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Walking with Lina in Zamora. Reflections on Roma's Home-Making Engagements from a Translocality Perspective

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Abstract

This paper discusses how concreteness of place and locality matter for Roma in negotiating belonging and in engaging with home-making practices. The idea of 'fluid identities' or 'flows' permeated Roma/Gypsies related scholarly approaches and migration studies to a point that corporeality and materiality of movement and settlement became rather marginalised. Criticising this trend, the translocality perspective (Brickell and Datta, 2011) emerged as an agency-oriented approach that sheds more light on how local-to-local connections are made. To tackle these facets, in this article I analyse a walking tour in Zamora with Lina. With the ability to stimulate embodied, exploratory and relational experiences of space (O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010), this walking episode enabled Lina, a Romanian Roma woman, to reflect on the places that mattered to her life abroad. Based on her reflections, the article discusses how Lina dwells simultaneously 'here' and 'there', and imagines dwelling translocally.

Keywords: translocality, belonging, home-making, Romanian Roma.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses how locality and place matter for Roma people's negotiations of belonging, how material attachments 'heres' and 'theres' (Brickell and Datta, 2011: 19) are nurtured and how translocal linkages between different inhabited places/localities are fostered. By doing so, it hopes to contribute to the scholarly attempts to unravel practices of emplacement, identification with places and home-making (defined in both material and immaterial terms) in relation to Roma social forms.

In his monograph *The Time of Gypsies* (1997), Michael Stewart wrote that 'No particular emphasis was put by the Rom on the bare fact of where they lived' and that, although they 'were in no sense "nomads"', for the Hungarian Rom he carried out research with 'a "place of their own" was not in the end a place at all; rather, it was always fragile realization of an intangible quality of life together' (1997: 72). This account, in which Rom appear as people for whom 'life together' mattered first, regardless of *where* this 'living together' would occur, seems to reflect on Gypsiness as a fluid category, constituted in the present, irrespective of where. In this way, what Theodosiou called 'the new Gypsy ethnography'[1] (2011: 100) focused, in a Barthian fashion, on showing how differences are constituted and boundaries maintained, underpinning understandings of Gypsiness as emerging from '"imagined communities" in the "here and now", regardless of "where" they are' (2010: 329). But considering that 'there never actually lived an abstract Gypsy, "nowhere and everywhere"' more attention should be conferred to the question of 'how Roma "belong to places"' (Lemon, 2000: 3).

Taking this critique as a starting point, this paper aims to reflect on the epistemological value of locality and place in grasping processes of Roma people's self-identification, material attachment and belonging by focusing on the analysis of my walking tour with Lina,[2] a Roma woman from Rotoieni[3] (Romania) who lives in Zamora (Spain). It will be asked whether for Lina a place of her own is not a place at all and whether the feeling of belonging (or togetherness) has indeed nothing to do with the material texture of her inhabited spaces and of the two localities she is simultaneously situated in.

Previous accounts on how place and locality matter in the processes of (re)production of Roma social forms inform this endeavour. The work of Alaina Lemon is particularly inspiring with her emphasis that, 'although Roma are mostly marginal to state politics and circles of elites, and though they are dispersed across every country colonised by Europe, Roma nevertheless are and speak of themselves as connected to local places and pasts' (2000: 3). Insightful in this sense is also the discussion of Martin Olivera about the process through which Gabori from Transylvania identify with Mureș as their place of origin. This identification implies a

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[1] Theodosiou mentioned as part of 'the new Gypsy ethnography' the work of Gay y Blasco (1999) and Stewart (1997) (see more in: Theodosiou, 2011: 100-101).

[2] To preserve the anonymity of my research participants, all the names were changed into fictional ones.

[3] For anonymity reasons, the locality which Lina identified as her 'hometown' and where I did my field-research was changed into 'Rotoieni'. In 2011, almost 10 per cent of circa 10 000 registered inhabitants identified as Roma.

self-affirmation of righteousness, modernity and being civilised, seen as qualities of the inhabitants of Transylvanian localities, historically oriented to the West, in comparison to 'their fellow citizens in Moldavia and Wallachia (...) largely seen as "primitive" (*înapoiați*) inhabitants of the "disadvantaged" Eastern and Southern regions' (2012: 22-23). Similar reflections appear in the account of David Lagunas Arias, who discussed Catalan *Calós*' self-identification with Catalonia, and thus as '*Gitanos modernos*' (modern Gypsies) in opposition to non-Catalan Gypsy groups (2002).

        The relevance of place and locality in discussions about belonging has also been signalled in accounts about Roma mobility and migration. Stefánia Toma et al. (2018), for instance, analysed mobility patterns and experiences of Romanian Roma abroad, shedding light on how migration shaped home communities, and the process of status increase for returnees. From a material culture perspective, Nora Benarrosh-Orsoni (2016) wrote about the transnational households and telephone communication, focusing on the bonds maintained via phone-calls between Romanian Roma migrants on the outskirts of Paris and their relatives in Romania.

2. Contextualising the Walking Episode

I met Lina in August 2015 during a two-week stay in Spain where I carried out ethnographic interviews for my PhD research about belonging and material attachments. Prior to this trip, between 2014 and 2015, I conducted a six-month ethnographic research project in Rotoieni in three phases (March-April 2014, August-October 2014, April 2015) and lived both with a Roma family in the *Țigănie*[4] and with a non-Roma couple. I explored the ways in which people who identified as Roma and/or Gypsies engaged with the materiality of their inhabited space in a context in which Gypsiness was associated with disorderliness, carelessness regarding the 'where' and the 'how' people lived and a lack of commitment with 'contemporary' home-making standards. By looking at the engagement with certain household objects and domestic practices, I analysed enactments of and discourses about who they and *others* were, as performed in a setting in which the material form of one's inhabited space is understood as the reflection of one's industriousness, morality and deservingness of others' appreciation. Notions of belonging, material attachments and home-making were thus important conceptual tools for interpreting these dynamics.

        What is important is that people who live (or lived) in *Țigănie* (as well as those who did not) associated their or others' decision or compulsion to migrate with the need and aspiration to improve their living conditions. For instance, Maria, the Roma mother who hosted me during my stay in the *Țigănie*, once mentioned: 'All those who come back [from abroad] invest a lot in their houses. They all want a modernisation! (...) Our Gypsies now want parquet, concrete... (...) many of them saw what were the living conditions there and said: 'I want that too!' (March 2014). In this sense, modernity-related categories play an important role on the way in which Roma in

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[4] *Țigănia* is the term used by Roma and non-Roma to refer to the area inhabited mostly by Roma/Gypsies and derives from the word *țigan*. *Țigănie* is thus a socio-spatial racialised/ethnicised category with which locals use to mark who *is* (almost irrecoverably) at the margins.

Rotoieni talked about themselves. They identified as *Ursari* which was explained as referring to 'more *Romanianised* Roma/Gypsies', 'more integrated' and 'less traditional Gypsies than, for instance Kalderash'. This way of accounting for a 'we-collective' would eventually end up with the statement 'we are modernised Gypsies'. In this particular interview excerpt, Maria alluded at 'modernisation' as an effect of migration which entails the 'civilising effect among local Roma', as also discussed by Toma et al. (2018: 79).

The question that emerged during my stay in Rotoieni was how life abroad shaped people's understanding of home in relation to the town and places that they had left. Relying on contacts that they had with people who were living abroad, Maria, her husband and I organised my research trip to Spain. I spent a few days with their relatives or acquaintances in three different localities in the Basque Country, the Valencian Community and the region of Castile and León, respectively. Apart from ethnographic interviews with the adults from the families that hosted me, we walked through the respective towns and marked places that were meaningful in one way or another to their lives there. The decision to analyse the walk with Lina in Zamora is related, in particular, to the fact that I could better relate to Lina's social and material environment in Rotoieni. The house where she used to live is located in front of Maria's house, where I stayed during the months that I spent in the *Ţigănie*.

The theoretical considerations that underpin this interpretation of Lina's experiences abroad and of our walk in Zamora emphasise that: dwelling is a precondition of movement and mobility (Urry, 2000: 18; Knowles, 2010: 374), which enable migrants to make 'home away from home' (O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010); migrants actively contribute to the creation of translocal linkages (Smith, 2011; Brickell and Datta, 2011); materiality and corporeality of movement (Conradson and McKay, 2007), as well as textures/ concreteness of routes and places (Knowles, 2010; 2014) are important in grasping mobility dynamics; the particularities of locality shape migration experiences (Glick-Schiller, 2011; Glick-Schiller et al., 2006), and migrants' self-identification and sense of belonging.

Belonging is understood here as encompassing notions of commonality, mutuality and, material and immaterial attachment (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011, 2012; Pfaff-Czarnecka and Toffin, 2011). Material attachment constitutes the main dimension contemplated in this paper as what makes people belong 'to spaces and sites, to natural objects, landscapes, climate and to material possessions' (2011a: 206). In relation to attachment, Haaken and O'Neill intimate that 'as the capacity to migrate has been highly adaptive in human history, so, too, has been the capacity for deep attachments to place and to the web of attachments that ground human communities' (2014: 79). In this light, this paper relies on the idea that belonging to places does not require physical and constant inhabitation of specific sites, but it requires the maintenance of attachments and connections to those (Lund, 2011: 119).

3. From Rotoieni to Zamora

The decision to leave or to have left translocally or transnationally their home town was often related by my research participants to the location of Rotoieni within the northeast of Romania (Moldavia). There is a consensus that, out of the eight Romanian development regions, the Northeast region is the poorest. Figures show that, in 2015, the northeast region registered the highest rate of severe material deprivation (South-Muntenia region likewise).[5] Data also indicates that Moldavia is the region with the highest share in 2015 and among the highest shares in 2007-2014 of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.[6] Also, in my research participants' accounts, Moldavia is depicted as 'poorer', 'more backward', 'less civilised' than other Romanian regions, mostly in comparison to Ardeal/Transylvania.

Many Roma in Rotoieni engage in formal or informal commerce activities. Bucharest[7] or Suceava[8] are the main centres where they go to buy merchandise which they then sell, be it at the local central market or at other local markets in the area. During our conversations in Zamora, Lina recalled nostalgically the times when she used to make a living by travelling with relatives or acquaintances to localities from Western Romania (Transylvania) to sell self-manufactured objects or items bought at lower prices and resold at a profit at local markets or events (e.g. city festivals or local celebrations). Once Romania joined the European Union (2007), many Roma started (just as many non-Roma) to seek work and income-generating alternatives abroad. While in the beginning the countries that would receive Romanians for work (mostly in construction, agriculture and domestic work) were Italy, Spain and France, currently England, Germany and the Netherlands are among the most frequent destinations. Regardless of the migration trajectory or destination, my research participants often emphasised the aspiration for improved living conditions and for a place of their own in Rotoieni. The expectation that abroad they would be able to work and save money to build a new house, improve the existing one or detach from the parents' household (in the case of young couples) has always accompanied those who started their migrant careers abroad.

Lina travelled for the first time to Spain with her partner, Marin, as an acquaintance from Rotoieni had promised them a contract for a month of work on vineyard fields. They 'journeyed'[9] (Knowles, 2010: 375-376) to Zamora in September 2009. Zamora, a city from the Castile and León region (in Northwest Spain), which in 2016 registered a population of 63,217 inhabitants of which 3.5 per cent is said to be *población extranjera* (foreign population),[10] was known by the people in the *Țigănie*

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[5] Source: The Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

[6] Source: The Romanian National Institute of Statistics. AROPE (at risk of poverty or social exclusion) 'refers to the situation of people either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity', definition available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(AROPE)

[7] Located at about 379 kilometres South from Rotoieni.

[8] Located at about 100 kilometres North from Rotoieni.

[9] 'Journey' is used here as what connects and generates places across nations and neighbourhoods (Knowles 2010: 375), requiring skills and knowledge that enable migrants to navigate (2010: 375) both social and material/physical spaces.

[10] The information is available on the city hall website:

(in Rotoieni) as where Gypsies travelled to engage in different informal activities. For instance, Lina's mother (Paula), who at the time of my research was facing critical health problems, had spent several years travelling between Zamora and Rotoieni.

Once they arrived in Zamora, the couple soon realised that the promised work contract was not going to be concluded. However, the fact that they did not have a place of their own in Rotoieni,[11] and the aspiration of having one, motivated the couple to search for alternative options of saving money for the construction 'back home'. After a year, they brought their children to Zamora hoping to return to Rotoieni as soon as they had enough resources for building a house. In August 2015, Lina and Marin were still living in Zamora, in a four-room flat, with five of their seven children (the two youngest born there), with Lina's first-born, his partner and child, and with Marin's sister who was in her last weeks of pregnancy. In time, they fostered multiple contacts with a variety of both formal and informal local networks, among which the local branch of the Red Cross, a Pentecostal church, Caritas, Spanish Gitanos and/or migrants with different national and ethnic backgrounds, who worked as peddlers at the Sunday local bazaars. It is the interaction with such varied actors and networks that enables newcomers, formally or informally, to 'make homes', as Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez put it (2015: 88-95).

Although Lina emphasised positive aspects of their stay in Zamora (such as being able to provide everything their children wanted in terms of consumption goods and food), her accounts were rather imbued with feelings of discontent with their life abroad and nostalgia for their living in Rotoieni. This discontent was mostly connected with the working conditions to which former (mostly informal) employers had subjected them and the lack of any kind of protection in facing such abuses. She reported high levels of stress caused by the uncertainty of a regular monthly income and by the constant insecurity entailed by the informal activities they were performing. As an example, in August 2015 Lina was under medication due to a paralysis that this stress had caused to her.

The particularities of Rotoieni, which derive from its location within Moldavia, as well as the characteristics of Zamora as the locality of arrival, account for an understanding of migration dynamics beyond the primacy of the national scale. The translocality approach (Brickell and Datta, 2011), which is the main theoretical focus of this paper, emerges as an alternative for overcoming methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2002) and proposes 'an "agency oriented" optic to transnational migrant experiences' by emphasising migration related 'processes and identities as place-based rather than exclusively mobile, uprooted or "travelling"' (Brickell and Datta, 2011: 3). This perspective emerged as a critique of the de-territorialised and un-moored notions of transnationalism, which tended to neglect corporeal and material dimensions of movement and emplacement. Thus, starting from the foundation of those approaches which highlight the importance of attending the materiality and concreteness of places, locality and mobility, this article asks with Smith how 'does the multiple emplacement of situated subjects, affect their sense of self' (2011: 198). More specifically, how do Lina's translocal engagements with place/home-making enable narratives and enactments of belonging?

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http://portalestadistico.com/municioencifras/?pn=zamora&pc=NGT70
[11] They used to live in a room of Paula's three-room house.

4. At home in Zamora

When I arrived in Zamora, on a Thursday morning, Lina's eldest son (who was then 19 years old) picked me up from the bus station and together we walked less than ten minutes towards the flat in which they all lived. As soon as we arrived, Lina invited me into the room that she had arranged as a living-room.

The way in which this room of approximatively 15 square metres, with bright-yellow walls, was organised and bedecked reminded me of both houses that I visited in Rotoieni and of the flats where the other people from Rotoieni that I visited in Spain lived. While two sofas were positioned next to each other, against two different walls, a television was situated on a chiffonier. Both to the right and to the left of the chiffonier there was a cabinet, each with three shelves and a closet at its bottom. In the middle of the room, a small rectangular table, positioned between one of the sofas and the chiffonier, made it difficult to pass from one side of the room to the other. There, parallel to the entrance, a taller round table was located, right in front on the window. Both small-sized tables were covered with two layers of tablecloth. The top layers were macramé tablecloths which reminded me of the famous *mileuri* – macramé decorative objects which used to be quite popular in communist Romania and the years that followed. Similarly, small macramé tablecloths were located right in the centre of each of the six cabinet shelves. On each of these shelves a variety of objects of different sizes, colours and textures were displayed, among which: vases filled with plastic flowers, small bibelots, decorative candles, framed pictures of children and other family members, one big image that displayed a representation of Jesus Christ. Bigger vases with more voluminous plastic flowers were placed on the tables, as well as on a white cupboard located, almost hidden, in a corner next to the window. I only noticed it due to the presence of the flowers and two other framed pictures. A big carpet, that Romanians would identify as a *covor persan* (Persian floor-carpet) was covering almost the entire floor, from the entrance to the opposite side of the room.

While talking about how difficult it was for them to find a flat where they could all live together and to furnish it, Lina made it clear that everything that was there was hers and that she planned to take all the objects back to Rotoieni, when 'the time to return would come': 'Of course dear... I will take everything with me, I will take everything that is mine. When I came here, the flat was empty, empty, empty... I brought beds, I found or made stuff, I carried [them], I brought [them], I installed [them].' On Sundays, whenever she would 'make some money', she would buy plastic flowers to decorate the flat:

> 'I got them [the plastic flowers] from the Chinese [shops]. They're about two euros, two fifty... and when Sundays I'd get the chance, I'd get flowers for myself. That's how I collected them. [...] That's how I used to arrange [my house] at home too. I used to like flowers a lot, just that at home I'd have the original ones [natural, not plastic].

As they did not plan to stay longer than a month, Lina brought nothing from home when they first came to Zamora in 2009. The only thing that she later asked her

brother to bring from their house in Rotoieni was a wall-carpet. At the time of my research, that carpet was hung on a wall in the room where she and her partner slept. It is important to mention that, in Rotoieni, hanging this kind of wall-carpets (which were also hung in the flats of the people whom I visited in the Basque country) was seen as an outdated and backward practice, often associated with Gypsiness.

Such engagements with home materiality illustrate the understanding of translocality as 'a mode of multiple emplacement or situatedness both *here* and *there*' (Smith, 2011: 181) which concedes attention to the 'concreteness' of the places. They evoke what Amanda Wise called a 'sense of contiguous home', 'carved out' precisely through place-making practices which connect two or more localities, 'both grounding transnationals and their practices within actually existing places, yet linking them across distance through material and symbolic ties' (2011: 95). For the analysis of 'multiply-located senses of self amongst those who inhabit transnational social fields' (2007: 168), Conradson and McKay proposed the notion of 'translocal subjectivity' contemplating three main concerns that I will illustrate in relation to Lina's life in Zamora.

Firstly, the concept of translocal subjectivity points at the ways in which migrants invest materially and emotionally in their relationships with places and people physically located elsewhere. Arranging the flats in which Lina lived abroad with objects brought from Rotoieni, such as wall-carpets (see: Figure 1) or similar to those used at home, such as plastic flowers as decoration items (see: Figure 2); celebrating important dates in ways that are similar to the ways of celebrating them in Rotoieni; or cooking the same dishes abroad. These constitute only a few examples that show her engagement in the constant (re)creation of translocal linkages to significant places and people from *home*. However, these commitments to the places that Lina came from shall not be understood as precluding home-making in Zamora, on the contrary. They allow for the materialisation of translocal linkages between 'here' and 'there', allowing for multiple forms of ongoing emplacements.

Secondly, what Conradson and McKay underline in their conceptualisation of translocal subjectivities is that 'the formation of migrant selfhood is usually more closely related to localities within nations than to nation-states' (2007: 169). While Lina is referred to by the Spanish statutory institutions as a Romanian migrant, she also understands herself as such when citizenship becomes a relevant category in specific interactions. However, in referring to 'our homeland' (*ţara noastră*) she deploys attachments rather to locality, people and places *within* Romania, that is to say from Rotoieni. Thus, the national citizenship becomes 'a second-order framing of identity' (idem).

Thirdly, the notion of translocal subjectivities aims to reflect on the emotional and affective dimensions of mobility (2007: 169). Feelings that are involved in both moving *across* and dwelling *within* places shape the ways in which Lina invests in relationships with places, things and people from Zamora. Attending to the 'felt' dimensions of migration, Conradson and McKay argue, is as important as attending its rational and intentional factors. Anxiety, fear, excitement, desire, frustration, and shame are only some of the feelings that Lina invoked, thus shaping her relationships to places and people abroad, as well as her return-related imaginaries. The walking

tour with Lina is illustrative of this variety of feelings and of the connections she made between 'there' (Rotoieni) and 'here' (Zamora).

5. Walking with Lina

Focusing on people's needs (related to housing, health, education, work) and on the urge of states to socio-culturally integrate them, migration related research as a well as public debates often neglect 'questions of ontological security, emotional well-being, and senses of belonging and emplacement' (O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010: 46). It is on these aspects that this paper seeks to focus by analysing the walk with Lina as an ethnographic event. This empirical basis will be complemented by conversations and observations that I made during the days that I spent in Zamora with Lina and her family.

We walked through Zamora on the 14th of August, shortly after eight in the evening. The plan was for me, before the walk, to join her and Marin's sister 'to bars and clubs' to sell cosmetics, chocolate and other goods. While Marin had a permanent work-contract in agriculture and would spend most of the day out, Lina, apart from chores and looking after children, engaged with such informal practices in an attempt to complement the family's income.

After approximatively 20 minutes of walking, we reached the area where the targeted bars and clubs were located. Lina gave her sister-in-law the bag with chocolates and cosmetics, encouraging her to enter without hesitation or embarrassment. We stopped and waited for her at around 30 metres distance, which allowed us to see Mihaela entering and getting out from those places faster than Lina expected. Soon after, Mihaela returned to where we were standing without having sold anything. Disappointed, she reported that all the bars she entered were almost empty and that none of the usual potential customers were there. They soon concluded that this absence was linked to the following day's local celebration, *el día de la Virgen* (Virgin Mary's Day). While Mihaela decided to return home, Lina and I headed towards downtown.

Walking as a bodily activity which matters socially were tackled both in earlier accounts (Mauss, 1934; de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre 2004) and recent ones (Ingold and Lee Vergunst, 2008; Lund, 2011; Pink, 2007; 2008; Degen and Rose, 2012). In this paper I rely on an understanding of walking that focuses on 'the relationship between practices of walking, the experience of embodiment and forms of sociability, both in everyday life and in the conduct of anthropological fieldwork' (Ingold and Vergunst, 2006: 67-68). With its 'sensate, embodied, relational and collective attributes' (O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010) walking as a methodological approach provides the 'means of exploring the importance of being-in-place among a group whose lives are often depicted as markedly transnational' (2010: 46), or, as in the case of Roma/Gypsy social forms, the importance that being-in-place has for people about who:

> (...) we are told, space, place and particular localities are a matter of convention after all: they are not used to ground experiences and do not contribute anything to their understanding of themselves; Gypsies construct their

communities in the here and now regardless/despite of *where* they are. (Theodosiou, 2011: 100-101)

This walking tour is what enabled Lina to show, touch and talk about how and which places in Zamora mattered to her, thus allowing for a reflection on how these everyday places, outside her domestic sphere, triggered expressions of feelings of belonging, experiences and memories of 'here' and 'there'.[12] I suggest that this walking methodological approach enables what Theodosiou calls 'a more topological understanding of the discursive and political conditions of the reproduction or transformation of particular formulations of identity' (2011: 102) and, I would add, of belonging and self-identification.

While I understand the walking tour with Lina as being part of my ethnographic research design, there are particularities that distinguish the walking approach from a solely participant observation endeavour. Following Lina was not meant to aim at following her daily activities, actions and discourses that she would engage in. But it was rather intended to focus on her intentionality regarding the choice of what route to follow, of where and how long to stop by, of what emotions or memories to attach to the materiality of the urban space. Thus, instead of focusing on how the daily activities order relations and positionalities, the walking approach created the ethnographic space for Lina to locate herself within the urban and social space of Zamora. In that sense, the jottings that I wrote after the walking tour were more about how I followed Lina, about the places and the trajectory that she chose for our walk, and less about what Lina did and how on our way through the city.

In this sense, the walking approach also has an empowering dimension due to its potential for weakening the asymmetries between 'the researched' and 'the researcher'[13] by requiring from the ethnographer to adjust her/his pedestrian movements to the movements of who is guiding. And who is guiding is understood as who holds the knowledge and the position of making it available to the ethnographer. Paraphrasing Ingold and Lee, as we cannot simply walk *into* people worlds, we hope to be able to participate *with* them. As such, 'To participate is not to walk *into* but to walk *with* – where "with" implies not a face-to-face confrontation, but heading the same way, sharing the same vistas, and perhaps retreating from the same threats behind' (Ingold and Lee, 2006: 67).

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[12] Notions of belonging based on the walking methodological approach were discussed before in relation to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees (see: Lund, 2011; O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010; O'Neill and Perivolaris 2014).
[13] For a discussion about the asymmetry between the researcher and 'the researched', see: Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2008.

5.1. 'Old architecture buildings' – *between* emotionally charged locative positionalities

The walk was guided by Lina's knowledge of the city and configured by the experiences that she chose to emphasise as illustrative of her relationship with specific places and material forms. At the beginning, Lina announced to me that the plan was to show me places that she knew very well. Comparing to her family and her 'Gypsy friends' who, in her words, would rather prefer visiting 'places where party and food were provided', Lina highlighted that she was the only one who enjoyed doing those long walks.

While walking across the city centre, Lina underlined that, in contrast to Romanians, Spanish people 'knew how to appreciate old architecture' and to properly preserve those 'thousand-year' old buildings. She emphasised several times how much she enjoyed that historical setting and the number of stories that she imagined while navigating that part of the city. At times, she touched gates, doors and the stone walls of those buildings, mentioning that no matter how many times she walked around, she would always find something new to contemplate. She amusedly remarked: 'Who knows what a marquise I may have been before, as I like these olden things so much…', alluding to the characters from a *telenovela* set in the 17th century, Águila Roja, that she enjoyed watching with her children.

The repeated appreciation that Lina expressed in relation to the way in which the material cultural heritage was institutionally treated in Zamora, and to the locally relevant ethics regarding the conservation of historical vestiges enabled Lina to affirm a familiarity with the material and socio-political setting in which she lived at that point. At the same time, by comparatively reflecting on the material and socio-political setting from which she had come (Rotoieni), Lina spoke about her multiple emplacement and material attachment as a dimension of belonging:

> *La ei* [At them]*,* what is old is being preserved, *la noi* [at us] in Romania, everything that was old was demolished, just because it's old [ironically]! Everything that was the most beautiful was destroyed, instead of just leaving it be…

It is interesting how what might be deemed to be affectively neutral spatial indicators – 'here' (in Zamora) and 'there' (in Rotoieni) – become epitomisers of the emotionally charged locative positionalities la ei compared to la noi. Lina repeatedly employed these Romanian expressions in a mirrored way – *la ei versus la noi – morphologically constituted by the* locative preposition *la* (meaning 'at') plus the pronouns *noi* (us) and *ei* (them). The word by word translation would be 'at us' and 'at them' in the sense of 'in our places' and 'in their places' respectively. As such, they constitute a pronominal-locative dichotomy that epitomises the idea of belonging based on a commonality of belonging to places, therefore on locative sameness and togetherness. Although an interpretative translation of *la noi* could be 'at home', the latter does not reflect the affirmation of togetherness with all Romanians (or in this case, with the people from Rotoieni) as the expression *la noi* does.

The expression la ei also intimates a certain distancing both socially and spatially from 'them'. The example provided suggests that, although corporeally located within 'here' (Zamora), Lina affirms her belonging to 'there' (Rotoieni) articulated through the expression la noi which reveals the understanding of belonging as an 'emotionally charged social location' (Toffin and Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2014: 3). By saying *la noi* Lina self-identifies with 'us Romanians' from Rotoieni/Moldavia, thus articulating togetherness based on her identification with Romanianness. In this way, by referring to how old buildings are preserved in Zamora (*la ei*), Lina affirmed her affective situatedness among/within *la noi* (Rotoieni), despite her physical location within 'here', or, in other words, *la ei*.

At one point during our walk, Lina suggested that the buildings 'with old architecture' from Zamora were similar to the buildings from Ardeal which she had observed years ago. This comparison triggered memories from the years when, together with relatives and acquaintances from Rotoieni, she travelled to localities from Ardeal to sell goods at local celebrations. While remarking 'I was always enchanted by those beautiful buildings', more than as a Romanian, Lina talked as someone from Moldavia who became acquainted with localities from Ardeal due to her engagement with the specific economic activities that required translocal movement. In this context, her acquaintance with Ardeal crystallised an acquaintance with architectural styles that, at the time of our walk, enabled her to trace connections between 'here' and 'there'.

5.2. The 'unexpectedly' open church – (non-)belonging as identification with place

While getting closer to the Church of San Andrés, she warned me that I was going to be amazed by the presence of a statue which, to her, seemed lifelike. Lina recalled the beginnings of her stay in Zamora when she had to beg in order to survive and to save money for her children's arrival in Spain. 'Re-evoking corporeal memories of previous enactments' (Leach, 2003: 80), the statue triggered memories about the first time that she begged in front of that church. She described that moment as one that made her feel both shame and anger for she believed that there was one more person begging with whom she had to share the potential alms.

If this statue acquired significance for Lina in the context of her experience as a jobless newcomer, a feeling of shame was revealed in relation with her life in Rotoieni. Begging turned out to be difficult for her as, in her words, 'she did not know how this was to be carried out', thus implying an understanding of begging as more than a 'shameful endeavour' and rather 'a kind of work which requires the bodily training and attention' (Tesăr, 2015: 1). In this context, Lina emphasised that she never begged or accepted alms in Rotoieni: 'I wouldn't even eat a thing from anyone as we went to the cemetery [in Rotoieni] to commemorate our deceased ones,[14] *because I*

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[14] Few times per year, occasioned by certain religious celebration, people in Rotoieni who identify as orthodox, go to the cemetery with offerings to commemorate their deceased ones. These offerings are understood as gifts shared with those in need for 'the name of the dead's soul'. It is common for the poor to join these events (to beg and) to receive part of these offerings.

simply did not need anything from anyone'. It is worth mentioning that the day before the walk, Lina mentioned that the shame experienced in the beginning slightly faded once she learnt 'how to do it' and once she started to earn money for her children to travel to Zamora. At this point, begging transpires as part of her '*transnational emotional work*' (Marcu, 2017).

As we continued our walk, Lina intimated that she knew that area well, as it was there where she would seek refuge whenever family fights occurred. This description of the area as 'a place of refuge' could be read as an affirmation of familiarity with the respective setting acquired through a frequent immersion within the social and material life of the city ('I've been here many times'). This frequent immersion reminds us of Neil Leach's suggestion that the repetition of spatial practices is what 'leads to normalisation and consequent familiarisation' (2003: 79), essential for acquiring (a feeling of) belonging in the sense of identification with place. Lina constantly reinforced her familiarity with the places where we were walking, while highlighting what was particularly different that night in comparison to other instances. Such observations enabled her to operate with her 'inhabitant knowledge' (cf. Ingold, 2007: 89), thus affirming her belonging to there, at least in comparison to myself.

We entered the courtyard of the castle which Lina had set as the final point of our walk. As it was already dark, and we could not enjoy the view of the river and beyond, she announced that we were about to return soon. Unidentifiable and far from the point where we were standing, on the other side of the river, few lights were on. These seemed to be also unusual for Lina who rhetorically asked whether anything alarming was happening there. This anxiety prompted her to accelerate the rhythm of our walk and to leave the court of the castle faster than I had expected. As we returned following a slightly different trajectory, we ended up getting somewhat confused on those small narrow streets which connect the castle to the city centre. Getting lost made Lina feel responsible with finding an exit, exclaiming as someone who had in-depth embodied knowledge about those surroundings: 'it's really easy here, there's no way to get lost'. At one point, our accelerated walking rhythm was interrupted by a poem written on a wall – 'Esto es amor' by Lope de Vega – which Lina took the time to read aloud.

Lina had a good command of spoken Spanish. Although we communicated in Romanian, she would often use Spanish words to express particular thoughts. For instance, she often used the comparative mas tranquilo in the context of our conversations about the intended length of their further stay in Zamora. The fact of not having a house to return to in Rotoieni was talked about as a source of anxiety considering the political situation and migration related debates in Spain. She mentioned that under the government of Mariano Rajoy, they as migrants felt under the threat of being sent back home. Against this backdrop, Lina explained that she would feel and stay 'mas tranquilo' in Zamora if they managed to build a house for their family in Rotoieni, to which they could return whenever circumstances might require them to do so. Thus, in this case, 'mas tranquilo' expresses the aspiration to a state of relief regarding the fear of having to return while lacking the concreteness of 'the where' to return. Another example is the use of the category 'payos' – which is the Spanish term for non-Gitano people – when referring to non-Roma Romanians that she had contacts with in Zamora.

As for the languages spoken in the family, both Romanian and Romanes were used to communicate with her elder children, partner, sister-in-law and other acquaintances that visited Lina while I was there. However with the youngest children (who in 2015 were 9, 5 and 2) Lina would rather mix Spanish with Romanes and would receive answers mostly in Spanish.

5.3. The embroidered gate - Making a home t/here

During our walk she imagined what her house should look like based on the architecture and material configuration of the buildings we were wandering around. At one point we stopped in front of a gate that she found particularly beautiful and stated:

> Look how beautiful this embroidered gate is, I die for this [type of decoration]! I said to myself that, if I manage to build a house, I'll use this kind of decoration. Because I want a house with a terrace; so, the terrace would be [gated] with this kind of embroidered [fences], something like this... Beautiful, like these ones.

The act of touching this gate prompted articulations of Lina's aspirations related to building a house in Rotoieni for her and her family. These aspirations mirror the idea of home as 'a *spatial imaginary*: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 2). In this light, Lina's aspirations to having a house in Rotoieni, built in accordance with architectural and decorative practices specific to the Zamoran urban space, crystallise a translocal connection between these localities, revealing her material attachments nurtured to both 'here' and 'there'.

At the same time, aspirations of this kind shed light on the question of becoming (Kannabiran, 2006) encapsulated in processes of negotiating belonging. In a context like Rotoieni, in which '"the" Roma/Gypsy way of living' is structured by 'natural' predispositions of carelessness toward the inhabited space, inertia and incapacity to overcome 'their condition', the efforts, aspirations and imaginaries that Roma people, like Lina, develop in relation to their inhabited spaces can be understood as a response to such anti-Roma/Gypsies local repertoires. At one point during the time that I spent in Zamora, Lina's partner stated: 'How can I go back now, after having spent so many years here, without enough money to build a house for me and my whole family? What would my neighbours [in Rotoieni] say?'

As such, 'socially aspirant' engagements in housing related deeds (Clarke, 2001: 25) are important in negotiating belonging, as they trigger the materialisation of processes of becoming. Renovating the house or building extra compartments to the existing household are only a few of the acts locally supposed to materialise and make visible one's commitment to the inhabited space. Through those means, the engagement with the domestic space is supposed to materialise one's dignity, industriousness and deservingness to be recognised[15] as belonging in the sense of

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[15] For a critique of recognition as a normative category, see more in: Theodosiou, 2011: 91.

'sharing values, networks and practices' (Anthias, 2006: 21). However, the rhetoric in Rotoieni about Roma tends to nurture local repertoires according to which, for 'them' these normative categories do not matter. The complication is that this rhetoric often disregards, on the one hand, how Roma people engage in home/house making practices, and on the other hand, that the often socio-economically precarious positionality precludes them from doing so.

While living abroad is often imagined as a precondition for acquiring resources meant to be invested in housing related deeds, it also provides the migrants with knowledge about 'contemporary standards of being a homemaker' (cf. Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 118). For instance, Lina, who in Rotoieni shared a room with her seven-member family, had a different view on what her home should be like after having lived six years in Zamora. At one point, after having moved away from the city centre, Lina emphasised:

> This is what I'd like [to have]: three dormitories, a living room, kitchen, bathroom and that's it. That's how I'd like to have a house. I wouldn't like to have a villa, with an extra floor, with the danger that my kids could fall down... no, no... like this, small, but beautiful (...) In the kitchen [I'd like to] have two double glazed windows that I could [use to] pass the food outside, on the terrace... Because I'd have a terrace too, where we'd eat...

This way in which Lina imagined and depicted making a home reveals the relational character of place (Brickell and Datta, 2011: 4; Massey, 1994: 169; O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010: 47). On the one hand, the home in Rotoieni, where home is both a place/site and a set of feelings/cultural implications (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 2), is envisioned in connection to the knowledge about and experiences of places that Lina acquired during her life in Zamora. On the other hand, it is often in relation to Rotoieni that Lina depicted and *made* her place in Zamora. The example of the wall-carpets and of the plastic flowers shows how her attachment to her home *back there* is materialised and how translocal connections to *here* are nurtured.

By shedding light on how Lina invests her 'imaginative and material resources' (Smith, 2011: 187) in trying to improve living conditions both in Rotoieni and Zamora, this paper subscribes to Smith's critique of the tendency to represent human mobility as 'too fleeting, ephemeral and unbounded' (2011: 189). This critique addresses mainly Appadurai and Hannerz's understanding of translocalities as 'newly constituted socio-cultural spaces of mobility, displacement, and deterritorialisation', analytically epitomising 'a sense of the fluid boundaries and identities' (2011: 181). At the same time, by reflecting on how Lina fosters translocal connections, on how she nurtured material attachments to *home,* and on her relationship with public spaces in Zamora, I followed Caroline Knowles's reconsideration of Urry's theorisation of mobility as a way of thinking (2000, 2010).

What Knowles imputes to the 'mobilities thinking' (2014: 7) is that it fails to attend 'the social textures of mobility' and to address the ways in which the social and the material are 'generated through movement' (2014: 6). In particular, Knowles criticises the 'flow' focused terminology for it tends to 'erase important information in the texture of shifting' (2010: 374). In doing so, it assumes 'an unreal ease with which

people and things move from place to place' (2014: 6), thus disregarding the ways in which mobilities actually occur. As Knowles put it:

> Additionally, people, objects and so on do not flow: they bump awkwardly along creating pathways as they go; they grate against each other; they dodge, stop and go, negotiate obstacles, back-track and move off in new directions propelled by different intersecting logics. They do all these things and more; but they do not *flow*. (2010: 374)

These are also aspects that the walk with Lina revealed: experiences of negotiating obstacles that she, as a migrant Romanian Roma woman, had to circumvent, as well as engagements with materialities and socialities abroad that enabled Lina to both maintain translocal connections to *there* and to make home *here*.

6. At the end of the walk...

The analysis of this walking event was meant to shed light on how Lina, as 'an interpretative subject' of her own mobility (cf. Brickell, 2011: 25), reflects on her experience of emplacement. Considering that 'each belongs and relates to the place through different personal histories' (Lund, 2011: 122) this ethnographic episode provided means to think about Lina's ways of relating to places and of locating herself in Zamora.

Looking at home-making engagements in relation to Roma social forms is relevant for it is prone to contribute to the dissolution of the ontological gap between Roma and non-Roma, nurtured in public discourses and debates based on the alleged lack of Roma people's attachments to places. Taking a cue from Lemon, who critiqued the tendency 'to *define* "Gypsy culture" only by features or practices that seem to isolate Gypsies from a majority' (2000: 3), I argue with Theodosiou that questions of space, place and locality should also be seen as indicative for the Gypsy ways of being, and not only as matters that merely non-Roma are concerned with (2011: 101). Like many non-Roma, Lina and other Roma from Rotoieni related their decision and compulsion to migrate to their aspiration and need to build a house or to improve their living conditions in Rotoieni, identified as the place where their roots were.

From the reduced attention allowed for materiality of place and locality – as aspects that matter for Roma/Gypsy people's narratives about and enactments of belonging – emerges the potential for obscuring their agency, capacities and investments in place-making processes. Considering the local discourses from Rotoieni that picture Roma/Gypsies as innately uncaring and disregarding of the places that they inhabit, it is significant to reflect on Roma's engagements in home-making processes, for it does justice to Roma individuals' investments concerning housing. The racialising rhetoric about Roma as indolent, unmoored and unable – thus unwilling – to do more for a better living, often obscures their doings and relegates the Roma to the realm of moral non-belonging. At the same time, looking at how places and locality matter for Roma underpins the analysis of practices and

discourses through which belonging to places and to we-collectives is negotiated. In particular, the walking tour with Lina revealed some ways in which places and locality matter for her understanding of self and of others. It shed light on her engagements with the places from Zamora and her identification with those, as well as her identification with *la noi,* which appears as an expression for a sense of both social and spatial belonging together.

In discussing these questions, notions of mobility and movement were interwoven as more than metaphors, in antithesis 'to the boundary keeping, classification and identity-obsessed, and unifying ideology of the modern era' (Engebrigtsen, 2017: 46). They are embedded into the thoughts presented in this paper as notions that propel us to think about how socio-spatial boundaries are negotiated; about how places and homes are made in movement, shaping one's situated identifications; about how material attachments *here* are strongly connected with attachments *there*; as well as about the structural restrictions that regulate the extent to which those deemed to be 'outsiders' and/or 'newcomers' are encouraged to establish homes elsewhere than where 'the national order of things' (cf. Malkki, in Theodosiou, 2010: 330) allows them to. But such 'politics of translocal place-making' (Smith, 2011) or 'everyday politics of agency during movement' (Brickell and Datta, 2011) could constitute the purpose of an entirely different paper.

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Appendix

Figure 1

Photo from the author's personal archive, taken in August 2015

Figure 2

Photo from the author's personal archive, taken in August 2015