

*CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY  
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology  
cordially invites you to the*

***Public PhD Defense of  
Kristóf Szombati***

on

**THE REVOLT OF THE PROVINCES  
ANTI-GYPSYISM AND RIGHT-WING POLITICS IN  
RURAL HUNGARY**

***Friday, September 23 at 4pm***

in

**Senate room  
(Monument Building)**

**Defense Committee**

**Chair: Ivan Szelenyi**, University Visiting Professor, CEU and Professor Emeritus NYU Abu Dhabi

**Supervisor: Don Kalb**, Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, CEU

**Second supervisor: Judit Bodnar**, Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, CEU

**External examiner: Doug Holmes** is a Professor of Anthropology at Binghamton University.

**Abstract:**

This dissertation aims to contribute to our understanding of the making of right-wing hegemony in Hungary. It seeks to do this by shedding light on a popular racist movement that took shape outside the party political arena in the 2006-2010 period and then went on to play a key role in the unmaking of left-liberal hegemony through its connection to right-wing agendas. This movement has not altogether been neglected by scholars and analysts but its connection to broader economic and political dynamics and its impact on party politics remain largely misunderstood. Students of racism and xenophobia have failed to recognize the novelty of political anti-Gypsyism, seeing it as an extension of prevalent racist sensibilities, prejudices and patterns of discrimination into the political domain at a time of economic and political upheaval. This perspective misses the

crucial link between the rise of anti-Gypsyism and the crisis of social reproduction suffered by particular segments of the rural population as a result of capitalist transformations connected to global economic trends and more particularly Hungary's accession to the European Union. Those who have called attention to the rise of racism and xenophobia in Hungary have in other words failed to see how anti-Gypsyism evolved out of social struggles and reacted to the real and imagined projects of ruling elites. As for political scientists and analysts, they have recognized how anti-Gypsyism fueled the rise of the far-right Jobbik party but have neglected its impact on mainstream politics and its role in the reconstruction of the state in the period following the right-wing Fidesz party's ascent to power (2010-2014). I fill these gaps by performing two broad analytic moves: 1) situating ideas about 'race' and 'ethnicity' within everyday relations, experience and agency and showing how these are themselves shaped by broader political economic processes and pressures; and 2) identifying relational strategies and processes that connect local sites of contention and allow for the transposition of social antagonisms into regional and nationwide political struggles. These moves shift attention away from 'Gypsies' and the far-right to historical processes unfolding over time and through space in two interconnected relational fields: everyday life and the political public sphere. The intention is to move beyond the unsurprising claim that xenophobia fosters xenophobic politics and to create analytic space for identifying the conditions of the emergence of racist movements and the processes shaping the trajectories they take.