that not everyone can play, that the musicians playing it did not use a music sheet, that it was improvised, and that there was this kind of musical language between musicians as they just follow one another when they play. My journey took me to music festivals, where there was not only Sinti and/or Roma music, but you could also find food, instruments, stories, and people that by then I have already met before. Through these musical encounters, I ended with two very strong stories that may show the process of discovering oneself through music, which involves for them reclaiming their identities.

Connecting Musical Narratives

Through an analysis and recollection of their musical journey, plus interviews on the way and all the additional information; I was able to connect the two stories in one intricate web of musical lives. Therefore, the following diagram shows how the stories of Lisa and Roger connect through important periods in their lives and different people that connect them and made their story remarkable. Their stories connect through: their rebel start in life, their life of music (living music), their music with a message, and their musical memorials to the *Porrajmos*.

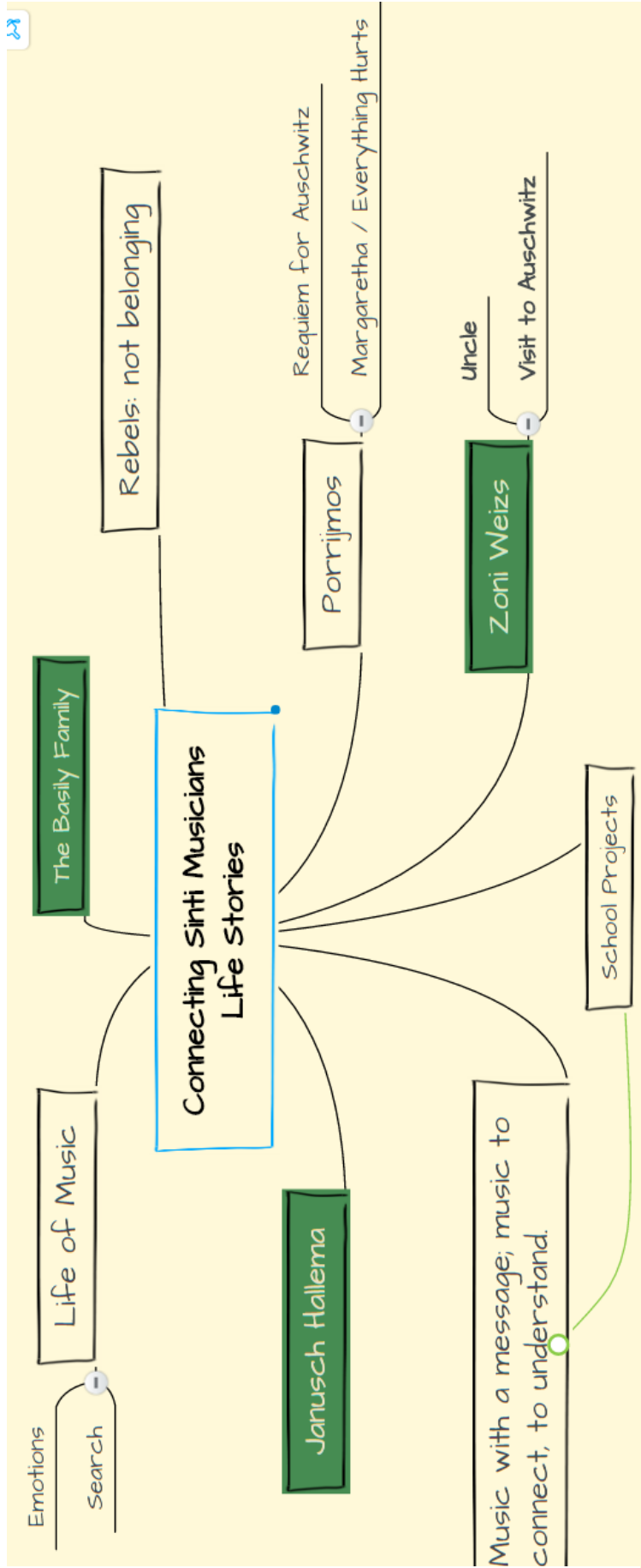


Figure 2: Connecting Stories of Sinti Musicians

4.1 Lisa's Drom: Looking for herself in History through Music



Figure 3: Lisa Weiss



Margaretha.m4a

Betje van Susteren, Lisa Weiss or Elizabeth Massing Weiss all the same women, different names that today co-exist in a very nice metaphor that Lisa expressed:

I live with two names, Weiss is my grandmother and my father is Massing, and then I became Van Susteren. I live with that name, I became that too. Lisa Van Susteren is the manager of Lisa Weiss, because she helps her made the things that she wanted to do. I tried to make it positive. They can help each other, and I am not alone. I can use the two names.

To the left you can hear an extract of the song Margaretha, while you are reading Lisa's story.

I begin with this part of Lisa's story because is a metaphor that culminates her exploration for peace in her self-search. Foremost metaphors are an important part in her songs and in Sinti's old stories. In a way it is a musician's way to make sense of the multiple selves and different understandings of belonging.

Lisa Weiss is Lisa's artistic name, Betje or Lisa van Susteren is the name she got after being adopted by her stepfather. Her parents split up when she was 5 years old, therefore for a very long time she did not see her father or his family. Lisa's mother, Mieke Lutgens was a Dutch traveller and his father, Kobus Massing Weiss, is a Sinto; they both lived in a caravan park on the Kaldenkerker-weg in Venlo. As she puts it:

They took me away from the gipsy's. After 27 years I saw my father and his family.

Her mother re-married and did not wanted contact with Lisa's father, she was afraid to lose her mother in the process of looking for her father. It took a while for her to find and re-unite with her family.

Little by little, piece by piece, I got my things back, I got my identity back. Now, I am OK with it because I told my stories in my CD. I felt ready, in my last CD I told everything that was in my heart. When I was younger, people said I was not good from the head. I have my own life or the life they could see, but I could not explain that I came from somewhere else. That I was actually someone different inside. Now everybody knows that I am who I am. I was open enough and glad that I could talk about it. So it is ok now, I am proud of myself, I fight a lot, a lot.

My gipsy life was there (pointing to the Forrest across the lake in front of the café that we met, Lisa is a regular here), I did a project in Venlo and a lot of people found it very good. We did it in the camp.¹¹

Lisa in that moment remembered the ‘Margaretha Project’¹², a project that started from the collaboration between Lisa and Mariet Verberkt, Venlo historian. They wanted to tell the story of the Roma and Sinti victims during the II World War. They accomplished a national exhibition called Warchild in Venlo Archive. After Mariet’s death a working group continued the project as ‘Margaretha lives’. Among the many things they did, it included a school project; at her theater Lisa welcomed students; they made music and she took them to the camp.

When I sing the songs or write about ‘Margaretha’ or about my family. I show a piece of me. I can share what happened with people, and then there is a connection there, there is something deeper.

The song ‘Margaretha’ was inspired in the events that happened in the same camp where Lisa was born. “In the springtime of 1944 the police of Venlo drove Sinti families from the Little Hay out of their wooden caravans. The family Pom-mée Steinbach was among them. Margaretha, a baby of a few weeks old and seven brother and sisters were deported to Westerbork and from there with the so-called ‘Gipsy Transport’ to Auschwitz-Birkenau. No single person of the family will survive this deportation.” (Lisa’s Drom 2015)

I can talk about people that are not alive. I can give things through the emotions of the music and tones, they can feel what happens and that is why they cry, and think my god how is this possible. I wish to take further and let people know, try to know people and listen to their stories. We are all the same people in this world, all the mess in the world is because we do not share.

Her music lets Lisa talk and express her story, a story that connects to many other people that live in the camp before her, to her family; a connection to the past and to the future. Her music is something she takes with her everywhere, is a way of life.

¹¹ Across from the lake and in the other side of the Forrest it was the camp Lisa spend her first years. It was the camp were the family on her father side was, where she decided to carry out the school project of Margaretha, and where she decided to come back to live.

¹² Video on Margaretha School Project: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWFeYD-0LUM&list=UU3vI1s1T5BNJ3sGaUwB5t2Q&index=35>

Music in my life represents everything! If I make music, then I live so intense with the whole universe, that I cannot say it in words, but it means everything.

Music represents also many of her life struggles, and the struggles of other who have stand before her.

Music was always with me in my life, people always say no, you cannot get money with that, as a girl you also need to help with cooking and cleaning, that is why they call me a "Rebel", I always runaway, I wanted to break free.

My first music experience was in Church, I wanted to be an acolyte, but they were only boys. Therefore, I was not allowed. So I got really angry and said if I cannot, I will never go to church again.

They offered Lisa to sign in the Church because she had the voice of an angel, she was hooked and her first song was about God. She recalls the many times she has been shut down of her dreams, just because she was a woman.

Then I was married, and people started saying singing is nothing. For me is something, is something that you cannot remove from your life, it always come back.

Everywhere there are Gipsy Festivals, I have to travel alone. I want the same as men, as the thing that happened in the church. No, a women should not play guitar, or should not travel alone. It is not nice that women fight for their own things.

Lisa wrote a song to her grandchild Sofie-Bleu, the song with the same name talks about her dreams and her struggles, it also talk about hope, and that is why she includes all children in her song, even her own childhood. She wrote the song to connect with her granddaughter that was far away. Bringing back her own childhood in the camp near nature that protected her. The song Sophie-Bleu culminates with the notion of Lisa that her own blood is all the way in the United States. "At the miracle of birth we realize that the long journey of the Sinti and Roma that started in India now has arrived on the other side/site of the ocean." (Lisa's Drom 2015)

While talking about her struggles she reflects that we live in a men's world, and sometimes people expect in Lisa's words:

You have to be women to men, but I have a mission. My mission is to bring cultures together, learn from each other, get to know each other. The biggest thing in life is that everybody is afraid, people do not trust each other; and is still a men's world.

She reflects now, after releasing her last CD that everything she lived has a purpose, and that she came to this world with a purpose:

I think I was born with a mission, that is why I lived the situations that I had to live and fight, and figure out and made myself a self-made women. Never a victim, and make something, never give up, you have to go through everything to become a human, try to be a good human more and more.

When we started talking more and more about the music, I could see how meaningful was music for her life, creating, expressing, feeling, searching, learning and reflecting. Music includes her and she includes music in her life.

For me is very important to be free, so I can make music. I still want to hold what I thought as a child. My music is my first love. More and more music for me lets me grow.

When reflecting on Sinti Music, Lisa says that:

Is about the tones and language. I always have a hard time with the language. In my last CD I made music and explain it in different languages so everybody would understand.

Her life is her music and her music is her struggle, a struggle that has a past and is dreaming of a future. At the end talking about Sinti issues today, Lisa reflects on the last point of her long search for identity:

You do not have to lose your culture; it is inside you, I never give it up. However, is a hard world, not only for the gypsies, for everyone who tries to work, at the end to survive.

The imagery of part of Lisa's story written in a Paramisa reflects part of her own reflections of her life and the life of the Sinti:

“A Gipsy Angel sings with all its soul. Its music expands our view on the universe. Even the stars and the moon are enchanted.

Gipsy angels welcome all people with an open heart. But from the very beginning of time the people on earth were often too fearful to dare speak with The Gipsy Angel.”

4.2 Teli lichta¹³ TABOR telling the Story of the Sinti through musical resistance



Figure 4: Tabor at FORT 1881

To hear an introduction of TABOR's music please click on the bottom to your right. At the end of this section you will find the lyrics to another song and the audio (on the



TABOR.m4a

TABOR is Roger Moreno Rathgeb band, is a Sinti music ensemble with two guitar players, a base (Janush Jallema) and his wife Piriuska, the singer. The story of Roger and the work of his band connects with Lisa's story; Tabor also wishes to tell the story of the Sinti's, to acknowledge their culture, re-vitalize what seem to be a vanishing art form. Roger with his recount of his life takes a journey back to the future of Romani-Sinti music; in the sense that he goes back but with his eyes on what his journey may bring.

According to their last album, the content stands for: "diversity, identity, emancipation and strengthening of the waning cultural heritage of the Sinti and Roma, threatened to be ruined by processes of globalization and digitalization. TABOR is struggling passionately against the fading away of culture and in favor of the survival of the musical cultural heritage of the Sinti and Roma." (Teli lichta, n.d.).

In the North Sea Gipsy Festival, done in the 1881 FORT¹⁴ was where I introduced myself to Roger Moreno, the composer of 'Requiem for Auschwitz'¹⁵.

¹³ Romani translated to English: Underneath the Light.

¹⁴ FORT 1881 is a coastal defence fort build in 1881 made to protect the Rotterdam region. Today it's a museum on and a well preserved cultural heritage in The Netherlands. The Fort was a very important site during the II World War.

¹⁵ Requiem for Auschwitz in Amsterdam: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDn0L6ZXmkk>

He with his band was playing as an initiative of the Fort to include the Olungo Drom moving exposition¹⁶ as part of the museum, as an addition to their II World War section. The exposition is a project that talks about the Sinti and Roma history in The Netherlands. Around this theme, they decided to create a four-day festival with music.

The Fort that was important in the II World War, was where Roger told me his story about music and of Sinti life, a story marked by important moments and events that let Roger re-claim his identities.

We started talking about music, how it was present since early years, he started playing at 10 and had his first paying gig at the age of 15. He as many other Sinti musicians is self-taught.

In the earlier years I was singing and playing the music in the recorder so I could remember. The reading and writing music I learned after, when I was 35. I played 20 years not knowing how to do it. Of course, I learned many things. It open a complete new world for me, I started to recognize what I did wrong. I took some lessons from a Hungarian violin player; he was playing in the symphony at the time.

When looking back on his childhood, he started with his life in Switzerland, he is a half Sinto, that learn from his heritage much late in life.

I was born in Switzerland, it was a complete different situation for gipsy, and my mom did not recognize she was a Gipsy. They had until 1973 a system where they took all the gipsy children away; they brought them to farmer families or families that did not have children. Travelling people or gipsy people could not take care of their children in a good way, "we are doing this on behalf of the children", all in the name of the children. Behind it was the idea to liquidate the population of the travelling people. The children grew up with someone else, they did not know anymore what their origin were, of course they felt inside they were not Swiss, they were not a farmer, of course those children spend their whole life looking for their family. It is a tragedy. I was lucky that my father was not gipsy but was Swiss, and that my mother did not tell this because maybe I would not be here, if it was not for that. From this topic, I am just writing an opera about it.

These was quite an important moment for him, where he reflected about what would of happened if they knew, how his life could have been if he was not raised as a *gadjo*¹⁷.

Roger's journey brought him to The Netherlands, the place that today he calls home. He told this story as a very fortuitous event, but one that eventually led him to establish a family, playing music and forming a band.

The first time I came (to The Netherlands) I was on tour with a Swiss band, we play Django Reinhardt music. I had a quarrel with the violinist of my band. I de-

¹⁶ A nomadic exposition on the life and history of the Roma and Sinti living in The Netherlands.

¹⁷ Non-Roma/Sinti

cided to stay here. In that moment, the father of Tucci Bassily, Lalo, took me in. We played for 7 years, with The Bassily, I mean. I stayed here very spontaneously. My main instrument is accordion, Lalo Bassily gave me an accordion, he said that my guitar was not fat enough, it does not sound strong enough, we need a strong accompaniment so he handed me an accordion. In 6 month I learned how to play.

There are different connections between Sinti; most are bond by families, and others as the case of Rogers was a connection of music. The big musical family, the Bassily, took him in, and as many of his son or relative the oldest and wiser of the family made the decision of which instrument he should play. When Roger was telling me this particular story, I was pulled back to the Gypsy Festival in Tilburg when I discuss with Roma Mirando, the son of Tata Mirando¹⁸, who also talked about how Tata (father in Romani) will tell him and all his brothers and cousins, which instruments they should play.

When talking about his musical aspirations, already settled in The Netherlands, Roger remembered his early dreams. By the tone of his voice you could tell he was content on what he accomplished. He felt wise in a way but with still a long way to go with many things to do and learn.

When I was young, I wanted to be a big star, to be famous, but after 5 years I decided it was a dream. What will come, will come. (pause) I think I write music with a message instead, a sort of social political protest song(s).

Going through his work, one of his most well-known project is ‘Requiem for Auschwitz’, a classical musical piece written in commemoration of the all the victims of the World War II.

In my first visit to Auschwitz, I had the idea of making a musical monument for all those victims. It took 10 years, and it premiered in Amsterdam in 2012. I composed something that I cannot play by myself, a type of music that can only be played by trained musicians.

The School Projects

I wrote a theater program titled Lungo Drom. The school project idea grow when we play in small theaters. Schools went to that pro-gram, so after that, the teachers were interested. I think it can be interested to people. They do not know where we came from. You can give the answer in the form of music and poetry. It is music and information at the same time. After the Requiem, people also got interested; therefore it started a new way of school program, how did I wrote it, why, etc. They asked themselves: how could a gipsy musician write a Requiem if he is unable to read or write music?

Roger then told me that they use that space, the project, and talked about what happened in World War II to the Roma and Sinti. And also emphasized to

¹⁸ Tata Mirando Ensemble today is led by Djangela Mirando, son of Meizel and grandson of Josef. The ‘Tata Mirando Gypsy Orchestra’ was first lead by Josef and continue after by his son and grandson.

children (the future generations as he mentions) that discrimination toward Sinti and Roma is still an issue in Europe.

When talking about the importance of letting people know who are the Sinti and Roma, and in particular on the school projects, we started talking about the con-text in The Netherlands, what was happening here that there was need to do this kind of projects?

In The Netherlands is quite good, when you compare it with other countries. Is quite integrated already into the population. Of course not everything is toward the wellbeing of the gipsy's, especially be-cause they may not travel around anymore. But even the new generation already, are confused about that, they don't want to travel any more, they want to have their computer, their play station. We were in fact the last generation that travelled around, like it was be-fore. I was traveling until 1995.

I asked about this nostalgia for the past and what he thought about today's generations, would they still play Sinti music. He was concerned about the topic, a part of him believed that their traditions will cease to exist.

In this moment [our travelling culture]...is on the way to die out. However, you never know. Maybe it will change and start again, maybe some will be interested to keep the traditions. Music is part of your identity, like your language also is, and language is dying out. This is very dangerous, because when music and language vanish; in fact then, a nation is broken. Music and language keeps it going on.

Therefore, when we talked about his music:

Many people say that my music has a really deep feeling going in-side, is not just something to consume, you tell stories with the mu-sic, and I also want to tell something with my music.



Lets go a new way.m4a

The next song is composed and written by Roger and Jan:

DCAS MENGE I NEWO DROM (Let's go a new way)

Text and Music: Roger Moreno + Jan Hallema

'People, open up your eyes,

Just look what is going on around you.

People, open up your ears,

Listen, what they are speaking about us.

[...]

We have to fight for ourselves,

The children are everything for us.

We have to take care for them to learn,

That there will come new times.

[...]

It's not enough when we only play,

Our most beautiful songs for the non-gypsies.

It's not enough when we only speak about,

how the past time was for us."

The song reads how Roger sees the struggle of Sinti, a call to wake up and listen and fight for themselves and for future generations. A call to let people know who they really are.

I wrote already more than 140 songs, and about 16 classical works. I want to do an Oratorio of the whole story of the [the Journey of] Gipsy's to Europe. I have the idea of the 'red line' the whole story of the Gipsy's. I have to write in different languages, to tell the story of the gipsy, but the song would be in Romansch, in gipsy language. I been working in this for years.

Roger tells his story, with anecdotes that take us back to the past and aspirations that takes us to the possible future of Sinti Music. He makes reference to the *Porrajmos* and to his own childhood, were political discrimination in Switzerland affected again the bodies of the Roma and Sinti. His story re-claims lost identities that are incorporated as songs with a message.

Roger and Lisa's story gave me a new perspective to understand music, as very personal yet inclusive kind of cultural tradition. Music as way to understand self, medium and a symbolic source that has the power to get to different people, or a broader audience. The next chapter will analyze further these first reflections, will try to bring a more comprehensive analysis to the bodily experiences of music and identity, and how this could be a way of resistance.

Chapter 5 Analyzing Sinti Musicians and their Music: Bodies, Identities and Resistance

The bodily experiences and performance of music can be the beginning of the analysis of Sinti identities, bodies and resistance. Music is a form of embodiment of Sinti culture that can be experienced in different ways. As an important standpoint, Sinti have been denied by the many stereotyped imageries, perpetuating the view as the 'other' in the European society, even though they have been living in Europe for centuries. Therefore, as mentioned before, the analysis is done incorporating the notion of the "other", living out a western rational. As Icaza and Vázquez rightly acknowledge "[...] rebellions that stand up against [...] cultural alienation cannot be adequately understood through the same rationality that underlies the processes that they are breaking with. They are, rather, an open question to this dominant way of thinking and ordering of the real" (Icaza et al., 2013;689) Hence, when analyzing Sinti culture it is important to incorporate rationales that go beyond what we are used to, to try understand their struggle and understand their own alternative ways of life. Rationales that move beyond the dominant structures, or the classical views, because when you choose to understand music and a movement of 'others'; you need to be open to different views and really hear what they are saying. Through music and the many stories and connections of the musicians the analysis is able to show in a different way the struggles of Sinti.

5.1 Bodies in Resistance: Music, Identities and Body Politics

Music is part of peoples identities, it may keep a culture going, as Roger reflected, is not just something to consume, you tell a story with music. Both Roger and Lisa wanted to tell stories through music, stories about themselves and about their people. They even wanted to go further, with their school projects where they wanted or maybe wished for a better future, but looking to a past that should not be forgotten.

Music is a bodily experience, for both musicians and listeners. Music is a way to express and live those identities, it is an experiential process (Frith, 1996). As Lisa portrays it 'music is everything', it is about living intense with the universe, it cannot even be put into words, making music is the most intense way she can live her life. Her music relates to people, to places and to her own life story; it is the way she connected with her past and made sense of her future. Is her own way of sharing, of experiencing, of connecting to people, to an audience. Finally, it is the way she wants to know herself and the way she wants people to know her, in every song she leaves a piece of herself.

Musical experiences help place ourselves in the world, as Lisa's own musical journey she connects and sings about what is troubling her, her songs are the dilemmas in her life, the predicaments of who she is, and what is important to her. Her songs talk about history and recognition, about her family and her lost self, about the connections made in life, about her people, son and granddaughter, she embraces being a mother and grandmother. And she manages to

connect all, to the origin of all Sinti people, Northern India. She recognizes that the long way of her people ends in the USA where her son lives.

The bodily experiences of music go beyond text, they are situated in a context, sung/played/performed by certain people, in particular places; they tell a story a message that transcends and dialogues with an audience. Music is emotions, is a message, is feelings, it can be everything and nothing at all. It can rebel or be a classic, and it can be part of everybody and nobody at the same time. The broader composition of music let it be emotions and feelings, and in that way also free are expressions of our own subjectivities, “[f]eeling/meanings are fluid, complex, infinite, never fixed in a text.” (Keil, 2002:37)

“The experiences of music –making and listening- is an experience of this self-in-process” (Frith, 1996:109). In the case of Lisa it becomes clear that in her search for sound, tones, lyrics and meaning she found herself, the construction of her music was her own construction and re-construction, the self-in-process. Her search for music became her search for meaning and her search for meaning became music, the bodily experience of herself.

The bodily experiences of identities go beyond music when we talk about the *Porrajmos*. The bodies of Roma and Sinti can be the first place in their political struggle, if we remount ourselves to the *Porrajmos*. “The body is the site for many struggles over different identities, ways of thought and daily practices.” (Harcourt and Escobar, 2002:8) According to Hancock during Nazi Germany, there were “three groups that they considered to be ‘unworthy of life’ were the ‘incurably mentally ill’,” Roma and Sinti were in this group. Bodies not worthy of life, irrelevant bodies. Again in history, as always, apparently some bodies are more important or ‘worthy’ than others. The racialized bodies became objects of extermination. Even in those days securitization policies were being used to make some bodies more important than others. The formulation of a law that enforced the unemployed Roma or Sinti to be sent to ‘work camps’ as a matter of “public security”. (Hancock, 2005:37)¹⁹

What happened to Roma and Sinti bodies back then, that was completely graphic of what certain kind of policies or projects can do to “some” bodies. “In calling attention to bodies as political subjects, it is recognized that ‘we are our bodies’, and that every rational, emotional or other experience or filtering of experience is ultimately had through the body.” (Harcourt and Escobar, 2002:10)²⁰

Mignolo talks about how society acknowledges some people as trustworthy of knowledge, these perpetual cycles all validated the same Western rational thinking. Some knowledges are portrayed more “worthy” than others. Moreover, there are “people who are not trusted in their thinking, are doubted in their rationality and wounded in their dignity.” (Mignolo et al., 2006:207). These notions of the unworthy other can clearly replicate to the Sinti. “The political self is not distinct from the body: it is only through particular ideological and historical processes that bodily experiences and activities have been removed from political discourse.” (Harcourt and Escobar, 2002:10)²¹

¹⁹ Ovalle Peña, 2016 *What is political about Sinti and Roma Music?*

²⁰ Ovalle Peña, 2016 *What is political about Sinti and Roma Music?*

²¹ Ovalle Peña, 2016 *What is political about Sinti and Roma Music?*

I think the song ‘Everything hurts’ (Lisa’s Drom 2015) of Lisa honoring his uncle Zoni Weisz, spokesperson and *Porrajmos* survivor. This illustrates the emotions of a holocaust survivor, through her song we are taken back to II World War, a war that took away the identities of the survivors –son, brother, cousin, Sinti-the war embodied the experiences of lost and the struggles to survive.

“After all these years pain lingers being left by everyone: by dogs and soldiers, by water, air, fields, sun and moon / life hurts /I cry salty tears / I have searched for my mother and father, my brother and sister / they never came back / their name etched in eternity/ their voices are whispers in the wind”.(Lisa’s Drom 2015)

The strong connections with family, the feeling of emptiness from a moment in history that transcends, the legacy of a war that cannot be forgot by those who were most affected. Also the constant reference to nature, as a way to understand or to connect life and sensations, the notion of a world that let us down and the forever presence of those who left us.

Music becomes powerful and personal, and does not mean less political. It talks about a wound, which not only the survivors have, but a wound that all Roma and Sinti have. A wound that they carry as their struggle, a struggle that people decided to erase from history. This song is a reminder that we must never again let this happen. “The notions of politics of place is closely linked to our recognition that politics is largely made up of contests over meaning: the interplay between culture and power. [...] place-based politics suggests that we need to take into account many more aspects of our social and cultural locations when constructing a movement in pursuit of social change.” (Harcourt and Escobar, 2002:11)²²

5.2 Resistance of Sinti Music

‘When music and language vanish, a nation is broken’

Roger Moreno

Music is a language we can all relate to, it is a human language; therefore the way it is presented, the emotions it connects in the song is independent of the actual language –Romani, Dutch, among others- it speaks to people. Music, musicians language, can try and speak to all of us, is a way to make as listen through the body.

The Gipsy-ensemble TABOR is an authentic Gypsy traditional band, that also get their inspiration as many musicians in The Netherlands, from Django Reinhardt. As identified on their own website their performance is a result of a combination of “health, compassion, nostalgia about the past, resistance against bourgeois conventions as well as against the disappearing respect for each other in terms of culture and identity.” (Sinti Music, 2016b)

²² Ovalle Peña, 2016 *What is political about Sinti and Roma Music?*

Resistance, survival and promotion of Sinti Culture

Teli Lichta is the name of their new album, a composition of the group that talks about their roots and aspirations. As mentioned in the biography of the group “all songs are personal compositions and texts, sung in the Romani-language of the Sinti.” The content of the songs wishes to put forward a message of diversity and identity; it is a way to acknowledge a cultural heritage. As mentioned before TABOR struggles to keep its traditional Sinti and Roma music alive. Therefore, TABOR through its music is trying to survive within a system that is dominated by different types of music and ways of life. Using Scott’s (1985) concept of resistance the Sinti band TABOR is not directly trying to overthrow a system that does not talk their language and does not necessarily approve of their ways, but it is also trying to survive within it. They sing songs about their old way of life, about sitting at the fire, making music and sharing. TABOR brings back the traditional stories in music, incorporating old songs and tales, acknowledging their oral history. Therefore, to resist is not just a complete denial of the dominant structure, it may also be a plea to survive. The “less visible” forms of resistance can also be played in small bars, in schools, in communities, in the streets, in a concert or a festival. It may be direct or indirect, living the way they want to live, keeping traditions, singing in Romani, living in a camp, enjoying their communities or even asking for recognition, or acknowledgement; they are making themselves present, they are here, they play their music and they wish you would listen to them.

Music can be a way to understand the world, in this case where the musicians position themselves, as Balliger (2005) rightly acknowledges music is a contextualized and intersectional expression of people’s life. Therefore it has social and political meaning, “...it inhabits a site where hegemonic processes are contested[,]” (Balliger, 2015:424), where the demand for following the traditional social structure, living in a settle way in regular houses, that have a different way of thinking; is criticize by music that sings of people who wish to follow their own journey.

The Lungo Drom project is a way to inform people, especially kids about who the Sinti are. Talking musical expression and performance as knowledge, a way to show people who they really are and let them know what happened in the *Porrajmos*. Going against the notion and stereotypes, and connecting through to people by artistic expressions. As Finnegan states: “[w]hether it is deeply intense fashion or more light-touch action, music provides a human re-source through which people can enact their lives with inextricably entwined feeling, though and imagination.” (Finnegan, 2003:188)

A way Tabor enacts their lives is by their song ‘Tikno Wago, Puro Grai’ (‘Small Wagon, and an Old Horse’) they reminiscence about their old way of life and talk about their journey: “*We will continue our journey with our wagons. / Like the sun is shining for us, / like the clouds are walking in the sky, / our road will never end.*”²³ (*Teli lichta* n.d.) Expressing in Romani other ways of life, ways they feel as their own, with nostalgia looking back at their “journey with their wagons”.

²³ Text by Piroshka Triska – Music by Eduard Adell, 2009. Dedicated specially to their parents and grandparents.

As Balliger and Gilroy mention, music can be a site of “collective memory”, the ongoing construction of a “community by symbolic and ritual means” (2005:432), where the rhythms, lyrics, language, instruments all make synergy to acknowledge their own culture. Music as the material representation of culture, a moving legacy that travels through space and time.

Following Balliger’s argument, Lisa’s work shows how music goes beyond mere representation. Music can be an element of resistance that goes beyond the visual or the knowable, something that can actually act on the imagination or emotions. She speaks of how people feel when she signs, because she is transmitting through the emotions of the music and tones, is her own way of making them listen. Acknowledging as well musical emotional expressions as a form of knowledge or information.

An example of that is her song *I saw your face*’ (Lisa’s Drom 2015) with an instrumental introduction that mixes violin, accordion, guitar and drums; it sets the mood for a melancholic song that slowly gets a powerful voice. The song talks about the darkness of the world, but how behind of all the bad we can find some hope, that face that takes you out of that place. *“I saw your face and the world becomes a light,”* Lisa explains it by saying: “from behind the dark masks of existence your loving face comes to me.” This song makes also reference to Margaretha, acknowledging the feeling of her parents. However, what she really wanted to do is to signify Margaretha identity, “paint her smiling face in the light as hope.” This makes reference to her own story as a mother, as a women who struggles for her sense of self in the world, and for her son that is also a parent. Margaretha is an example of what extreme discrimination can take away from you.

A collective past can construct an identity imagery; in the case of the Sinti it becomes the long last struggle to recognize the “forgotten holocaust”. However, as exposed in the songs it also talks about a deeper meaning, an emotional attachment and feeling that they share today. The *Porrajmos* is not just the past of Sinti and Roma, it is a present that hunts their sense of self, in a society that discriminates them. In a rationale that denies their bodies and thinking; and may challenge their ways.

5.3 Body Politics and Belonging: two rebels re-claiming Sinti Identities

The contextual complexities of identities are shown in the lives of Roger Moreno and Lisa Weiss. When analyzing the act of belonging, according to Yuval-Davis, an act of self-identification, where I choose where to be or were I declare myself comfortable. Roger shows a perfect example in his first trip to The Netherlands. “In 1980 my band and I were on a tour of Holland and I met several Sinti families of musicians. The band just left me there with them [laughs]. They only spoke the Sinti dialect of Romanes, and I immediately felt at home among them.” (Moreno, 2012)

The rebellious acts of both Roger and Lisa were part of this feeling of not belonging, an emotional attachment that relates to people and places. Both stories show different ways of belonging, one following her family, which she missed, and him following a ‘family’ that he never knew he had. “I [Roger] always had the feeling I was not like other Swiss people. I was a rebel. I protest-

ed against Swiss laws, against society, against everything. Swiss people have a completely different mindset. Inside I suspected I was not Swiss, that it couldn't be true. There just had to be something else.” (Moreno, 2012)

The childhood experiences proved to be an important process of their self-journeys for both Lisa and Roger. He has a clear memory of his time in school when living in Switzerland. “When I was young, children in school would laugh at me and say I was a ‘gypsy’, and I always defended myself against their accusations because I really didn't know anything about my origins. Once I came home and complained about it to my mother and she revealed to me that I am Romani. It was not easy for her to say, she was a bit ashamed herself. Then, for many years, I had a problem with my identity. After all, I grew up as just a ‘nor-mal’ Swiss person, just like a *gadjo*.” (Moreno, 2012) Something was missing in Roger's life, he felt an outsider in a country, a society or a community that he did not connect, with discourses that he did not agree. By declaring this he did an act of self-identification, in his disputing identities he felt he belong more, he decided to re-claim his Sinti identities.

Lisa's story is a search for herself, is a search to know who she is. Her exploration started very young when she moved away from her family, and could not understand what she was missing. As her own biography describes: “Lisa was a person who lived in a kind of nowhere-land. This insecurity, and the feeling of not belonging here nor there, is the central theme that's run through Lisa's existence and it is intertwined in her life.” (Lisa's Drom 2015) Her latest CD shows this, all her journey toward a place where she feels comfortable with who she is. Her different struggles through music help understand her message and story.

Lisa's interview pulls through a gendered perspective that I had not brought in the early stage of the research. I struggled to incorporate a gender perspective because of the male dominant music circle in The Netherland, all following the Django Reinhart style. However, she makes very clear in her narratives and songs that she is a self-made woman, and she does not need a man to accomplish anything in life. Her story is a gendered story, her struggles have a gendered perspective, and her body is her first place of struggle, since being a young girl.

5.4 Gendered Identities: Romani Feminism to Music Feminism

Women should not play guitar, or should not travel alone.'

Lisa Weis

Romani feminism takes into account the intersectionality of the gendered bodies, Esther Brooks, a Roma academic explains the importance to take an academic and active stand when talking of feminism in the Roma community: “As Romani women, as feminist and as embodied, racialized, gendered subjects, we are positioned to intervene productively in these interrelated challenges. With increasing violence against Romani people all over Europe and beyond in the twenty-first, the need for activism and theory, and the possibility of Romani feminism. Take on an urgency that cannot be denied.” (Brooks, 2012:10) Lisa's life is a life of a gendered musician *sintezza*, when we talked for the first time in

Venlo, her reference where always gendered. The female/male differences were made from the beginning, as a child she realized that she was born in a world where men and women were allowed and told to behave in different ways. She never felt comfortable with that division, she wanted to explore and know everything.

Getting deeper into a gender romani-perspective, including Romani academics, they acknowledge that 'Romani feminism' is a "way of thinking about the means and meanings of a sociocultural action research that links the descriptive, critical, and deconstructive analysis of power relations with an activist commitment (activism) toward empowering the critical perspectives and practices of people situated in disadvantaged positions." (Bitu and Vincze, 2012:46) It is a way to acknowledge an act, and it is related to Lisa's life because she became aware of these patterns and chose her own path. She not only did that, but she also wrote songs about it and performed them. Her song 'My Life' (Lisa's Drom 2015) sings about the first encounter with 'machismo' as she called it, it was religion, it made her reflect on life and who was allowed to be nearer to God. As she sings: "Do these men know all the lessons of life?" Therefore, in the imagery of her son she sings about how she asks men to play for her once, because she as well knows about life. "Play for me on your guitar, on your violin, because I know about life, about light." (Lisa's Drom 2015)

Petra Gelbart in her paper 'Either Sing or Go Get the Beer' acknowledges the intersectional characteristic of Romani feminism, as Mohanty discusses when talking about the "third world women". Gelbart states: "[i]n fact, Romani gender dynamics intersect with and parallel larger structures, including the gender roles and inequalities of the broader societies in which they are embedded, while also taking some of their own quite plural trajectories." (2012:27) Lisa's words show how she lived a life framed by gendered structures, were patriarchy of Sinti communities –her family- and society as whole, particularly the music industry close paths or made her goals much harder. Her story started with the recollection of music and she herself remembered that she ended up singing in the church because they would not let her be an acolyte. She recognized this as a chance to sing but it kept being a pattern in her life. Following Gelbart's argument more specifically on music "Romani women, for the most part, have gained respect only as singers and dancers with bosoms and twirly skirts. Many Romani boys are trained to play musical instruments, whereas most girls, whose usual musical roles are to sing and dance, are never offered the chance:" (Gelbart, 2012:26) Lisa recalls a similar argument when she started her musical career, women should not play guitar, or should not travel alone. She narrates how when she got married people insisted singing was a hobby, that is not something to live by, and recognizing her just as a singer when she is a musician as well. Going back to Gelbart's argument she ended her paper acknowledging the intersectional nature of identities and emphasizes that woman can have relevant 'status' in their own community and as women. Being a 'stereotypical' role in the community does not mean being less of a woman or less of a feminist. This last point for me and I think for Lisa is very important, as it is about challenging notions of something being less important we need to reincorporate, as music, emotions and Roma knowledge, female typical or stereotypical roles as relevant, and as important.

To finalize with Lisa's reflection, "[i]n nature there was tranquility. [...] This deep natural happiness was in stark contrast with the obstacles that life and

real-ity often bring for someone who was born in a caravan. In this world you are often merely judged by your descent and therefore rejected.” (Lisa’s Drom 2015) This last quote reflects the intersectional perspective and struggles in a young Sinti women living in a caravan. The multiple identities that cross over in her life and make her who she is and the struggles she has to overcome, and that is more than just being a women, or musician, or Sinti, or to live caravan camp.

The connecting stories of Lisa and Roger were analyzed as a way to understand other ways of thinking, it is also a way to listen, to understand what music can do. Understanding that music is art, language and message; that represents a way of life, of being; living a musical life is connecting in such a way that you feel more alive. The act of performing and producing music is a way to make yourself out there. Music, as very few other mechanisms or art, transcends space and time, in different moments in time can be out there so other can listen and understand.

Chapter 6 Conclusions

The narratives of Lisa and Roger describe their search of self and music. Two rebels searching for a place to belong, two rebels who wish to let people would understand who they are; Sinti, self-taught musicians, women or men, Dutch or Swiss, all the crossover on identities that were exposed through music. The history of the *Porrajmos*, the struggle for recognition, this deeper feeling of knowing there is some-thing missing in their lives, the sensation both describe as not yet complete. Narratives that describe the embodied experiences of identities and music as the constant struggles of the body.

The dialogues between Roger and Lisa in the paper allows them to speak about their own process, the methodology used helps to understand the experiences, the processes and their own recognition of self. Acknowledging the importance of orality, of people telling their story; the importance for Sinti, for musicians and for music itself, the different sources contribute to the understanding of the embodiment of music.

The connecting stories show how completely different experiences can be linked, how people that not necessarily share a neighborhood, family, even friends; can join stories of music; people that in different way and from different standpoints created projects for the recognition of the *Porrajmos* and emphasis on schools and children hoping that future generations will understand them. They are manifesting the following message: our culture is about our journey, our family and music; we are still here and we matter. We do not want exclusion to take over as it did during the Holocaust.

This research argues that Sinti music is or can be politically enough to be a counter discourse to the dominant one, because it speaks of a way of life, a recognition of the past and because musicians wish to tell something with their music, something about themselves and about their culture, and most importantly about who they really are. The analysis of the narratives of the musicians demonstrates how music in another language, and how it talks of people and their own life; is also powerful knowledge. It is knowledge that speaks about an embodied struggle that is racialized, gendered and divided by class. The re-claim of Roger and Lisa's Sinti identities shows the strong role that the collectivity, in this case Sinti in The Netherlands, could play in their life and in their music. Music and identities as something you construct on the process of being, of reclaiming self and doing music, but also something you feel, that you embodied.

Music can be an element of resistance that goes beyond the visual or the knowable, something that can actually have an effect on the imagination or emotions. (Balliger 2005, Frith 1995, Finnegan 2003) *Many people say that my music has a really deep feeling going inside, is not just something to consume, you tell stories with the music, and I also want to tell something with my music* (Roger). Music as a way to go against the preconceptions and stereotypes of the Sinti, and connecting through to people by artistic expressions. *My mission is to bring cultures together, learn from each other, get to know each other.* (Lisa)

In a European context where an exacerbating division and separation seems to be on the rise, where hate and violence seem to be in the news every day. Sinti

exclusion and discrimination have become relevant again because of the violence against the “other.” In a Europe that is no longer looking for integration and unity, where do people who have different way of living, look differently and values other things, fit?

The resisting bodies of the Sinti today are fighting all sorts of violence, not just physical. Everything is political about the Sinti culture, the whole context of their bodies. It is a way of surviving, of resisting to those who do not wish to understand their way of life. “Re-embedding politics in place, thus, also means locating discussions and activisms squarely and deeply within all of their contextual complexity.” (Harcourt and Escobar, 2002:11) A society that it is afraid of its own diversity is a society that does not listen, is a society afraid of the unknown, and is a society that needs an enemy, a scapegoat. In this space of discrimination to survive is to resist.

As Lisa said you do not have to lose your culture; it is inside you, I never gave it up. However, is a hard world, not only for the gipsys, for everyone who tries to work, at the end it is about surviving.

Music is a unique way to continue traditions; it is a way to make others listen, a way to survive, to declare I am still here. In a monitored world -where even sounds are controlled- music can be a way to challenge the dominant discourse or a way to promote your views of the world and society. If nobody is willing to hear, music is a way to let people hear about the history and life of the Sinti, as told by the musicians is a way to connect, to celebrate, to join cultures; is their own way to make people understand them. They are performing their identities through music, they are telling their story, and they are leaving a permanent or material record of their collectivity. Music as a symbolic weapon that acts on the imagination of a destabilizing power.

Last Reflections

This paper discuss different perspectives towards knowledge and knowledge value; more than emphasizing on the great reflections of academia, it brings light to the stories of people. At the same time, there was a focus on the process and not just results, like a journey towards music. Therefore, the decisions, along the way matter; how we do it, for what purpose and the statements we wish to make at the end, all have a purpose. Future research should highlight the importance of the research process and the incorporating of different knowledges. The call now is to engage, to listen, and to emphasis in the different knowledges. We can be creative and value the power that music may bring to research.

Annex Table 1: Interviewees and Informal Conversation

Interviewees

Name	Place	Date
Lisa Weiss (In-depth)	Venlo –different locations	August
Roger Moreno (In-depth)	FORT 1881-Gypsy Festival	August
Sabina Achterbergh	Utrecht – The Hague – FORT 1881	Feb – May – August
Janusch Hallema	FORT 1881-Gypsy Festival	August

Informal Conversations

Name	Place	Date
Peter Jorna	Several times	Feb-August
Galid	Utrecht – The Hague – FORT 1881	Feb – May – August
Beike Steinbsch	Municipality – Hague Talk	May – August
Zonzo Basily	La Rana	April
Piroska	FORT 1881	August
Roma Heina Mirando	Gypsy International Fest-Tilburg	May
Alban Claret	Gekke Geit, La Rana	April
Noa Eyl	La Rana	April

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