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Roma Mobility, Beyond Migration: Religious Humanitarianism and Transnational Roma Missionary Work as De-Constructions of Migration

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Abstract

Much of the literature concerning the migration of Roma in-between European Union countries has thus far focused extensively (and almost exclusively) on the political and economic consequences of this 'Roma movement' across national borders. In this context, the core of the analysis has remained on the conceptualization of, specifically, an East-West Roma mobility (i.e. the movement of Roma from Eastern to Western European countries) and the widespread media, public and political debate regarding the visible marginality of these European citizens in present-day Europe.

Within this broad background, my paper focuses on a rather distinctive experience of mobility among Roma individuals within European Union countries and one that has attracted far less attention in both academic and public debates: namely, the encounters between different Roma groups, from different national contexts, in the process of a widespread Roma Evangelical movement. Based on more than two years of ethnographic fieldwork with Pentecostal Roma in Finland and Romania, I focus specifically on the religious mobilization of Finnish Roma individuals and their engagement in missionary work with Roma communities in Eastern European countries. As such, transnational mobility, rather than migration, constitutes the central concept I use in understanding the broader processes involved in the experience of movement across borders. Furthermore, given that the focus of analysis is on the West–East (or rather, North–South) movement of Roma individuals across countries, this type of approach may help highlight the biased understanding of 'Roma migration' as strictly an East–West phenomenon. In this sense, it also allows space for reflecting on the diversity present within specific experiences of mobility (or immobility) and on the agency and reflexivity of individuals who choose to be part of a movement that complicates the strict delineation of migration as predominantly a political and economic issue.

1. Introduction

Roma mobility within Europe has become, particularly over the past decades, a central topic of concern for academics, activists and politicians alike. It is sufficient to look at the number of publications and special issues on the topic, many published in the past few years. Though the purpose of this paper is not geared towards a comprehensive literature review, the value of the work conducted by recent scholars need not be underestimated; some work has created important insight into the subjective and politicized experience of Roma mobility.

As one of the clearest examples of most recent debates on mobility, Jan Grill's discussion on 'migrating racialisations' offers a critical analysis of the culturalization of Roma difference by NGOs and state actors in the context of Slovak Roma migration to the UK (Grill, 2017). Highlighting the importance of using relationality as method, this work especially emphasizes the necessity of a contextualized and critical assessment of the myriad relations embedded within the movement of Roma (and other) individuals across European borders *(Ibid.)*. Similar approaches to the complexity of mobility and its reshaping of local and institutional relations have been taken by others, including Enache and Tervonen's work on bordering and gatekeeping among Roma migrants in Helsinki (Tervonen and Enache, 2017), Benedik's analysis of the interlinking of NGOs, states and individuals in the migration of Roma to Graz, Austria (Benedik, 2011) and Solimene's discussion of the concepts of borders and boundaries in the case study of Bosnian Roma in Italy (Solimene, 2017). Furthermore, beyond ethnographic studies, the relationship between freedom of movement and the impediments laid out by national legislations within various nation-states have been the subject of important and central contributions in the past few years (see, for instance: Humphris, 2017; Sardelić, 2017; van Baar, 2008; 2017a; 2017b; Yıldız and De Genova, 2017). Together, these individual studies shed important and crucial light on the ways in which subjective experiences of migration are tied to broader socio-political changes and the politicization of Roma issues in Europe.

Nevertheless, within the vast majority of European Roma mobility the focus has been placed on either the economic, social or political consequences of movement across borders, and much of the emphasis on Roma individuals or families moving from Eastern European to Western European countries (but see: Sardelić, 2017; Sigona and Trehan, 2010; and Solimene, 2017, whose works on Roma refugees shift the focus away from an analysis of migration itself to an analysis of border constructions and experiences of belonging). While these topics are undoubtedly necessary and central in the analysis of Roma migration, especially as it has been reflected in media and political discussion, the possibility of understanding mobility as a broader concept, and the potential for different types of transnational movements to occur simultaneously with politically, socially or economically-driven ones, should be emphasized further.

My aim with this paper is to provide an ethnographically-grounded analysis of Roma mobility, connected yet distinct to that of Roma migration, and one that moves away from the focus on the movement and settlement of individuals from Eastern to Western European countries. As such, I see mobility, rather than migration, as

providing a broader framework within which different types of transnational border crossings simultaneously occur, and within which individuals' movements can be distinctively connected to the adoption of a particular (in this case, religious) worldview. More specifically, in the case of cross-border missionary and humanitarian travels, migration, both as a theoretical and practical concept, would not suffice in encompassing the motivations, visions and experiences of those crossing borders for the purpose of Evangelism. For this purpose, my paper will introduce a distinctive experience of transnational Roma mobility, embedded in the missionary movements of Roma individuals from Western European to Eastern European countries. More concretely, this paper will focus on the work of Finnish Kaale (Finnish Roma)[1] Pentecostal believers conducting missionary activities among Roma communities in Eastern Europe. As temporary yet regular transnational movements, missionary projects not only challenge analyses of Roma cross-country geographical move as a form of economically driven engagement with the world, but also reveal new elements embedded in the crossing of borders with the main purpose of evangelism: an embodied form of social outreach, and new understandings of common belonging and ethnic solidarity.

Furthermore, while the spread of Pentecostalism among Roma in Europe has been widely researched, highlighting the various important and contextualized ways in which Pentecostalism shapes dynamics within local communities (see, for instance: Canton Delgado, 2010; Fosztó, 2006; Gay y Blasco, 2000; 2012; Ripka, 2015; Williams, 1987), little work has been done on the developmental projects that Roma Pentecostals from so-called developed European countries become involved in. In fact, outside of a Roma-focused narrative, scholars of humanitarianism have recurrently emphasized the complexities and problematics of developmental interventions conducted by Western agents in non-Western contexts (see: Kwayu and Stambach, 2013; Mostafanezhad, 2013), bringing to light the reification of social, cultural and economic differences between 'saviors' and 'saved' within the same process (Fassin and Reichtman, 2009). Likewise, the broader connections between immigration and humanitarianism in Europe have already been addressed (Fassin and Pandolfi, 2010; Ticktin, 2011), highlighting the professionalization of solidarity and the politics and poetics of suffering within humanitarian NGOs (Malkki, 2015). All the while, the impact of faith on international development has been circumscribed primarily by critiquing the politics of 'faith-based developments', while nevertheless emphasizing the moral struggles of Western developmental workers in non-Western settings (Bornstein, 2005).

In this context, the connection between transnational movements, Roma-led religious mobilization and Roma-led/Roma-focused religious humanitarianism is particularly relevant, as it brings with it a means of understanding how grassroots interactions between Roma individuals from different social, economic and national contexts that come into contact in the process of transnational evangelism re-shape

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[1] Though sometimes referred to as Finnish Roma in policy papers and academic texts, throughout this paper I retain the name that my informants most often used to refer to themselves, namely Kaale. I do this not only because this corresponds most clearly to the experience of my own fieldwork but, more importantly, because it distinguishes between Kaale and former migrant Roma in Finland who have become naturalized as Finns over the past 20 years.

individual understandings of a common belonging and humanitarian agency. Nevertheless, such missionary projects and the transnational movements they facilitate also enhance how arguments for development are laid out by missionaries (be they Roma or non-Roma) from Western European countries conducting work in Eastern European countries, and how the surge in religiously-based humanitarian projects within present-day Europe may lead to a differentiation between the 'West' and the 'East' in the practice of missionary work. It is with these matters that my paper is concerned, and particularly the ways in which evangelical belonging shapes the broader spectrum of Roma transnational mobility, through an analysis of religious humanitarianism and transnational missionary projects.

The arguments presented here are informed by more than two years of fieldwork conducted with members of Finnish Kaale (more widely known as Finnish Roma) living in Southeastern Finland. They are also derived from a consideration of the role of Pentecostalism among Roma in Finland. As part of my fieldwork experience, I gradually became connected with the missionary practices of Finnish Kaale Pentecostal believers, many of whom were conducting missionary work in various Eastern European countries. As a Romanian myself, yet neither Roma nor Pentecostal, I became directly embedded within those practices when asked to act as an interpreter during my informants' travels to Romania. Additionally, as a friend of these missionaries and a scholar interested in the centrality of Pentecostal faith among them, I became a small cog in a larger movement of missionaries travelling across European countries in search of contacts with Roma abroad. The ethical conundrums of this position are discussed in the final section of this paper. In what follows, I will introduce some of the central elements that have shaped the experience of my fieldwork and have led to the articulation of this paper's focus: the contextualization of its ethnographic subject matter, the centrality of missionary practice in the lives of Finnish Kaale believers and, finally, the missionary encounters between the latter and Roma in Romanian settlements.

2. Kaale, believers and Pentecostal Evangelism: past, present and future

All the individuals introduced in the following sections are members of a recognized 'traditional' minority in Finland, the Finnish Roma.[2] Their status of traditional minority is grounded in the long-term presence of Finnish Kaale on the territories of present-day Finland.[3] As such, much like Roma elsewhere, their history is grounded in the historical trajectory of the Finnish nation-state and the role that the Roma minority in Finland has played within it.

Culturally, it is important to highlight that Finnish Roma profess and maintain specific community norms and rules of conduct deemed by its members to constitute the core of Finnish Roma 'culture': namely, respect for elders, a specific manifestation of shame, an age-and-gender-divided hierarchy within the community, and the centrality of the family unit (cf. Grönfors, 1997; Markkanen, 2003; Roman, 2015a; 2015b; Viljanen, 1979). Though some of the individuals I met professed to still speak

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[2] There are an estimated 10,000 Finnish Roma in Finland, with 3,000 more living in Sweden.
[3] The presence of Finnish Roma in the country has been attested from the beginning of the 16th century (cf. Pulma, 2006; Tervonen, 2010).

the Finnish dialect of Romani, much of the everyday conversation within and outside family settings was in Finnish, as the use of Finnish Romani appears to have significantly deteriorated over centuries of assimilation policies that originate in the nation state (see: Tervonen, 2010).

An element also worth noting here is that Finnish Roma are presently a sedentary population, living in non-segregated housing among majority Finns. Furthermore, though lower employment rates and difficulty in accessing private housing markets have recurrently been raised by minority activists and scholars as a source of concern regarding the fair treatment of Finland's Romani minority, the situation of Finnish Roma has vastly increased over the past four decades, primarily with the rise of Finnish Roma activism in the 1970s and social reform within the country concerning the treatment of its national minorities (Friman-Korpela, 2014).

Additionally, over the past few decades (since the 1960s–1970s), there has been a gradual and steady increase in the Pentecostal belonging of Finnish Kaale in the country. As such, all of the families I met over the course of my fieldwork had at least one member attached to the Pentecostal faith or declaring themselves a (present or past) 'believer'. Coincidently or not, the surge of Pentecostal conversions occurred almost simultaneously with the revised housing legislation concerning Roma in Finland in the 1960s, which ultimately led to improved housing conditions for the Finnish Roma. In addition to this, several Finnish Roma NGOs, the majority of which are religious or religiously affiliated organizations (though not necessarily of the Pentecostal label), have a prominent role in contouring modern day policies concerning the Roma community in Finland.[4] One in particular, *Elämä ja Valo*, is connected to the Life and Light movement that led to the spread of Pentecostalism among Roma elsewhere in Europe (cf. Acton, 1979; Strand, 2014). It is also one of the main religious organizations that have contributed to the setting up and development of transnational missionary projects in places such as Eastern Europe, Ukraine in particular, and the Baltic states.

Finally, an important and central aspect of Pentecostal belonging among Finnish Kaale is that, unlike among many other Pentecostal Roma communities elsewhere in Europe (see, for instance: Canton Delgado, 2010; Gay y Blasco, 1999; Ripka, 2015; Rose Lange, 2002; Strand, 2014; Williams, 1987), Finnish Kaale belong to mixed (namely, 'multi-ethnic') congregations, sharing spaces of worship with non-Kaale Pentecostal believers. This particular trait of worshipping life among Finland's Roma community is central to understanding the ways in which encounters between Romanian Roma and Finnish Roma take shape within missionary travels.

Thus, while this paper is not so much concerned with the relationship between religion and integration or with the social impact Pentecostalism may or may not have among Roma communities, the centrality of Pentecostalism in shaping an enhanced social engagement with the world will be emphasized throughout this paper. The next section focuses more concretely on the spread and influence of evangelizing among Finnish Roma and the ways in which the background of larger non-Roma faith-based organizations have shaped the practice of small group missionary work in Eastern Europe, connecting congregations, institutions and, ultimately, nation-states.

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[4] *Romano Missio (Roma Mission)* and *Elämä ja Valo (Life and Light).*

3. A small detour: Evangelism, Inc.

Evangelization and missionary work have always been central tenets of Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2004: 84–86, 206). Missionary work, in this sense, constitutes part and parcel of evangelical identity. Much like Pentecostals elsewhere, early Pentecostal Finnish missionaries devoted their lives to growing new congregations across the world and spreading the tenets of Pentecostalism outside of the nation state. The history and present-day manifestation of such mission work is central to understanding the mobilization of Kaale believers in this form of evangelism. It is also central to underlining the ways in which temporary or long-term cross country movements of Roma in Europe need not always be circumscribed under the umbrella term 'Roma migration'. Rather, such forms of transnational movements highlight the necessity of rethinking the ways in which we portray and theorize issues of Roma mobility within the European space.

Looking specifically at the Finnish context, in a clear example of modern, institutionalized forms of transnational missionizing the Finnish Free Foreign Mission *(Suomen Vapaa Ulkolähetys)* first developed in 1927, joined in 1973 by the so-called Missionary Development Aid *(Lähetyksen Kehitysapua)* with a powerful social work dimension (Anderson, 2004: 86). The two entities worked in tandem for some time, merging in 2001 under the common name of FIDA International Ry (FIDA, 2014a). The latter is presently one of the largest and most well-known Christian aid organizations in the country.

As a specific focal point, education (of children and adults alike) features heavily in the missionary agenda of FIDA, particularly in so-called developing countries. For this purpose, the promotion of general education is often combined with religious education to spread particular understandings of social inclusion and social development. As will be discussed later on in the examples of missionary work conducted by Kaale among Roma in Romania, education has been argued to be the only pathway to the social integration of marginalized or disenfranchised communities. Additionally, as an example of its reach, FIDA is presently active in over 55 countries and has a missionary staff of over 250 (FIDA, 2014b). Most importantly for the purpose of this paper, beyond work in so-called 'developing countries', FIDA's attention has more recently been directed to setting up mission posts on European soil, targeting in particular Roma communities in Eastern Europe (such as Romania, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine, to name but a few). In fact, one of the largest European Roma missionary work projects, 'For One Of The Least' *(Yhdelle vähimmistä)*, is conducted through the direct support of FIDA.

Though the smaller missionary groups presented in this paper acted independently from larger faith-based organizations and were not directly affiliated with FIDA, their practices were undoubtedly influenced and shaped by the latter. In fact, several of the Kaale missionaries I met throughout my fieldwork claimed to be inspired by larger transnational projects they had heard or read about through the mediation of their local Pentecostal congregations. Furthermore, the importance and specificity of their approach to missionary work is that it advocates a specific vision of Evangelism in which long-term contact is established with the communities targeted for missionary purposes. These practices have also directly contributed to the

understanding of a rather distinct version of European Roma mobility, in the form of transnational missionary practices.

4. Beyond the congregation: The transnational reach of Pentecostal mission outreach

In the past 30 years, particularly since their clearer involvement with Pentecostalism, more and more Kaale believers have also become directly engaged in processes of missionizing, in terms of both religious and social engagement. In a sense thus, missionary work has become an important element of their evangelical persona, of their own personal engagement with other believers and a core means of reaching out into the non-believer world. Moreover, though international missionary work was by no means accessible to all believers (missionary travels are paid for by each missionary, unless sponsored by a church), the desire and hope to be part of missionary teams doing work among Roma in poorer countries was one expressed by many Kaale believers I met. The entanglement of their sense of religious awakening with an expressed desire to encounter and 'help other Roma' in 'other' countries revealed the tension between Pentecostalism's role in a form of ethnic mobilization and perceptions of it as a means of boundary crossing between the Kaale and the non-Kaale.

This is how, for example, Sarita,[5] a 25-year-old Kaale believer, expressed her hope to one day also be part of these travels:

> For some reason, the opportunity just never came for me. I was either at school, at work or had little money, so I could not afford to go. And then when I could go, there was no team going. It was always like that. But it is a longing I have, if God wills it. It's something in me that tells me I should do it. I know many people who have [done it] and have been strengthened in their faith after that. And whenever I hear stories of these travels, and people show pictures from these trips, of how people can live on nothing, it's just incredibly painful to watch. But it's also a call to action, a call to do something about that. And I want to do something about it. I want to feel like I am contributing to a change in this world as God has changed mine.

When I asked Sarita of the type of work that she thought missionaries did among those communities, she replied:

> All kinds of work, really. It's not just one thing. They have to do everything because that is what is needed... People need food for the body and food for the soul. So the work is both humanitarian and spiritual. And educational, of course. Education is very important because that is their path out of the lives they live and that is the path to knowing God. If you can't read the Bible, if you don't understand it, you don't really understand God. But through learning to

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[5] In order to maintain the anonymity of informants, all names used throughout this article are pseudonyms.

read and write, they could also get jobs and opportunities. Like, in Finland, I think that is one of the reasons we [Kaale] are better off [than Roma in other countries]. Because though we are not university graduates, we all know how to read and write and all that. It is not like that in places like Romania or Latvia, or so I heard. Maybe people don't even have birth certificates there. So really, missionaries try do everything, in different ways, depending on the possibilities.

In a nutshell, Sarita summarized everything she had heard in the many PowerPoint presentations we had both seen of missionary trips organized among impoverished Roma communities across Eastern Europe: the combining of humanitarian aid with spiritual teachings, the emphasis placed on Biblical studies and primary education as a pathway to social mobility, the ways in which evangelizing became a remedy for inconsistencies of faith and the ways in which the relationship between giver and receiver was mediated by the return of something much more important: namely, a sense of spiritual development.

Though this version of evangelism as targeting all problematic aspects of social life among Roma in Eastern Europe may seem idealized in Sarita's description, in reality, missionary work was more than just about evangelizing: clothing supplies, food, and Bibles were all distributed routinely during mission trips in a variety of poor local Roma communities. In fact, this situation was characteristic, as often described by several of the missionaries I met, including Henri:

> I did not know much about Romania or the people there before I went. But I had a calling from God that I must do something because I had heard how Roma children there lived and that many were facing much bigger challenges than us Kaale in Finland. And there was another group that had gone there before us, who told us of how terrible the situation was. So I felt that I had to do something, you know? When I found out that some other Kaale brothers wanted to get involved, we discussed [the situation] with our local pastor [in Finland] and arranged everything: we had some food supplies, we collected some clothes and Bibles and we hired a mini-van. After the border [between Romania and Hungary], we saw a young man on the side of the road selling some handicrafts and we asked him where the Roma village was. He took us there eventually, and from there on we found other places. It was all God's work.

The spread of evangelical missions appears thus to have taken place through an almost snowball-like effect, with a clear connection to the Pentecostal Roma movement already taking shape in Romania (see: Fosztó, 2006; Ries, 2011; 2014). Missionaries moved from one 'Roma village' *(Romani kyllä)* to another[6] and continued their work throughout the years. From there on, connections with local Roma congregations were made stronger and new territories for missionizing were explored. All the while, the main recipients and targets of these missionary endeavors were always Roma communities in Eastern Europe, rather than impoverished

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[6] Though 'village' is the direct translation of the phrase used by missionaries, in reality these were areas located at the edges of main villages rather than villages themselves.

communities more broadly, connecting a form of religious mobilization to the perceived necessity of Roma-led social intervention.

Furthermore, though Evangelism was always the central part of the mission – the drive – it often seemed that the reality of people's lives moved it beyond that, creating links and connections between givers and receivers that lasted for years after the first mission trips occurred. In these ways, missionary encounters between Finnish Pentecostal missionaries and Romanian Roma focused not only on how the work would change the lives of those the missionaries were trying to reach out to (in this case, Romanian Roma), but also paved the way for missionaries' reassessment of the work they were doing, and the appropriate way to do it: at times adapting it to local contexts, local desires and local expectations and, at other times, going against them.

In the following sub-sections I focus on specific ethnographic encounters when meetings between missionaries and the Romanian Roma they were reaching out to re-shaped the experience of their work. More specifically, the focus is on presenting a clearer image of the travels of particular groups, the missionary encounters that were part of the transnational journeys, and the ways in which connections across national borders were continuously forged. It is perhaps this complexity and open-endedness of missionary encounters that highlights not only the more general experience of evangelism (in which the fruits of evangelical labour are often adapted to and grounded in local contexts), but also the ways in which a type of transnational evangelism conducted by Roma (here Kaale) for Roma (in Romania) re-positions these believers in a relationship both with their sense of Roma belonging and with their understanding of the role of Pentecostalism in shaping individual lives. It is also here that the relationship between different forms of mobilities (and, in some cases, immobilities) between givers and receivers and between missionaries and missionized comes centre stage.

4.1 A mission's story

It was 1991 and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe had brought dramatic changes to the countries in the area. Romania was among them. Suddenly, the borders of the former communist states had fallen, and movement across them became possible once more. There were, however, many whose lives had changed for the worse: growth in unemployment, powerful economic decline, and an unstable social situation. Many of those affected were Roma, the country's second largest minority (cf. Bunescu, 2014; Voiculescu, 2017). Documentaries were made about the dire situation of this group in the country, including news reports about the health status of young children and media debates about the rise in anti-Gypsyism, with Roma houses being burned down and settlements being evicted. This news made its way across national borders, reaching a vast audience.

The early years of the 1990s were also a time when the first missionary travels of Kaale believers to Eastern European countries began. It was in those early years after the fall of the communist regime that Tino (a 70-year-old Kaale Pentecostal believer) and his friends began their engagement with Roma transnational missionary work. The story he tells is as follows:

In 1990, Rainer, a good childhood friend of Tino's and a Kaale pastor living in Sweden, received word from a Roma Pentecostal pastor who was the leader of his own church in Western Romania. In that letter the Romanian pastor told of his church, the hardships his members endured, the difficulties of making ends meet, and the hope of some sort of blessing from abroad, from their Roma brothers and sisters.

The letter came as a shock. First, because Rainer did not know how that Romanian Roma pastor had got his address, or how he had known of his existence in the first place. Second, because the letter was in Romani, and though Rainer could understand some words, much of it had to be translated by others.

As revealed in that letter, and in many conversations about it over the years, the Romanian pastor learned that a Finnish group of believers had come to his city a year before, evangelizing in a large (non-Roma) Pentecostal congregation. Sensing the moment was right, the pastor inquired into the matter and found a list of the names of missionaries, and their postal addresses. He knew some of them had been Roma from abroad, but he did not know which ones. As he went through the list, he randomly picked one name from it. It was Rainer's. After receiving the letter, Rainer quickly brought the matter to his own (mixed) congregation and proposed to organize a team to visit the Roma pastor's church in Romania. Among those he invited to come along was Tino.

Soon after, they were on their way in a van filled with clothing, food, Bibles gathered through church donations, and with an unquenched enthusiasm for the long journey ahead. The first group of three Kaale missionaries travelled through Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary, each taking their turn in the driver's seat and, after three days, finally reached the border between Hungary and Romania. They met other Roma communities along the way, in Czech Republic and Hungary, but, though they created fond memories with the latter, their destination was Romania.

What followed from that first missionary encounter was the beginning of a relationship between individuals, congregations and countries which has lasted for more than 24 years. The mission visited individuals in that pastor's congregation and asked others about the Roma settlements they had heard so much about. The pastor took the missionaries to the poorest areas he knew and became the main point of contact with the people in the settlements: the missionaries thus obliged most of his requests and, though they often wanted to visit other places as well, most of the ties they created with Romania were through the mediation of this pastor and his church. That congregation thus became the mediating point between missionaries from Finland and the Roma people they sought to reach out to in Romania.

Though unique in its way, other such missionary movements happened simultaneously, and other missionary groups reached similar (and nearby) areas in Romania, sometimes even building on the same connections and making trips to the same areas as Tino and his team. News of this work travelled fast from one town to another, from one Kaale missionary to another, from one Pentecostal congregation to another, and many Kaale believers at the time of my fieldwork yearned for or intended to be involved in such work. What had begun as a missionary movement of individuals thus developed into a movement of its own; at once a humanitarian endeavor to reach out to what people knew was the poorest minority in Europe in

some of Europe's poorest areas, and, for Kaale missionaries, a chance to meet, help and engage with Roma in other countries. In the following section, I recount the experience I had among one such group, travelling alongside them on their journeys that were related to yet distinctly of the type of missionary work Tino had been conducting for the past decades.

4.2 Education, education, education: Mission work and/as development work

Starting in 2012, and after more than two decades of missionary work in Romania, all members of that missionary team from Eastern Finland, Kaale and Kaaje (the name Kaale use to refer to non-Kaale, or non-Roma) alike, wanted to make sure the changes they were bringing to the lives of those they met were of a longer duration, rather than just taking the form of the material items they brought with them on each of their trips. This also came from the initial desire of the local Romanian Roma pastor to set up a day center for impoverished Roma in his church.

The members of the missionary team then put together a plan for the development and future of the community: setting up a Sunday Bible school and an afternoon school club for Roma children in the area, where they could come and, through the same process, learn both Christian teachings and be helped with their formal education by local volunteers. In their view, education was the most important element in bringing up a new generation of Roma children that could change the future of their community. They envisioned a project that could help children (and later, adults as well) to read and write and therefore also offer them a chance at future employment. Furthermore, basic reading and writing skills would be, they thought, complemented by Christian teachings and Bible classes. Education and acquiring reading skills would thus bring people into closer, direct and personal contact with the word of God, rather than relying on the teachings of pastors, hence spiritual development would be ensured. For this purpose, an entire team from one Finnish Pentecostal congregation was organized and delegated to set up events for children in that area.

In fact, the local pastor and his church's elders did not find such a project particularly urgent. They wanted to focus on the adults in the community, and the pastor also wanted to make sure that the church had space for the constuction of the day center. There were many divisions within the church, he would say, and many who were envious of him, and setting up such a center would strengthen his role as a good leader.

In this sense, there were at least two different perceptions as to how things should be done and what the most beneficial aspect of missionary work would be for the future of that local Roma congregation. In this case, the local pastor's vision clashed with the desire of missionaries. At the same time, realizing the missionaries' drive, and not wanting to offend or push them away, the pastor emphasized how the situation was very different in Romania to Finland, a country he had visited as a guest speaker in a Finnish Pentecostal congregation, and that the type of activities that were organized in Finland would not work for the Roma in his community. Youth in Finland, he highlighted, had 'different needs' and 'different upbringings' to Roma

children in Romania: they were more independent from their families than in his congregation. Unlike in Finland, he also emphasized that Romanian Roma children never come to church on their own, but are always accompanied by their family members. That is why organizing youth or children meetings, and focusing exclusively on that issue, would not work.

In the end, the pastor gave in at least to some of the missionaries' plans (they organized a children's day programme in the church), but this appeared to be a concession rather than a personal desire for that work to be continued. Furthermore, he proposed that, if such a project be set up, he be put in charge of the children's teaching, despite the missionaries' suggestion that they employ a female educator whose salary the Finnish congregation would pay for. And, though the missionaries had wanted others in the local community to become involved in the congregation's future, they nevertheless obliged all of the local pastor's requests. As such, a back-and-forth motion between givers and receivers was embedded within a process of negotiation concerning the process and extent of missionary work. Moreover, seeing that the possibility of hosting such educational projects in that congregation were bleak, the team also began looking for other places to do their work, where such projects would be more welcome and where the engagement and involvement of local communities would be clearer.

5. Reflexivity, 'collaboration' and reciprocity in mission encounters

As the story described above shows, though the main purpose of Kaale missionary work in Romania was to reach out to and engage with Roma in their home countries, and though the movement may seem like a one-way street (from missionaries to missionized), in reality, collaboration and reciprocity between missionaries and 'missionized' also become central parts of this work. It was, in fact, through the initiative of a local Romanian Roma pastor that the connection between Tino and Roma in Romania was first made possible, and it was often local Roma pastors (and other such contacts) that influenced, if not dictated, the places and ways in which missionary work could be conducted. Local Romanian Roma pastors were also at times invited back to Finland, expenses paid, to speak in different Pentecostal congregations, in Kaale meetings and in different religious events, about the work of Finnish (Kaale and Kaaje) missionaries among Roma and about the situation of Roma communities in Romania, often raising donations for their home congregations in the process. They thus became the spokespeople for poor Romanian Roma and, in doing so, presented their personal views of how mission work could or should occur, what the needs of their communities were, and what the means of covering them could be. Thus, it was not only the missionaries that influenced the outcomes, places and contexts of the mission work but, to a large extent, also the local Roma contacts (often pastors or elders of Roma congregations) in a process of personal collaboration between missionaries and local 'representatives'.

This is also perhaps where my own position as a Romanian and a person who had been born in the area they were missionizing (Western Romania) brought me further into their missionary work. After almost a year of fieldwork in Finland and, by then, knowing my own life story and background in minute detail, I was asked to act

as a translator on several of the missionary trips my hosts had been engaged in. Given that none of the missionaries spoke Romanian (and, very few were fluent in Finnish Romani), communication between them and those they were seeking to reach out to was often arrived at via mediation. Through the serendipity of fieldwork encounters, I had thus become one of those sources. Furthermore, I was often asked by my Kaale missionaries if I knew other places where local Roma people needed their help, places to sleep and people to visit. Many of the group members expected me to know the country well enough, and I believe they were quite surprised to learn that I had been away from the area for years and knew little about the locations they were seeking.

As an anthropologist and a non-Pentecostal, I was also unsure of what the limitations of my engagement with my informants' missionary work could or should be. Struggling with my own doubts about the matter, yet feeling a sense of indebtedness towards my friends, I decided to inquire more into the possibilities for such help: I asked Romanian friends (Roma and non-Roma) and members of my family who I knew were living in villages with large Roma population if they could make possible contact between the latter and Pentecostal Roma missionaries from Finland. Some agreed and, through this, not only did I observe the act of missionary practice as conducted by others but, in many ways participated in it and facilitated it.

Unexpectedly thus, I had gradually become a small cog in a larger movement that involved missionaries, missionized and mediators, individuals and congregations, people and their environments. I was not only a translator, a friend and an anthropologist but, to some extent, a facilitator of their missionary work. Collaboration between anthropologists and the people they work with may take many forms and may give rise to a myriad of issues, amongst which also ethical and moral ones (see, for instance: Gay y Blasco, 2017; Gay y Blasco and De la Cruz, 2012): in this case, from the extent of my participation as an interpreter, a translator and a friend, to the outcomes that such involvement may have on missionaries and missionized alike. The places 'picked' for such a purpose may change the lives of those that are 'reached out' to; or it may not. The alternative outcomes of my own involvement are difficult to speculate on while the changes that were effected are still underway. Furthermore, the politicized ways in which mediation occurs should not be underestimated. As mediators, we translate not only words or sentences but, to some extent, ideas about lifeworlds, cultural backgrounds and practices, all embedded within politicized and differential positions of authority and power (cf. Grill, 2012, 2017). I thus often found myself puzzled by my own uncertainty regarding the right course of action and uncomfortable in the position of translating cultural, political and social issues. But the ways in which all of these entanglements, engagements, collaborations and reciprocal relationships occurred highlights the embeddedness of missionary work in the lives of Kaale believers in Finland, as well as the extent to which such work expands to incorporate the lives of people around them: believers and non-believers, Kaaje and Kaale, pastors and simple members of local communities, anthropologists and the people they study. It is thus by no means a uni-directional process, but one that connects people, communities and countries in an ever-expanding web of social relations. It is this quality of missionary work that, I believe, is most attractive to the Pentecostal believer Kaale I met.

6. Concluding discussion. Religious developmentalism and negotiating mobility

Discussing the role of institutional developmentalism in post-1989 Europe, Huub van Baar argued that, after 1989, 'human rights organizations and transnational activist networks played a vital role in representing the situation of the Roma as a 'human emergency' and in bringing them onto Europe's agenda' (van Baar, 2017a: 3). Though this argument is built upon van Baar's extended studies of the relationship between the process of Europeanising Roma 'issues' and the rise in Romaphobia across European states (van Baar, 2008, 2011a, 2011b), his insights are particularly relevant to the arguments of my paper. Namely, a form of spiritually-driven developmental outlook appears to have shaped the actions, transnational movements and discourse of Western Roma Evangelical missionaries reaching out to Roma in Eastern European countries. As such, within these processes, it is not only the politicization of the Roma issue that is at stake here, but also the differentiation made by missionaries themselves between developed and 'less-developed' geographical areas of Europe and the perceived need for Roma-led social intervention.

In a sense, sentimentality and emotional engagement, core themes 'in contemporary humanitarianism' (Mostafanezhad, 2013: 493), often play their part in the geographic differentiation and (at times) racialized representation of poverty (Benedik, 2011; Grill, 2017; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy, 2017). This is also the case of missionary work conducted by groups from various Western countries in areas identified as 'under-developed' or 'in need of development.' In fact, transnational missionary forms of mobility take place in order to foster development in the first place, therefore creating an a priori differentiation between the West and the East (wherever these areas may be), as a geographical space circumscribed to specific levels of social, economic and political status.

In the missionary encounters I have witnessed, the contrast between missionaries' expectations and reality and between what the appropriate form of Pentecostal action is, often comes center stage: not all individuals want to be part of the same congregations (and often not among non-Roma), not all may be members of poverty-stricken groups, and not all welcome missionaries with open arms. But these unmet expectations did not deter missionaries from returning again; rather, a new drive to continue their work developed as members of such teams yearned to learn more about each other (and about the people they encountered on their trips) and to expand their missions and their projects in diverse ways. The reality of everyday life, complex and contradictory, therefore contributed to missionaries' re-assessment of their role in the process, of the proper means of missionary action, of the people they thought they should maintain contact with, and the means of doing so. Sharing stories of missionary travels in their home congregations also brought others into the movement, and the process itself developed from one strictly of individuals to one of the groups and the institutions that sponsor those missionary travels.

However, a specific view of progress and development shaped the projects and work of missionaries; one that did not always fit in with the desires and expressed needs of the local communities. Similarly to American Evangelicals setting up

orphanages in non-Western contexts, for Kaale missionaries in Romania educating children was thought of as 'a way of saving them from poverty, ignorance, ill health, and superstition' (Kwayu and Stambach, 2013: 393). Missionaries associated education with progress, and the possibility for both spiritual and a social development. Often, in their sermons among Romanian Roma, Kaale speakers argued that education was the pathway to the better integration of Kaale in their home country, and thus they themselves were an example of its fruits. Thus, children were seen by missionaries as 'the future' of local Roma communities, the saviors of their own people, and education as the pathway to that future.

As the last example especially shows, one can thus find underlying the clashes between missionaries' expectations and local realities different perceptions of needs and wants. In such situations, local authority and hierarchy seemed to extend itself into the practices of missionaries. It was, at the same time, a type of hierarchy that could swap roles in the missionary encounter, as processes of exchange (of gifts, money, or packages from abroad) re-positioned missionaries as givers and Romanian Roma pastors as receivers. Briefly put, that which some have referred to as the 'humanitarian gaze' in development projects also reflects itself in a 'hierarchy between givers and receivers' (Mostafanezhad, 2013: 489).

Nevertheless, what seemed to be a central element in most of these relationships was an ongoing process of collaboration and mediation (between missionaries and missionized, between givers and receivers, between anthropologists and the people they work with), whereby reciprocal accommodations and adaptations occurred not only on the part of those that were missionized (cf. Barker 2014: 174) but also on the part of the missionaries, as we all became embedded in a network of social relations and informal exchange. What becomes clear from these encounters is also how, in the context of transnational missionary work, Pentecostalism constitutes an open-ended driving force that shapes the everyday actions, engagements and interactions that people have with those around them. In this sense, the process of Finnish Roma Evangelism among Romanian Roma highlights the ways in which the embodiment of a Pentecostal Evangelical outlook leads to new and expanding ways of reaching out into the world: in this case, crossing borders in the hope of engaging with people they would not otherwise have met but with whom they believe they have connections; as Roma reaching out to other Roma. What such engagement with the Pentecostal movement has come to provide for believer Roma from 'Western' countries is also, therefore, the possibility for not only interaction with others in their local environments, but also for a type of social action that transgresses the borders of the nation state, giving them an alternative understanding of mobility, alongside an alternative means of engaging with broader issues (Roma marginality, poverty and social exclusion) and with majority society.

As regular, temporary and long-term processes of cross-border crossing, yet as movements that have received little focus from scholars of migration, such practices highlight the necessity of broadening our understanding of Roma mobility within a Europeanized (and globalized) social-geographical space. They also emphasize the necessity of rethinking the complexity of movement, lack of movement, and transnational connections that may form and take place within an increasingly interconnected world and the crucial role that global Evangelical movements,

Pentecostalism in particular, play in shaping diverse forms of transnational humanitarian interventions. With this background, my aim has been to provide, first and foremost, an ethnographically-grounded analysis of the encounters between members of different national Roma communities, fostered by their involvement within Pentecostalism and grounded in the expansion of a missionary outlook among Pentecostal Roma believers from Western European countries. Through this, a spiritually-driven transnational Roma mobility comes to the fore, complementing the expanding ethnographic material on European Roma migration from Eastern to Western Europe. Finally, and in connection, as a form of movement primarily involving Roma individuals from Western (or Nordic) European countries to Eastern (or less-developed) European countries, these types of missionary encounters also ask us to rethink the broad portrayal of Roma European mobility as a strictly East-to-West phenomenon.

Acknowledgements

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