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Visual interventions and the "crises in representation" in environmental anthropology: Researching environmental justice in a Hungarian Romani neighborhood

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ABSTRACT: Participatory visual research, or "visual interventions" (Pink 2007) allow environmental anthropologists to respond to three different "crises of representation": 1) the critique of ethnographic representation presented by postmodern, postcolonial, and feminist anthropologists, 2) the constructivist critique of nature and the environment, and 3) the "environmental justice" critique demanding representation for the environmental concerns of communities of color. Participatory visual research integrates community members in the process of staking out a research agenda, conducting fieldwork and interpreting data, and communicating and applying research findings. Our project used the Photovoice methodology to generate knowledge and documentation related to environment injustices faced by Roma in Hungary. I discuss the promise and limitations of "visual interventions" as a pathway leading applied environmental anthropologists beyond the three "crises in representation."

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1. Introduction

Photo 1: Yard flooded by broken water pipe
 (Photo: S. Kelemen)

On a Saturday afternoon, six young people gather around a laptop computer to share their digital photos. They are not just looking at snapshots of friends, but at photos they have taken to document environmental issues in their predominantly Romani[1] neighborhood in northern Hungary. The young photographers discuss the underlying ideas they wished to convey. Judit, a Romani community organizer who grew up in the neighborhood, leads discussion while I take notes. We click on Sándor's photo of a woman on the steps of her house, surveying her flooded, muddy yard (Photo 1). Sándor is new to digital photography, but already creating memorable images. He shares the story behind the picture:

> When a pipe breaks, it floods people's yards. This woman, our neighbor, could not
>
> leave her house for hours. Since there are outhouses in the yards, this is a health
>
> problem. The water pipes in this community are old, and they are not well
>
> maintained by the responsible authorities.[2]

Sándor relates that the repairman who came to fix the break complained that neighborhood pipes were in such bad condition that he had been called in three times in recent months. Máriann, another photographer, mentions that water pipes are being upgraded in non-Roma neighborhoods across the bridge. The following Monday, she walks across town to photograph the new infrastructure, documenting the disparity.

The photos and discussion are part of a participatory visual research project. Sándor, Mariann, Judit, and four others documented neighborhood environmental conditions using

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Photovoice--a methodology in which community members use photographs to document issues, stimulate discussion, and gain policymakers' attention. Residents have long lamented that their neighborhood lacks the infrastructure and green space enjoyed in non-Romani neighborhoods "across the bridge" while also enduring substantial illegal dumping. Conditions of environmental injustice are widely experienced by Roma, who make up over five percent of Hungary's ten million citizens and are by far the largest ethnic minority.[3] In a political setting where Roma's voices remain on the margins, our research team's Photovoice project allowed residents to present these problems in an accessible medium that invites discussion and demands policy action: making "visual interventions" into the way their neighborhood and its environment are represented (Pink 2007).

For environmental anthropologists, participatory visual research provides a response to three "crises of representation" challenging the authority of anthropology, the environmental social sciences, and the mainstream environmental movement. The "first crisis of representation" of the 1980s criticized the way anthropologists represented the ethnographic research encounter, especially those portrayed as the "Other" through colonial, racializing, or other power-inflected tropes (Marcus and Fischer 1986). What I call the "second crisis" is the wave of scholarship positing that "nature" and the "environment" are culturally and historically constructed objects, and that cultural constructs shape how people use or exploit the environment as well as efforts to protect the environment, with material effects (Cronon 1992). The "third crisis," provoked and inspired by grassroots struggles for environmental justice, directed attention to the ways in which the concerns of marginalized groups have been ignored by the mainstream environmental movement (Bullard 1990).

Participatory visual research, like participatory action research (PAR), integrates community members in staking out a research agenda, conducting fieldwork, interpreting

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data, and communicating and applying research findings. I reflect on a project with the Sajó River Association for Environment and Community Development in northern Hungary where we used the Photovoice methodology to generate knowledge about social and environmental exclusion. I conclude with an assessment of the promise and limitations of "visual interventions" as a pathway leading applied environmental anthropologists beyond the three "crises in representation."

Three "crises in representation" in the environmental social sciences

Participatory visual and digital research helps environmental anthropologists respond to three different "crises of representation." The "first crisis" was the critique of ethnographic representation of the 1980s. Postcolonial and feminist scholars drew attention to the power imbalances between anthropologists and their subaltern research subjects and challenged the discipline to develop new approaches to research and writing (Asad 1973). Postmodern scholars criticized the objective stance in ethnography and encouraged scholars to pay attention to issues of subject position, power, and trust in research (Castelden 2008; Marcus and Fischer 1986). These diverse critiques spurred the development of collaborative and experimental approaches to writing ethnography.

The second crisis of representation, influential in the environmental social sciences, was the constructivist critique of "nature" and environment," a departure from earlier work focusing on the environmental resources and limits shaping the conditions for cultural adaptation (Dove and Carpenter 2008). Environmental anthropologists of the 1970s kept a distance from the symbolic-interpretive school of cultural anthropology (Ortner 1984), with a few exceptions (Glacken 1967; Gragson and Blount 1999). Perhaps as a result, environmental anthropology entered late into the wider discussion of feminist and post-colonial scholars'

deconstruction of "nature" as a concept freighted with normative values (Asad 1973, Strathern 1980).

In the early 1990s, environmental historians began to pay closer attention the stories we tell about nature, a "narrative turn" soon followed by historical ecologists and archaeologists (Cronon 1992). Meanwhile, cultural anthropologists considered how "nature" was being symbolically redefined as "biodiversity" in conservation projects from Colombia (Escobar 1998) to Indonesia (Brosius 1999; Tsing 1999; Zerner 1996). Peet and Watts (1996) identified "environmental imaginaries"—the diverse "locally grounded vision[s] of nature itself"--as a field of inquiry. They highlighted the role of social movements in producing new "environmental imaginaries" that challenge the development and governance frameworks promoted by state and market institutions. This attention to the cultural politics of environmentalism inspired environmental anthropologists to study how actors in specific places define environmental problems in ways that contest or strategically appropriate global discourses (DeLind and Ferguson 1999; Gille 2007; Hayden 2003; Heatherington 2010; Igoe 2004; Kirsch 2006; Satterfield and Slovic 2004; Snajdr 2008; West 2005).

The third "crisis in representation" for the environmental social sciences emerged from activists challenging the ongoing exclusion of subaltern people from mainstream environmental politics. This critique has been called "environmental justice" in the United States and the "environmentalism of the poor" in the global South (Guha 2000, Martinez-Alier 2002). Environmental justice offers a framework for investigating the unequal distribution of environmental harms and benefits and for organizing activism and policy. In the United States, low-income people and communities of color began to organize for environmental justice during the 1980s (Bullard 1990; Gottlieb 1993; Agyeman et al. 2002). These efforts made inroads in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and large,

mainstream environmental organizations. Recent decades witnessed mobilizations for environmental justice in South Africa and urban Latin America, on issues from asbestos contamination to electronic waste dumping (Carruthers 2008; Harper and Rajan 2007).

Environmental justice activism has far-reaching implications because it challenges dominant ways of defining what counts as "environmental problems" and who counts as "environmental subjects" (Agrawal 2005, Mohai 2003). Environmental justice includes the wider array of spaces "where we live, work, and play" in identifying environmental issues (Taylor 2000). Political representation within environmentalism and public policy is a key goal of the environmental justice movement, reflected in the rallying cry, "nothing about us without us." This critique is applied to environmental social science as well, inspiring a turn to participatory action research (Austin 2004; Checker 2005; Maida 2008).

Participatory Visual/Digital Research and the Environmental Social Sciences

Some environmental justice scholars bridge the gulf between social science and social change through a range of methods, including participatory action research (PAR)[4]. The PAR tradition offers a well-developed framework for breaking down barriers between researchers and "subjects" and between analysis and praxis. Another methodological innovation, "visual interventions," draws from earlier social documentation traditions to produce visually rich, collaborative work that communicates beyond academia. The project presented here draws from both strategies.

PAR attempts to forge collaborative research relationships, with community partners taking an active role in studying problems alongside a traditional researcher (Lewin 1946). It acknowledges and tries to redress power inequalities inherent in the research process, especially when researchers are studying oppressed groups (Fals-Borda and Rahman 1991). Feminist scholars further developed participatory methods, using focus group discussions as

a form of research, collective reflection, and personal transformation (Madriz 2003). Indigenous communities asserted more control over the research process and challenged anthropologists to develop projects with clear benefits to the community studied (Atalay 2007; Castelden 2008). These diverse critiques and responses have come together in PAR.

Contemporary "visual interventions," including photography, film, and digital media, are a hybrid of applied visual anthropology and Freireian approaches to PAR (Pink 2007).[5] Collaborative methods of filmmaking and photography were in the first wave of visual interventions, and researchers have further modified these to contribute to community organizing and policy interventions (Biella 2008). The rise of digital and internet technologies offers an even wider palette of visual tools for PAR, such as participatory geographic information systems (PGIS) (McMahan and Burke 2007), digital storytelling (Gubrium 2009), and participatory online exhibitions and archives (Guldbrandsen and Amidon 2009). These methods generate rich visual and narrative data guided by participant interests and priorities, putting the methods literally in the hands of the participants themselves. They appeal to wide audiences, allowing for access to and production of anthropological knowledge outside the academy.

Bringing visual interventions into environmental anthropology allows us not only to understand how members of specific communities define environmental problems, but also bridges research and practice to address those problems. Political ecology researchers used PGIS to engage women, landless peasants, and people with disabilities in making authoritative maps of their environments (Kwan 2006; Rattray, 2007; Weiner and Harris, 2003). Environmental anthropologists are also turning to participatory video, photography, and digital multimedia (Menzies 2004).

Among these methods, Photovoice holds special promise as a path to PAR in environmental anthropology. Carolyn Wang and her colleagues developed Photovoice in their research on Chinese peasant women's health (Wang et al. 1996). With Photovoice, a group of community members uses cameras to take photos on a theme. Photos are then selected by photographers themselves and used as prompts for group discussions. Photovoice research not only raises awareness in a community but also communicates with policymakers and representatives of institutions who are often inaccessible for members of disadvantaged groups. Throughout the process, participants discuss their ethical relationship with their photographic subjects, as well as changes the photographers and subjects would like to see in their lives, and collective action strategies to address problems depicted in the photos.

Photovoice is a popular method in public health (Catalani and Minkler 2010; Hergenrather et al. 2009) and increasingly in the environmental social sciences. Environmental anthropologists, geographers, and urbanists have turned to Photovoice to study Chinese villagers' views on deforestation (Zackey 2007) rural Canadians' "senses of place" (Stedman et al. 2004), Los Angelenos' perceptions of urban environmental injustices (González et al. 2007), and Indian peasants' views of nature and conservation in a biodiversity preserve (Bosak 2008). This variation shows Photovoice's versatility and appeal as a means of not only collecting rich visual and narrative data, but also going beyond a focus on environmental discourses into spatial and embodied ways of knowing the world. In the next section, I discuss my collaboration with a grassroots Romani community organization in northern Hungary that used the Photovoice methodology to elicit local knowledge related to the environment and the dynamics of social exclusion.

"Across the Bridge": Photovoice research on environmental issues and values in a Hungarian Roma community

In spring 2007, I conducted a PAR project with members of the Sajó River Association for Environment and Community Development (*Sajómenti Környezet- és Közösségfejlesztők Egyesülete*) in Sajószentpéter, Hungary. Sajószentpéter (pop. 14,000) was a minor industrial center near Miskolc in northern Hungary for most of the twentieth century. Sajószenterpéter's glass factory and river are emblems of the town and region's ecological heritage. Like other small cities in Borsod County, Sajószentpéter used the Sajó River as a power source and waste sink as it developed industrially in the early 1900s. The town's glass factory opened at that time, downstream from other industrial plants such as paper mills. State socialist planning of the 1950s and 1960s encouraged further development of heavy industry in Borsod, including chemical plants and steel mills. The river's fish died out, and by the early 1970s, the Sajó River was internationally known for its heavily polluted waters (Pál 2006). In the early 1990s, state-owned factories along the river shut down en masse, and a massive river restoration project successfully improved water quality and brought fish back to the river after almost forty years (Vári and Kisgyörgy 1998).

While the river's condition has improved dramatically in the postsocialist years, many residents' livelihoods and environmental conditions have deteriorated. From the 1960s through 1989, Roma men living in Sajószentpéter worked alongside non-Roma in the local glass factory and as professional musicians, while many of the women worked in the glass factory or in hospitals as cleaners and cooks. The factory and mine were privatized then closed down following the collapse of state socialism in the early 1990s. The entire population of the town lost its livelihood in the space of a few months, and few new employers have appeared since. Surrounded by fields and the Sajó River wetlands, the

neighborhood in this project is at least 100 years old and has over 2000 residents, most of them Roma. Connected to the rest of town by a bridge, the community is a two-minute walk to the main square where the mayor's office is located.

I had met Judit Bari, the president of the Sajó River Association, in 2005. We shared an interest in Roma communities and the environment and decided to work together on these themes. Bari, a Hungarian Romani woman who grew up and raised her son in the neighborhood, had founded the association in 2002 with other residents. They included "environment" in the organization's name with the hope of involving the community in restoring nearby wetlands and improving public space. However, the association was isolated from the large, national network of environmental groups, which has largely downplayed social justice issues while demanding broader public participation in environmental policy (Harper 2006).

Bari and I developed our collaborative project as a way of shifting power relationships of research on and representation of the Roma, with a focus on participants as cultural producers. Our project harnessed the power of visual images and critical discussion to examine positive and negative aspects of the community's environment, using Photovoice. We were attracted to the Photovoice research method because of its potential interest to young people, its ability to rapidly generate visual data on environmental issues, and its effectiveness in activist and policy settings.

We recruited six young community-based researchers (ages 18-24) by contacting households with active members of the association and speaking directly with young people and their parents. The team held training sessions on photography and research ethics. I presented the basics of PAR and research ethics in accessible Hungarian. Bari and I then facilitated a group discussion of critical themes: visual representations of Roma, the young

researchers' relationship to the rest of the community, and what it means to be on either side of the camera's lens. This discussion established awareness of power relationships and modeled critical reflection as a research practice. We ended the session with role-playing scenarios where the youth considered the ethics of hypothetical photo-taking situations.

At the second official meeting of the research team, I distributed small digital cameras to the photographers. I presented the theme, "environment," and asked them to define the term broadly and to include both positive and negative aspects of environmental conditions and people's beliefs and practices related to the environment. By the following week, the photographers had taken over 400 photos related to the environment. Quickly running through the photos, we noticed that almost half showed trash heaps in and near the neighborhood. Clearly, waste management and illegal dumps would be important foci. Once we had selected a manageable number of photos for discussion, we arranged them as a digital slideshow and gathered around my laptop to analyze the images. We were aware that photos capture and condense information, but we were all amazed to discover how much each picture opened up stories, emotions, and new questions. Photos also crop and frame subjects selectively, and so we regularly posed the question, "What is really going on in this photo that we can't see?" to draw out contextual details and photographers' creative or ethical decisions in photo-taking.

Photos drew attention to environmental values in the community--positive environmental practices that had rarely been recognized by residents or outsiders. Photos of fishing along riverbanks prompted stories of family picnics and a sense of connection to surrounding wetlands. Similarly, photos of flowers, piglets, and dovecotes offered opportunities to discuss how some residents express their attachment to place through gardening and animal husbandry. Photos of children and young people playing football

opened up memories of sports as a source of community pride, health, and moments of friendship and connection within and across ethnic boundaries, as well as complaints about the lack of parks and playgrounds in the neighborhood.

Photographs drew our attention to a wide range of environmental problems experienced in the neighborhood--issues that globally resonate with struggles against environmental racism and injustice. Photos portrayed the neighborhood's unequal access to sewerage and sanitation, household water infrastructure, green space and playgrounds. They showed the links between poor housing quality, especially as regards energy efficiency, and residents' constant struggle to obtain fuel for heating and cooking. The photographers also drew attention to the neighborhood's lack of telecommunications infrastructure relative to other parts of town.

In group discussions, photographers elaborated upon stories hidden within or behind the images. Community-based photographers documented illegal dumping and analyzed photos of waste to demonstrate that outsiders as well as residents contributed to the neighborhood's waste problem (Photo 2). Viewing a photo of a garbage heap in the wetlands next to the neighborhood, Máriann presented her observations:

> Everyone dumps their trash next to our neighborhood. The town government says that we're dumping it ourselves. That might be true for some of it, but if you look at these piles, there are brands that people in our neighborhood don't use.

The photographers then named off common brands of cigarettes and food products sold at the two small neighborhood shops and the closest supermarket. The group analyzed their large set of photos of waste heaps in terms of whether or not these brands were present. They acknowledged that residents occasionally deviated from brands available in the neighborhood, for example, if they had a car or were offered a ride to a more distant

supermarket with a wider selection. Taking these exceptions into account, the photographers concluded that these photos, along with others showing unfamiliar people dumping garbage from their cars, illustrated that people from outside the neighborhood were dumping waste in the wetlands.

Bari later shared the group's observations during a meeting with a public works official (an ethnic Hungarian), who conceded that there was more trash along the river than could be attributed to neighborhood residents alone. Bari suggested that the town could develop better recycling and waste management by consulting an environmental group in Miskolc. The public works department did not act on these ideas but occasionally sent a crew to clear trash from the riverbanks.

At the end of the project, the group presented its work at photo exhibitions in Sajószentpéter and Budapest. The team decided to hold the local exhibition on the street at the entrance to the neighborhood. This venue posed logistical challenges, but the young photographers wanted to ensure that everyone from the community could to see the exhibition. An added benefit of holding the exhibition in the neighborhood was that the association would see which policymakers and potential partners were willing to cross the bridge to attend an event on the *cigánysor* ("Gypsy row").   Reflecting on this possibility, the photographers gave the local exhibition the title, "Across the Bridge: This is also Sajószentpéter." They posted flyers around the town and delivered invitations to the mayor, local council members, public administrators, and to doctors, nurses, and teachers serving the neighborhood. The group also invited potential partners from environmental and civil rights organizations working at the regional, national, and international levels, and the county newspaper published a front-page story on the exhibition. The exhibition allowed us to share

our work with the community and receive feedback, to extend the organization's network, and to open a broader discussion of environmental issues.

The team held the Budapest exhibition at the Central European University in Budapest.   For several members of the research team, it was the first time they had visited the capital city. The event included a 90-minute discussion of the issues raised, facilitated by Angela Koczé, an internationally-known Roma scholar and activist, and Sándor Fülop, a respected environmental lawyer who later served as the Hungarian Parliament's first "Green Ombudsman." In addition to providing a broader audience, the exhibition allowed the organization to make contacts in the capital city.

Following the exhibitions, the Sajó Association collaborated with the environmental group *Védegylet* (Protect the Future) in developing a proposal for a nationwide project addressing social justice and environmental issues. The project received funding from the EEA and Norway Grant program, and Bari and the Sajó River Association participated in the 2009-2010 cycle. Their project promoted environmental projects among low-income communities, Roma neighborhoods, and organizations for the homeless. The project sought to build alliances with grassroots groups and developing programs and policy recommendations on what they have come to call *"környig"* ("EJ" or environmental justice). In 2010, the group sponsored the first panel discussion on "Environmental Justice" ever held at the annual meeting of Hungarian environmental NGOs.

In addition to facilitating new alliances with environmentalists, the photographic medium opened up unexpected opportunities for us to present the project internationally. We presented the photos to the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (UNCESCR) when it met in Geneva to review Hungary's record, and the Committee's country report integrated material from our presentation. We also published

photographs and research findings from the project in a UNESCO volume bringing together academics and activists working on water issues (Johnston 2012).

Addressing the "three crises of representation" in practice

My decision to use Photovoice as a methodology was motivated by the three crises in representation manifesting over the course of the field research process. I hoped to challenge prevailing representations of the Roma as ethnography's "Other." Having conducted extensive research with environmental groups in Hungary in the past, I wanted to move away from dominant representations of environment and nature that created a division between "environmental" issues affecting the majority population and "social" issues affecting the Roma minority. Finally, as the PAR partnership unfolded, my collaborators and I sought to create openings for Roma community members to represent themselves in questions concerning the environment.

Crisis #1: The crisis of ethnographic representations of "the Other"

Initially, I imagined my research on environmental inequalities in Roma communities within the traditional framework that Renato Rosaldo (1989) wryly labeled the "lone ethnographer." Yet after interviewing many Roma activists in 2005, I learned how Hungarian Roma felt justifiably wary of social scientists and of being studied without clear benefits or shared power for the research participants, resonating with Native American critiques of anthropology (De Loria 1969). Inspired by discussions with PAR ethnographers, I turned to this research framework (Bacon et al. 2005, Hemment 2007). My relationship with Judit Bari transformed from an ethnographer-key informant dyad to an intensive, PAR partnership.

By choosing a participatory visual research method, Bari and I made a conscious attempt to decolonize and transform research relationships between non-Roma academics and Roma research subjects. Since the nineteenth century, non-Roma scholars have

produced authoritative texts that present the Roma as "exotic Others" in the heart of Europe, while Roma scholars, only recently entering into scholarly institutions, have not had resources to provide alternative descriptions and analyses (Kocze and Trehan 2009, Guy 1998, Weckman 1998). We sought to break with this traditional dynamic by adopting a community-based team approach to research, by integrating young Roma women and men as researchers studying their own neighborhood, and by making decisions collaboratively during the research process.[6] We also addressed power hierarchies by using visual media to present our research, promoting dialogue between Roma and non-Roma, researchers and community members at exhibition events.

Beyond the goal of transforming power relationships in research, we also sought to produce alternatives to long-established visual tropes that continue to shape stereotypes of the Roma today (Imre 2003). Our choice of Photovoice further challenged dominant representations of the Roma as ethnography's "Other." "Romantic Gypsy" imagery of mustachioed men playing violins and colorfully clothed women with piercing eyes dates back to the nineteenth century (Lemon 2000, Dobreva 2009). When Klára, a member of our team, greeted a girlfriend who was wearing a calf-length skirt instead of her usual jeans, she joked "you look like a 'real' one (*az igázi*) today!" Klára's quip got laughs because her friend's skirt, worn as a fashion statement, suggested the stereotype of Roma women in "typical dress." "Socialist realist" representations in the late 1950s de-emphasized ethnic differences, portraying Roma as schoolwork-brigade members (Szuhay 2003).

Postsocialist images of the Roma include pop culture images of *ciki* ("tacky") Roma and documentary photography. When we discussed visual stereotypes during an ethics training session, the young photographers brought up televised images of Roma. RTL's reality show, *Gyözike*, presented the rags-to-riches tale of a Roma musician and his family as

they moved from a modest house to a gaudy, gilt-encrusted villa. Although show ridicules

the family's *ciki* taste, photographer Szilvia pointed out that the show would not be popular

if viewers did not identify with the family. Roma also appeared on *Mónika,* a talk show where

families air stories of infidelity, abuse, and dysfunction before a live studio audience. Stefán

complained, "On *Mónika,* it's always the stupidest people, and then Hungarians watch it and

think that all Gypsies are like that."

In contrast to the "*ciki*" pop culture genre, late socialist and postsocialist

"documentary" images presented the Roma as a socioeconomically marginalized ethnic

group, showing pictures of hovels, tired faces, and "dirty, naked children," in the words of

one Roma intellectual I interviewed. "Roma urchin" imagery appears in the pamphlets and

websites of NGOs (Tidrick 2010). A 2000 survey of photographs of Roma appearing in the

four main Hungarian newspapers found that Roma were often portrayed in the context of

"social problems" and "ethnic conflict" while other images of Roma were rare (Bodnar 2000,

cited in Szuhay 2003). Many Roma intellectuals have come to believe that these

documentary images reinforce negative ethnic stereotypes (Csík 2005). While the pop

culture and documentary representations of Roma may appear different on the surface, they

both reflect the postsocialist conflation of ethnicity and class where Roma are repetitively

portrayed as "needy subjects" (Timmer 2010).

What is common across historical periods is that "the image that non-Gypsies hold

about Gypsies is always modified according to the shifts of focus and self-interest of 'the

whites'" (Binder 2011). We sought to intervene in this history with a focus on Roma youth

as cultural producers. The "visual intervention" of Photovoice allowed youth from the

neighborhood a chance to represent themselves in contexts where their voices might

otherwise be submerged. Following the discussion of visual research ethics, the

photographers decided to make "individuality" a third theme for photographs: portraits that brought together visual references to the photographic subject's belonging to both "Roma" and "majority" society. For example, one photographer took a portrait of her father wearing his *Polgárörség* ("Neighborhood Watch") vest, signifying his participation in civic life, with his dark skin, hair, and mustache indexing his "Roma" identity to Hungarian viewers. Another photographer took a picture of two dark-haired little girls dancing--a reference to Roma's association with performing arts--but pointed out that they were both wearing fashionable track-suits with pants and sneakers. The youth saw this picture as challenging images of Romani girls and women as uniformly passive, abject, and oppressed by clannish traditions.

Photovoice also provided space for photographers to reevaluate how Roma communities are persistently portrayed in terms of needs and lack. A photograph of a bicyclist riding down the main street in the neighborhood drew compliments for its dramatic visual composition (PHOTO 3). This photo also spurred a discussion between the youth about the meaning of the bicycle. On the one hand, it showed that many Roma are excluded from the culture of car ownership, one of the key markers of success in the transformation to a market economy. This lack has material consequences for low-income residents seeking jobs and better schools. On the other hand, within the environmental justice framework, they recognized bicycling as an ecologically sustainable form of transportation, an area where their neighborhood could be recognized as an environmental leader rather than as "needy subjects" who are perpetually "backwards" and "behind."[7]

We extended our critical approach beyond content to the *display* of images as a social practice. Audience response to photos is shaped by the photographic exhibition as an event. In order to avoid replicating the "human zoo" dynamic of non-Roma viewers looking at pictures of Roma without intellectually engaging with *actual* Roma, we decided against having

a standing exhibition. Instead, each photo exhibition was planned as a short-term, interactive event with photographers circulating in the audience. In Budapest, the faces in the photos were unfamiliar to the audience, and viewers might easily fall into a detached, voyeuristic mode. We facilitated a formal discussion of the photos to disrupt this effect, retooling ethical relationship between the audience, the photographers, and their photographic subjects.[8]

Crisis #2: The crisis of environmental representation

Our project addressed the "crisis in representations of nature and the environment" by examining how residents identify and understand environmental issues. Paying attention to environmental inequalities bridges the gaps between Roma and non-Roma and between the policy silos of "environmental" and "social" problems.

Hungarian environmental politics and activism have been shaped by history and political constraints. These weigh especially heavily in northern Hungary near the former Soviet border, where the socialist state invested in heavy industries such as steel, glass, chemicals, and coal (Burawoy and Lukács 1992). In the 1950s, the state's central planners placed the resource needs of developing industries ahead of those of urban residents for clean water and air. The Sajo River was treated as a sink for pollution, and all life in it died for nearly 40 years.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Hungarian journalists and environmental activists began to criticize the state's productivist tenets in light of environmental threats to human health as air and water pollution. Although they identified problems that were the proper province of party leadership under state socialism, they found political opportunities in officials' initial perception of environmentalism as addressing ecological, not social, problems. Residents of northern Hungary were dependent on industries for work and fairly quiescent on

environmental issues (Pál 2006). For environmentalist groups working in that region, it was especially important to frame criticism within this non-threatening framework that nominally set apart ecological issues from the social. During the post-socialist period, some environmental conditions in the industrial northern counties actually improved as the industrial economy collapsed. Fish and wildlife returned to the Sajó River following the shuttering of factories along its banks, even as the people of the region emigrated in search of jobs. This dynamic reinforced the conceptual division of "ecological" from "social" problems.

Still, other environmental problems persisted or worsened after the collapse of state socialism, even as air and water quality improved overall in the region. Some citizens face worse environmental conditions in their everyday lives than others, despite the fact that all Hungarians are guaranteed the rights to health and to a clean healthy environment by their Constitution. The 2004 national survey commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Issues noted that access to clean drinking water is a problem for a large number of Roma settlements (Debrecen School of Public Health/Hungarian Environmental Ministry 2004). The same study draws attention to problems frequently cited by Roma community organizers—the widespread siting of legal and illegal dumps and slaughterhouse waste depositories (*"dögkút"*) near Roma communities and unequal access to the public sanitation system. The survey demonstrates that Roma across the country face systemic environmental injustices. Few environmental activists or researchers, however, have addressed these issues because when occurring in Roma communities, they are usually framed instead as "social issues."

The Photovoice method allowed us to define environment and nature through emic perspectives of the photographers and to draw unexpected connections between

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environmental and social issues. The intersections of current environmental and economic problems manifested in photographers' discussion of illegal dumping as we looked at a photo of a car hauling trash to the riverbank, the town's former glass factory in the background (PHOTO 4). Stéfan explained his interpretation of the photo: "Before, we had the glass factory—everyone in town made jars and bottles for the whole country. Now we have no jobs, and we are drowning in plastic bottles and trash." Stéfan drew our focus to two socially *and* ecologically positive aspects of the now-defunct glass factory: it provided employment for thousands of local people, and it produced a reusable, environmentally benign form of consumer packaging.

This interpretation breaks from the hegemonic postsocialist narrative that the switch to a market economy improved environmental conditions by rewarding efficiency, which many criticize (Gille 2007; Pavlínek and Pickles 2000). Stéfan insisted that the transformation to capitalism not only dispossessed the town of a potentially eco-friendly enterprise, but also brought new environmental problems. While some Hungarians benefitted from new opportunities for consuming products, low-income people, and especially Roma, bore the burden of new forms of consumer packaging waste. Stéfan, like other young men in the community, was an avid hobby fisherman who found hope and inspiration in the return of fish to the Sajó River after upstream factories and paper mills were closed and river silt was remediated. He nevertheless resisted the dominant narrative that postsocialist industrial decline, though bad for unskilled workers, was uniformly good for the environment. In other words, Stéfan resisted the separation of "social" and "environmental" issues.

Crisis #3: Environmental justice and the crisis of political representation

Our project addressed the "third crisis" in representation posed by environmental justice activists in two ways. First, it created a space for members of the Sajó River Association to discuss environmental injustices and present themselves as "environmental subjects." Second, the act of exhibiting photographs engaged the research team, community members, policymakers, and activists in face-to-face discussion and allowed the organization to identify allies.

At various moments since 1989, submerged themes of environmental justice have surfaced within Romani civil rights and environmental activism in Hungary. Through programs like the Autonómia Foundation's Greenworks, some Roma community organizations initiated small-scale sustainable development projects, but these perished as international foundations prioritized other regions. The 2005 Transatlantic Initiative for Environmental Justice held in Budapest, Hungary, brought together environmental and Roma civil rights activists and lawyers from Eastern Europe to network with environmental justice activists and scholars from the United States (Pellow, et al., 2005). These developments demonstrate a growing recognition of the environmental conditions of Roma communities as an injustice requiring redress.

Hungarian environmentalists and Romani activists have not, however, developed a cohesive, environmental justice "master frame." A master frame is an interpretation of social reality that allows people to make sense of problems and provides a logic for collective action (Snow and Benford 1992).[9] An environmental justice master frame defines conditions of environmental inequality as a social problem, attributes causes for the problem, and seeks remedies through policy change or collective action. Dorceta Taylor writes that the environmental justice master frame attributes "unjust outcomes in life circumstances…to

pervasive and persistent societal racism rather than the victim's imperfections" (Taylor 2000).

In the Hungarian context, an environmental justice master frame must challenge negative stereotypes of Roma as profligates who neglect their houses and steal wood from forests. Most non-Roma (and many Roma as well) attribute poor living conditions to perceived faults of the Roma, as people lacking in education, environmental awareness, a work ethic, and the "cultural" advantages of the majority. For example, Richard Filčák (2007) analyzes how members of the non-Roma majority in eastern Slovakia view Roma settlements as "beyond the pale"—spaces where "normal" citizens do not live, and where "normal" laws and environmental regulations do not apply. As postsocialist governments encourage new markets for wastefully packaged goods and the reestablishment of polluting industries, Roma communities provide attractive spaces for the "geographical displacement of sources and sinks" (Martinez-Alier 2003: p. 10).

Toward the end of the Photovoice process, Judit Bari collated the group's reflections in an essay that participants ratified as the Declaration of the Sajó River Association's Photovoice Group. The Declaration draws attention not only to the environmental problems faced by the community but also to positive practices:

> These pictures show us that we have strengths within ourselves to create a more
> livable environment and more possibilities for ourselves. Bicycling, fishing,
> gardening, and animal husbandry in our community—these practices show that we
> love and value the natural environment. (Sajó River Association 2007)

The Sajó River Declaration also includes a definition of the term "environmental justice" that captures the hopes articulated in the research process:

What do we mean, when we talk about "environmental justice"? We mean that
every community should have access to sewerage, clean water, clean air, possibilities
for heating, livable and energy-efficient housing, green spaces (parks, playgrounds,
sports fields), and protection from environmental hazards such as pollution and
toxic waste. These services are the birthright of all citizens, regardless of their ethnic
or socioeconomic status, as is the right to participate in policy decisions related to
the environment and living conditions. (Sajó River Association 2007)

The Declaration is the first document by a Hungarian grassroots organization that attempts
to define environmental justice as a frame for community-level activism. It was first
unveiled at the local exhibition, where community members had the chance to see
themselves and their environment portrayed from the perspective of young residents.

Lack of recognition of Roma and low-income people as "environmental citizens" is
one obstacle to developing an environmental justice frame, but key movement resources
such as social networks and funding are also necessary. Grassroots civil organizations, and
Roma organizations in particular, cannot access European Union grant money, and smaller
grants that allowed new groups to gain a footing in the early 1990s have disappeared. Lack
of trust and ties between Roma and non-Roma organizations hinders coalition building. I
drew upon my own history of research ties within the Hungarian environmental movement
to locate potential allies and partners. At the local exhibition, the Sajó River Association
succeeded in bringing potential partners from "across the bridge" and from other cities to an
event in the neighborhood. At the university exhibition in the capital city, we drew the
attention of national- and international-level civil organizations and ministry officials.
Adopting a PAR strategy of producing, disseminating, and using community-based research

may help communities connect with organizations, policymakers, and government institutions more effectively to gain political and material resources needed for change.

Limitations of Photovoice

Our participatory action research project was largely successful in using the Photovoice research process to respond to the three "crises" in environmental anthropology. At the same time, our work was limited by several factors. The fragility of small, grassroots organizations makes for uncertain trajectories in PAR. We had hoped to expand upon the Photovoice project the following year, but members of the workgroup were called away from the group by increased family duties and immigration to Budapest and abroad. Bari and I could not pursue the ongoing PAR collaboration in Sajószentpéter that we originally imagined.   However, as a result of our project, Bari later worked with *Védegylet,* a national-level environmental organization, in developing a successful grant proposal for further research and community-based projects addressing environmental justice issues.

In terms of policy impact, our team was surprised to see our project developing momentum at the national and international level but failing to gain traction at the local level. We had planned the local and Budapest exhibitions from the very start, but within a few months, Bari and I had been invited to present the team's photos in a short slideshow to a country report review committee at the UNCESCR in Geneva. The young photographers felt surprised, excited, and overwhelmed by the responsibility of producing critical images of their country in such a high-profile forum. Similarly, the youth felt honored by the presence of ministry officials, professors, lawyers, and national-level activists at the Budapest exhibition, even if they were uncharacteristically shy during the discussion period.   The largely positive reception we received from policymakers in Budapest and Geneva contrasted with the indifference expressed by most town officials in Sajószentpéter. When it comes to

building infrastructure and solving waste management problems, gaining the attention of *local*-level policymakers is critically important. The youth hand-delivered invitations for the local exhibition to the mayor's office and to every member of the town council, but only a few representatives attended. Photovoice made reaching national and international policymakers almost shockingly easy, but finding an audience among local policymakers proved harder.

Concluding thoughts

Our Photovoice project enabled our community-based team to critically examine environmental inequalities in one neighborhood. The issues raised by our research have relevance throughout Europe, where Roma settlements are often exposed to pollution and excluded from public services that maintain a healthy environment such as waste collection and sanitation infrastructure. These conditions have worsened with neoliberal restructuring of postsocialist welfare states and the current rise of far-right nationalist political parties throughout the region (Harper et al. 2009, Steger 2007). Given these pervasive problems, simply "handing out cameras" is not enough to create systemic change (Nakamura 2008). Nevertheless, "visual interventions" provide pathways for environmental anthropologists navigating the three crises of representation described here. PAR approaches such as Photovoice allow researchers and community members to work side by side to investigate, understand, and transform social processes producing environmental inequalities.

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NOTES

[1] Many Roma consider the term "Gypsy" and its variants to be pejorative. I use the plural noun "Roma" and the adjective "Romani," and retain Gypsy where they appear in common expressions and quotations.

[2] All quotations are translated from the Hungarian by the author.

[3] Roma have lived in Central and Eastern Europe for six centuries; Hungarian Roma have been settled in towns and villages since the nineteenth century (Crowe 1996). Roma were left out of the post-war land redistribution, but Roma industrial labor market participation increased steadily under state socialism (Kemény 2005). The collapse of state socialism devastated Hungarian Romani communities and resulted in the "ethnicization of poverty," particularly in rural areas and economically depressed regions (Szelenyi and Ladányi 2005). Almost two thirds of Hungarian Roma lived in poverty in 2001 compared with 11% of non-Roma (Feliciano et al. 2004). Yet, across Eastern Europe, Roma served as scapegoats of the new market economy and faced violent attacks, police harassment, and attempts to segregate schools and restaurants (European Roma Rights Center 2009; Fuhrmann 1995), though a Romani civil rights movement has also developed in Hungary (Vermeersch 2006).

[4] There are several terms for research methods that integrate the active participation of community members in the co-construction of knowledge: community-based participatory research (CBPR)

(Minkler and Wallerstein 2008), collaborative anthropology (Lassiter 2005), participatory action research (PAR). I use PAR because it is widely used and places emphasis on "action" as a research goal.

[5] Visual interventions are the latest phase in applied visual anthropology. Early visual anthropologists struggled to gain academic acceptance and emphasized the empirical and systematic qualities of photos and film (Collier Jr 1957). The 1960s marked a shift toward collaborative production, from filmmaker Jean Rouch's call for a "shared anthropology" to Worth and Adair's *Navajo Film Themselves* project (Ruby 2000). Around this time, Paulo Freire brought visual methods into his work on literacy and critical consciousness among poor urban communities in Brazil and Peru (Boal 1979).

[6] Some Hungarian social scientists have integrated PAR into their work with rural and Roma communities, including György Pataki's Environmental Social Sciences Research Group (Saint István University, Hungary), Barbara Bodorkos (Budapest Business School), Karolina Kósa (University of Debrecen), and Dávid Hargitai (Budapest Esély).

[7] The photographers rejected the "eco-friendly" designation when they saw it as greenwashing institutionalized racism. When a non-Roma environmentalist suggested that the neighborhood install state-of-the-art composting toilets as a way of "leapfrogging" twentieth-century sanitation systems, Sajó River Association members objected that this solution would not address the community's long-term exclusion from public infrastructure. Their response resonates with Checker's critique of "environmental gentrification" as "a mode of 'post-political' governance that shuns politics and de-links sustainability from justice" (Checker 2011).

[8] Our decision not to hold a standing exhibition of the photographs evokes Peter Benson's discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "faciality" and Levinas' call for "face-to-face" ethics in relation to perceptions of immigrant farmworkers in the United States (Benson 2008).

[9] The "master frames" concept used by social movement theorists closely resembles Ortner's (1973) discussion of "key scenarios" as culturally valued symbols that suggest appropriate action.