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Editor-in-Chief:  
Margit Feischmidt

Special Issue Editors:  
Judit Durst, Veronika Nagy, Nóra Kovács

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**JUDIT DURST AND VERONIKA NAGY\***  
**Transnational Roma Mobilities: The Enactment  
of Invisible Resistance**

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\* [durst.judit@tk.mta.hu] (Centre for Social Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest and University College London, Anthropology Department); [V.Nagy@uu.nl] (Willem Pompe Institute, Utrecht University, The Netherlands)

This thematic double issue on Roma transnational mobilities and migration, to be published in two parts, seeks to galvanize debate about the value and contribution of ethnographic studies to theoretical developments regarding the cultural, economic and social factors that influence the spatial mobility of people who call themselves Roma or Gypsy in different social and regional settings. The contributors to this special issue draw attention to the multi-directional, diverse, contextualized and situational mobility strategies of different Roma groupings. The research findings presented here encompass a wide range of geographical areas, from sending countries such as Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and Finland to destination societies such as Italy, France, England, Spain, Canada, and Poland.

There has recently been heightened interest in the topic of Roma cross-border mobility, as can be seen from the growth in academic literature. Many of the recent studies have created new insights and rich, valuable contributions to the main organizing topics of Roma transnational mobility, such as the construction of Roma migration and the ‘Roma migrant’ as a racialized and homogenized political category in the EU (Magazzini and Piemontese, 2016; Vincze, 2014; Picker, 2017); the bordering of un/free mobility in the EU space (Yildiz and De Genova, 2017; Van Baar, 2017; Solimene, 2016, 2017); the neoliberal governmentality of precarious Roma migrants at the municipal level (Matras and Leggio, 2017; Asztalos Morell et al.; 2018); racial profiling as crime control during border screening (Nagy et al., 2015); the workings of everyday racism in the practice of welfare state actors who deal with Roma migrants (Humphris, 2017); ‘migrating racialisation’ (Grill, 2017) as the culturalization of Roma difference; and the link between migration and social change in ethnically mixed sending communities (Anghel, 2015; Toma et al., 2017).

Empirical studies have regularly been critiqued as being merely descriptive, and it has been argued that ethnographic methods are unable to contribute to theory development in the social sciences. In contrast, the papers in this volume are theoretically grounded case studies about issues of transnational migration and the mobility of different Roma networks. Their ethnographic data contribute to the further development of existing theories and new theoretical developments. We believe that the value of this collected volume lies in its heuristic character.

The contributors to this double issue explore different aspects of the spatial mobility of diverse and heterogeneous social groupings self-identified as Roma or any of their subgroups. They show how diverse and context-dependent these spatial mobility strategies are, in contrast to the homogenized and socially, politically and legally (Sardelic, 2017) constructed representation of distinctive ‘Roma migration.’

Due to this distorted and racially constructed notion of Roma (Kóczé, 2017), Roma migrants are seen as a security threat to the imagined community of destination societies. They are targets of a variety of selective and exclusionary mobility politics and bordering strategies, several of which have been scrutinized in recent studies (Yildiz and de Genova, 2017; van Baar, 2017; Yuval-Davies et al., 2017).

Following this line of inquiry, the current special issue contributes to the understanding of the ethnicization – in this case, the racialization – of the exclusion (and inclusion) phenomena present in mobility and border regimes. However, the studies that make up this publication endeavour to move Romani Studies out of ‘its splendid isolation’ (Willems, 1997) by connecting and embedding the approaches into the wider theoretical debates about transnational mobility and migration studies.

Moreover, another of the main interests of this collected volume is understanding the inner workings of the interplay between the structure and the agency of mobile subjects, and of other social actors who also affect Roma’s cross-border mobility processes and regimes, such as states, institutions, and formal and informal migration brokers, both in receiving and sending countries. The selected papers highlight the chances and challenges of the theoretical concepts in the following four core fields: (1) Regimes of borders and mobilities; (2) Transnational relations; (3) Spatial and social mobility nexus; and (4) Migration as a form of resistance.

### *Roma Migration and the Regimes of Borders and Mobilities*

Mobility theorists Glick-Schiller and Salazar (2013) propose shifting the vocabulary of traditional migration studies to the language of border and mobility regimes, which ‘call[s] attention to the role of states and of international regulatory and surveillance administrations that allows the mobility for certain categories of people while criminalizing and entrapping the ventures of others’ (2013: 189). The elasticity of border effects and their uneven distribution across people with different social positions has variegated and prolonged impacts on the lived conditions of migrants across divergent legal statuses (De Genova, 2010).

Building on this line of thinking, and also on Cunningham’s and Heyman’s (2004) work, Patrick Ciaschi interprets in this volume the concept of borders as not fixed, ahistorical sites of inclusivity or exclusivity, but as regimes.

Ciaschi chose the ‘Numbered Streets’ neighborhood in Miskolc, Northeastern Hungary as his site of empirical study. There are two factors that make Miskolc a critical site for research into Roma mobility and border regimes: the on-going displacement through eviction of Roma neighborhoods, as well as the phenomenon of significant out-migration and asylum-seeking in Canada of Roma families and households. Ciaschi presents ethnographic snapshots about how Roma experience deep inequalities in the changes of border regimes as a consequence both of the racial profiling mechanisms of the Canadian immigration officers who act as gatekeepers at the airports of transit EU countries, and due to their constructed status of evictability at the local level.

Greenfields’ and Dagilyte’s main contribution to this special issue (in Part 2) is a demonstration of how strongly institutionalized the process of ‘bordering’ has

become in post-Brexit Britain. Based on 28 interviews with Roma migrants, mainly from Poland but also from the Czech and Slovak Republics and Romania, the authors evaluate the extent of the impacts of changes in welfare regulations in 2014 on recent EU Roma migrant populations. The authors argue that, despite their moving to the UK to find work, when in need of welfare support, low-skilled, low-paid Central Eastern European migrants – or as the authors’ call them, Roma EU citizens – are disproportionately ‘bordered’ by social workers. The post-2014 welfare regulatory changes, with their increasingly restrictive criteria in many cases, exclude these individuals from the UK welfare system, despite the fact that as EU citizens they should be entitled to exercise their right not only to work and reside in England but to make use of its welfare regime when needed. The authors demonstrate how Britain has created a hostile environment for migrants regarded as ‘undesirable’ by employing different bordering practices; among these by applying pressure to encourage the ‘voluntary return’ to the country of origin of those migrants whose applications for welfare benefits in circumstances of need have been refused.

Still embedded in the mobility paradigm, Raluca Roman draws attention to the longstanding, widely overlooked phenomenon that Roma cross-border movement cannot be confined to westward Roma migration. Roman claims that we should use the term mobility as a broader concept than migration to better understand the different types of transnational movement that occur simultaneously with politically and economically driven ones. The paper shows, using vivid ethnographic illustration, the role of ethnic solidarity in the transnational mobility of different Roma groups from the ‘West’ towards the ‘East’ through the Evangelical movement of Pentecostalism. Theoretically framed not only in Romany studies but also in development studies, the author depicts the distinctive experience of Roma movement embraced by the work of Finnish Kaale Pentecostal believers who conduct missionary activities among impoverished Romanian Roma communities. The author shows how their experiences are integrated into the broader connection between transnational mobility and humanitarianism in Eastern Europe, and the professionalization of solidarity.

### *Roma Mobility in a Transnational Social Field*

Due to current social and infrastructural changes, the classical concepts and interpretation of human mobilities are being challenged, particularly considering the relevance of ethnic boundaries.

Transnationalism, the phenomenon through which ongoing material, informational and human flows connect sending and receiving societies, has been identified and explored since the 1990s (Schiller et al., 1995; Portes et al., 1999; Goldring & Krishnamurti, 2007; Faist, 2010). However, as some scholars emphasize, transnationalism implies more than regular contact between migrants and their home countries (Vertovec, 2001; Portes et al., 1999). The problem with the concept is that it has become ‘overused to describe too wide a range of phenomena’ (Vertovec, 2001: 576). Moreover, it tends to be conceptualised in ‘vague and loose ways that lack a well-defined theoretical framework and analytical rigour’ (Portes et al., 1999: 28). For Portes and his co-authors, transnationalism means systematic and enduring cross-

border experiences involving ‘dual lives: speaking two languages, having a home in two countries, and making a living through continuous and regular contact across national borders’ (Ibid.: 217). According to these criteria, and especially the last one (transnational connections in the economic realm), many Roma who take part in cross-border mobility – partly due to their precarious positions – do not live a transnational life, their migration is rather home oriented (Tesar, 2015).

As the debate surrounding transnationalism has developed and the empirical evidence has been enriched, the concept has been refined to acknowledge that transnational social practices are not simply undertaken by those who move. Rather, many people may live in a *transnational social field*, in which their practices, attitudes and identities are shaped because of the movement or linkages that are actively maintained by others (Levitt and Schiller, 2004; Levitt, 2009). Gowricharn (2009) points out that when a concert promoter brings a singer from the home country to perform for a diasporic audience, only the performer and the promoter have engaged in transnational practices in a narrow sense. But, in a broader sense, the audience as a whole connects with the homeland. This is an important point, as it implies that the ancestral homeland can play a significant role in the lives of those who live in a transnational social field.

The transnational perspective helps us to shift our focus to the spatially dispersed webs of relationships such that connect transnational families through geographical distance. Bryceson and Vuorela claim that far from being ‘fixed entities’, transnational families are highly relative, and could more accurately be configured as ‘imagined communities’ (2002: 10). In studying online cross-border communication between migrants and their networks that have ‘stayed behind’ in the sending country, Veronika Nagy (Part 2) explores how the use of new technologies in a transnational social field facilitates ‘doing transnational families’ even in the circumstances of geographical distance, and how the use of online polymedia, Skype and Facebook can affect offline interethnic relations. Based on multi-sited fieldwork in London, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary, her paper analyses how online communication about offline experiences with other ethnic groups in social conversations among different Roma transnational families and networks living in geographically different places changes interethnic trust relations, independent of physical proximity. A case in point is how London-based Roma migrants’ online references to Pakistani migrants’ involvement in human trafficking are generating ambivalent effects regarding trust between Roma transnational families and Pakistanis in the transnational social field.

In a similar vein, Juan Gamella studies the role of gender and family systems in fertility changes among Romanian Roma women residing in Spain through an investigation of the influence of living in a transnational social space under the social control of a transnational family. He addresses a timely and topical – and still under-researched – issue, as the presumed demographic contrast (‘irresponsibly high fertility’) of the stigmatized Roma migrant populations, both in their sending and receiving countries, especially from Romania and Bulgaria, have been a constant source of ‘ethno-demographic anxiety’ that fuels populist and nationalist sentiments. Gamella’s ethnographic case study of seven kinship networks leads to the claim that Romanian Roma who migrated to Spain experience a first fertility transition by practising universal, early and arranged marriage, but the birth of subsequent children

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is spaced and controlled, and childbearing ceases early. The paper shows how Roma migrant women use their agency to end their reproductive lives as early as the beginning of their 30s, when most women in the West are just entering into motherhood. The author argues that these women and their families' sustained residence in Spain, due to the intersecting influence of changing environmental and institutional conditions, is transforming the cost of childbearing, as well as income and preferences, thereby triggering a fertility decline. This fertility transition process should be seen as part of the complex cultural transformation of family lives in a transnational social field involving permanent online communication and the multi-layered influence of an emerging, more equalitarian gender system.

The article of Stefano Piemontese, Bálint-Ábel Bereményi and Silvia Carrasco (Part 2) explores the importance of social positioning in a contextually embedded environment of disadvantaged youth based on different lifecycles. The individual life paths challenge existing ideas about the correlation between the educational level of ethnic minorities and social mobility, and reflect the dynamics of structural constraints and individual agency. According to their multi-sited research, situational interplay shapes the interaction between spatial, educational and social im/mobility for young people growing up in a condition of poverty defined as 'youth transition.' In brief, the authors argue that the relation between formal education and social mobility is not straightforward because the role of individual decision-making in education is shaped by discrepancies that are created between institutionally defined paths and young people's actual educational choices. The paper highlights how temporal situations impact situational decision-making processes and individual migration trajectories, in which adulthood is processual. By reflecting on the limitations of traditional structuralist approaches it is argued that the educational and post-educational choices of young people who experience mobility are not defined by demographic life stages marked by specific events, but may be explained by 'critical moments' such as conjunctures of events and networks that cause young adults to continuously adopt their life trajectories.

Researchers of mobile lives have recently started to warn us against over-celebrating the unfettered transnational life and have drawn attention to the price or emotional cost of geographical mobility and living in a transnational family (Svasek, 2008; Limmer et al., 2010). Ethnographic encounters reveal feelings of loss, sadness and loneliness among translocal migrants (Németh, 2017; Durst, 2018 forthcoming).

When mobility is discussed, the importance of the interpretation of feelings, place and belonging should not be overlooked from attention. By focusing on the epistemic issues around place, Andreea Racles defines locality through the process of Roma self-identification, material attachment and belonging. In her contribution, based on reflections on Roma's place-making engagements from a trans-locality perspective (gathered partly during a symbolic walking tour with one of the research participants, a Roma woman from Rotoieni in Spain) she highlights the situational feeling of belonging, detached from material connotations of the subject's inhabited spaces or the localities considered as home. The paper explores how life abroad shapes people's understanding of belonging in relation to the towns and places they left (towns and marked places that were meaningful to them). Material attachment constitutes the main dimension in this analysis and the attributes that frame belonging

and the spatial attachment of communities. By deconstructing the concept of translocal subjectivity into material and emotional concepts, the author explains the engagement with places and people in terms of the physical proximity of migrant participants.

Giuseppe Beluschi-Fabeni (Part 2) covers another emotionally loaded theme, the transformation of funerary practices: places of burial, multi-sited funeral celebrations and the use of communication technologies. This symbolic ‘mortuary focus’ provides a better understanding of the values that shape the translational interactions in Korturare networks and the way these mould their mobility patterns. Besides ethnographic observations in Granada, Spain, Romania, England, and Italy and an examination of social media use, audio-visual materials and a sample of 69 deaths, this paper uses the example of funerals, as this shapes the mobility of relatives living abroad. The author provides vivid illustrations from multi-sited observations that are attached to data from Facebook and YouTube about events in Romania and as a diachronic extension of the rituals that occur between the place of death and the place of burial. The paper shows the increasing role of technology in mobility patterns and explains the mediating role of mortuary practices, as these amplify the presence of and social control exerted by the Korturare national community. As concluded, the international visibilization of funeral rituals in Romania reduces the perception of distance and amplifies the visibility (and absence) of attendees and their ritual performances and even creates greater social pressure on individuals to travel to Romania to attend events in person.

### *The Spatial and Social Mobility Nexus*

One overarching theme in this issue is the investigation of the link between spatial and social mobility. This exploration can be linked to the migration–social change nexus, a popular field of analysis in migration studies. A few years ago, the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (JEMS), one of the leading vehicles for migration research, devoted a thematic issue to theories of migration and social change. The starting point of the collected works was that migration needs to be viewed as a process that forms an ‘integral part of broader social transformations, but which also has its own internal dynamics, and which shapes social transformation in its own right’ (Van Hear, 2010: 1531). Linked to this perspective on theoretical embeddedness, a few authors in this double issue explore the entanglements between spatial and social mobility using ethnographic methods. What is common to their approach is that they interpret social mobility as it is lived and experienced by mobile subjects, their protagonists, not in traditional sociological terms.

From an analysis of the life stories of two Romanian women living in Italy, Ana Ivasiuc argues that their spatial moves are inscribed in their projects of social mobility which implicate their families on a transnational and transgenerational scale. Using her interlocutors’ life history narratives, Ivasiuc aims to contribute to the conversation about the concept of the ‘autonomy of migration’ (De Genova, 2010). According to this thesis, migration is an autonomous and subversive social movement, challenging the very categories upon which state power and the global capitalist order are predicated. By attempting to nuance this thesis with its over-celebrated appraisal of the

agency of mobile social actors, and avoid the ‘romanticisation of Roma mobility as inherently subversive,’ she persuades the reader about the ambivalence of migrants’ subjective practices (cf. Mezzadra, 2011). The author draws attention to the need for contextualization involving the careful analysis of the intersection between spatial and social mobility through the lens of transnational and transgenerational projects in which protagonists reinvest their (im)mobility with meaning: one evades the *campi nomadi* (nomad camp), while the other uses it as an economic strategy leading to her family’s social mobility.

Stefania Pontrandolfo critically reflects on sociological assumptions concerning the processes of social transformation in the migration context. She uses ethnographic cases to illustrate how status is shaped by the interplay of migrants’ desires and motivations, local reception policies, and levels of anti-Gypsyism experienced by these migrants. As she critically states, deep-rooted forms of anti-Gypsyism impede these processes of re-stratification while they may contribute to a new fissure between Roma returnees and those who stay behind, or are not able to accumulate enough material capital. By exploring the assertion of new stratifications both in Romania and in Italy, she explains the social, cultural and political resistance that hampers the structural social re-stratification of Roma in these countries, even if this is independent of material or educational resources. Following the concerns about visibility, Pontrandolfo concludes that improvements in living conditions or in terms of the desegregation of poor Roma do not challenge the stereotypes that the majority population projects on these ethnic migrants.

Durst’s article (Part 2) departs from the theoretical vantage point that migration should be seen as part of social transformation (Castles, 2010). In current times, a significant part of the societal change or social transformation that migration processes are embedded in involves the restructuring of the global labour market in highly developed countries through new employment practices such as subcontracting, temporary employment, and casual work. Closely linked to these changes are the expansion of informal segments of the economy and the ‘informalization’ of the formal low-wage labour market (Scott, 2017). Durst argues that one essential role that economically backward regions in Hungary play in this socially transformed global labour market is providing a cheap, flexible and extendable labour force, mainly comprised of members of those social groupings – among them Roma of precarious social position – who are considered superfluous and the ‘reserve army of the labour force’ in their home society. Additionally, she demonstrates how these seemingly resourceless transnational migrants are inventively using almost the only capital they have at their disposal: their kinship network as a resource and ‘rumour publics’ (Harney, 2006) as a strategy to manoeuvre under political and economic uncertainty and unequal circumstances of domination in the ‘one-world capitalism’ (Hann and Hart, 2011) to pursue a better life, or what they consider socio-economic mobility.

Engaged in multi-sited ethnographic research within a global political economic framework, the paper explores the multidirectional transnational movement of precarious groupings from northern Hungary towards some EU member states as EU citizens, and to Canada as asylum-seekers. In so doing, it claims that these movements would better be described using the term *recurrent mobility* than the well-established category of circular migration, as is regularly applied to describe the spatially mobile

money-making practices of Roma. It also asks how geographical and social mobility are entangled mutually and with broader economic, social and political forces.

Contributing to our knowledge about the migration–development/social change nexus, László Fosztó and Stefania Toma’s paper (Part 2) focuses on two home communities of Romanian migrants, with the aim of explaining the effect of migration on the sending localities. The authors analyse one segment of the migration-social transformation nexus: the influence of local social contexts, and particularly the social distance between different groups in two ethnically mixed localities in Romania. Applying a mixed methodology approach (combining qualitative methods with ethnographic community studies), they claim that the diverging local development paths are due to migration. The authors use the concept of social distance as a way to understand prejudice and reveal how local interethnic relations have an impact not only on the different migration paths of local migrants, but also on the local development induced by migration. Toma and Fosztó claim that a better understanding of local interethnic patterns and the dynamic of social distance would help to create more effective local policies.

### *Migration as a Form of Resistance*

While many scholars have documented how Central and Eastern European Roma migrants became the target of national securitization policies, relatively few researchers have concentrated on analyzing the role of integration policies played in Roma mobilities in many European countries. Since the early 1990s, the beginning of the period of the ‘Europeanization of the Roma problem’ (Van Baar, 2014; Vermeesh 2012), public policies targeting so-called ‘problematic,’ ‘hard-to-integrate’ Roma migrants in a disadvantaged socioeconomic position started to be implemented in Western European countries to help them manage the allegedly vast influx of Roma migrants from East European post-socialist countries. Following the infamous expulsion of Roma from France in 2009 and 2010, and the ethnic registration of Roma and deportations in Italy, the European Commission launched its Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011. This required EU member states to design programs to promote Roma integration in education, employment, housing and health (Matras, 2015, cited by Asztalos Morell et al., 2018).

As illustrated in some of the case studies in this volume (see Clavé-Mercier and Olivera, Daniele et al., and Kostka), these so-called ‘inclusion projects,’ or ‘contractual integration’ policies were motivated in almost all European countries by an ‘a priori definition of the “problematic population” that is to be integrated: the Roma’ (Clavé-Mercier and Olivera, this volume).

Anthropologists, in exploring the way oppressed and underprivileged social groups use their agency in situations of domination and interplay with structural constraints, often turn to resistance theories (cf. Scott, 1991). Resistance theories demonstrate how individuals negotiate and struggle with structural forces and create meanings of their own from interactions with those in power.

One of the most valuable contributions on integration policies, written by Alexandra Clavé-Mercier and Martin Olivera, reflects on the unintended consequences of inclusion practices and hidden forms of resistance among Roma

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migrants against bureaucratic measures. Their paper is based on two case studies of Roma families who migrated from Arad (Romania) and Alba (Bulgaria) to French cities. These families have been subjected to classification and targeted integration measures and are forced to use different identity strategies to cope with contradictory expectations resulting from the integration policies of the host country. As the analysis presents, many of these newcomers, who are defined by the logic of the use of singular Roma identities in France, secure their integration and autonomy even in unfavourable circumstances through several forms of resistance. By using new interpretations of the concept introduced by Scott (1991), this paper illustrates the value of informality and ‘productive misunderstandings’ in the case of the *effective integration* processes that take place in strongly binding contexts. Despite the exclusionary policies surrounding the ‘inclusion’ projects, Roma migrants, indeed, manage to consolidate their administrative situations, as well as achieve local integration in terms of housing and economic activities – but as the authors show, they do it in their own way.

As in France, Roma migration from Eastern Europe to Italy has also been one of the most heated political topics and biggest perceived threats to native citizens’ safety, especially in major cities. At the same time, in parallel with the situation in France, and also thanks to the European Union’s development projects that address Roma poverty, Roma migrants have become the target of ad hoc inclusionary policies. Ulderico Daniele, Stefano Pasta and Greta Persico’s article (Part 2) describes the policy development and demise of Italian nomad camps during the last ten years, from the time of the ‘Nomad Emergency’ in 2007 until the present-day dismantling of the system. By focusing on Romanian Roma migrants who live in two Italian cities, Milan and Rome, the authors show that Roma migrants have managed to develop relative autonomy and resistance, even in the most hostile environments of the *campi nomadi*. They argue, however, that despite the dismantling of the nomad camp system and the opening up of opportunities for better housing conditions, Roma migrant families still seem to be confined to marginalized areas in both towns. Although the discriminative and stigmatizing nomad camp system has ceased to exist, Roma migrants’ citizenship and therefore social position has become fragmented and insecure.

Poverty, a core contextual component of several contributions, plays a central role in the paper by Joanna Kostka that emphasizes the importance of the visibility of migrants framed in terms of poverty, and challenges the assumptions about westward Roma mobility by illustrating the situation of Romanian migrants in Poland. Through describing the development of exclusionary Polish policies against Roma migrants and how these contribute to violations of legal rights, the author explains how the guidelines of ‘behaviour control’ justify and legitimize the securitisation measures of officials and care workers who work with migrants living in precarity. She describes the practices of daily monitoring and shows us how neoliberal values shape social service management and the development of all aspects of social inequality. By using post-Marxist arguments, Kostka defines current controlling practices as ‘chronic punishment’ that are aimed, in place of the pressing need for integration processes, at securing the privileges and benefits of a corporate elite.

In summary, the contributions to this collected volume highlight how empirical studies can challenge existing conceptual approaches to both migration and Romani studies when the aim is to understand specific phenomena related to migration and the transnational mobility of Roma. Embedded in four different theoretical vantage points, this collection of empirically grounded studies highlights how certain interdisciplinary approaches such as transnationalism, the transnational social field, the link between spatial and social mobility, bordering and resistance can be adopted to analyse any social phenomena considered as Roma mobility. While we do not wish to reject the relevance of ethnicity in current research about Roma migrants, we stress the importance of situational, contextualized and historicized approaches and the risks of the application of normative social connotations with regard to ethnic deprivation, precarity, and identity politics that should be treated more critically in future empirical research.

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**PATRICK CIASCHI\***

**Around and Around: The Politics of Mobility in Everyday Lives of Roma in current day Hungary**

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\* [ciasp191@newschool.edu] (Ph.D. Candidate, New School for Social Research, New York, USA)

### **Abstract**

Asylum-seeking and significant out-migration have been the response of many Roma communities who continue to face multiple insecurities in their everyday lives, leaving them to their own survival devices. This work seeks to understand how we approach and categorize realities of such internal and cross-border displacements of Roma in current day Hungary. Drawing from an interdisciplinary field of mobilities and borders scholarship, this paper advances the concept of border regimes to approach intersecting regimes of movement control and the dynamics of mobility and enclosure at local and transnational levels. This lens is translated in the case of protracted Roma family evictions, and their struggles with an externalized border regime in the city of Miskolc, Hungary. Fieldwork accounts and snapshots, deriving from on-going ethnographic research in the city's 'Numbered Streets', Roma-populated, residential neighborhood will provide the premises for empirical investigation.

*Keywords: border regimes; mobility and enclosure; location of dispersion; evictions; ETA; Miskolc.*

*'Where do you think that one is going?' 'Lyukó!' He said, replying to my question.*

*Then his sister, pointing at the fading jet stream running perpendicular to the first one, said*

*'That one is going to Budapest!'*

*'Noooo!' He replied, tossing freshly ripped grass in the air.*

*Outraged. 'That one is going to Canada!'*

*The sky reveals the tell-tales that only children can envision.*

## **1. Introductions**

While recent works yield rich empirical contributions to the study of Roma cross-border migration networks (see: Vidra, 2013) and the problematization and racialization of Roma migration (see: De Genova and Yildiz, 2017), this paper proposes a study of border regime formation through the experiential scale, attentive to the ways Roma encounter extended bordering practices across various substrates of governance. A turn to border regimes – social institutions that function to both expedite and impede the movements of goods, ideas, and people along a continuum of uneven status distribution – can approximate emergent and latent powers that condition and manage the everyday of Roma mobilities. While most works on regimes of border control emphasize the spatial or topological effects of bordering practices, my intent – through a micro-analytical entry point – is to comprehend the banal and temporal aspects of border regimes that arise in the process of mobility-enclosure dynamics (Cunningham and Heyman, 2004). This is not an analysis of deportations, detentions, or encampments, but on the personal, affective and normalizing effects regimes of border control are experienced and lived through by individuals. A focus on border *regimes* accounts for changing political environments, and can elucidate how borders are in fact imbued with meaning by and concerning a plethora of actors, institutions, norms, ideas and practices that construct partial and quasi-coherent fields of mobility management.

Discerning border regimes, particularly in studies of Roma migration and displacement, can lead to more attuned understandings of subject formations that reflect the complexity of migration and border security today. To do so, my work is intrinsically tied to and informed by experiences, trajectories and possibilities of migration, with reflection upon the macro- and micro-structures in place that either impede or attempt to control levels of mobility. This paper sets out to study the interstices of border regime formation and how they unfold in Roma-populated communities undergoing out-migration and displacement in current day Hungary. Informed by informal interviews and participant observation conducted since the spring of 2016 within the 'Numbered Streets' residential neighborhood in the city of Miskolc, I aim to provide a different epistemological and ontological entry point into debates on Roma migration. I build from what anthropologist Julie Y. Chu (2011) calls the 'location of dispersion' as starting point and field site for multiple mobilities, and forms of emplacement and displacement, that mark the intersections for regimes of border control. Such a concept disrupts the typical migration spatial analytic that bisects migratory journeys between an 'origin' and a 'destination', and rethinks the idea of permanent settlement in the process of cross-border movement.

The paper will begin with a literature review of current work on Roma migration and mobility, with a focus on what is occluded in research that affords primacy to network and security objects of analyses for explaining Roma migration and mobility. To complement these works, I introduce the dynamics of mobility and enclosure applied through the case of the ‘Numbered Streets’ residential settlement in the city of Miskolc, Hungary. Of pertinence here is the overlapping of two border regimes: the advancement of the new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) profiling mechanism by the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), and the inner workings of the city’s protracted eviction campaign of Roma populated neighborhoods. Engagement with how these regimes have profound effects on migration knowledge sets, how new border mechanisms are navigated and lived within by Numbered Streets inhabitants will comprise the final section of the paper. The concluding section will synthesize the various analyses teased out of the application of the concept, as well as turn to the prospect of refinement of this research agenda for furthering empirical work.

## *2. Literature Review*

Since EU enlargement and the extension of EU citizenship to Central and Eastern European member states, there has been a documented increase in xenophobic anti-Roma sentiment (FRA, 2009; Sigona and Trehan, 2009), as well as a correlated rise in the problematization of Roma who migrate or Roma as *a priori* migrants.

Much scholarly work has been attentive to the ways Roma are *made* into irregular migrants. The predominant focus of critical scholarship has been on the connection between speech acts that frame Roma migration *cum* national security threats, and a correlative economy of racialized imageries. Cross-border policing of Romanian and Bulgarian Romani nationals, as well as the criminalization of Roma encampments in Italy<sup>1</sup> and France<sup>2</sup> since EU enlargement, have been paradigmatic examples of what Angéla Kócze (2017) has aptly termed the ‘racialized regime of representation’ of Roma mobilities. These representations circulate ‘Romaphobic’ imageries of Roma as ‘nomads’, ‘excessively mobile’, and welfare dependent ‘beggars’ and ‘criminals’ who migrate around the EU (van Baar, 2011; Parker, 2012; Pusca, 2010; Picker, 2010; Sardelic, 2014). These imageries are reproduced to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate mobile classes, and regular and irregular forms of migration.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, as these works argue, a triaged and unequal distribution of the right to ‘freedom of movement’ across racial and class divisions constitutes Roma as comprising an ‘un/free labour’ class (De Genova and Yildiz, 2017).

<sup>1</sup> Such as the de-legitimation of Kosovar Roma refugees in the 90s as ‘nomads’ (Sigona, 2005) and the criminalization of Roma populated encampments and the policing of Romanian nationals with the passing of the ‘Nomad Emergency Decree’ in 2008, has been emblematic of the Italian government’s treatment of Roma (Hepworth, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> In France, former President Sarkozy’s ‘discours de Grenoble’ and his call to dismantle unauthorized ‘savage camps’ provided fodder for expulsions of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma nationals. State programs of selective assimilation were also inaugurated as civilizing spaces for migrants (i.e. ‘les villages d’inclusion’) (see: Bessone et al., 2013), to sort between economically viable versus unviable integration candidates, while also targeting *gens du voyage* and French citizenries as a ‘new truancy problem’ and thus internal enemies of French republicanism and public order (Guild and Carrera, 2013).

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The aforementioned works pull predominantly from Foucauldian and discursive analyses of power and security, providing a top-down perspective (statist, univocal gaze) of how Roma migrants are produced as problematic moving subjects. Meanwhile, ethnographic and empirically grounded studies of chain migration of Roma communities along the East-West conjecture continue to illustrate the polyvocal and “mixed” - both economic (read labour) and political (read asylum seeking) - factors for Roma migration (Grill 2012; Vidra 2013; Durst 2013). While cognizant of the inequalities of migration, these works place an emphasis on how Roma migration networks function and are sustained over time. Motivations for leaving home countries, and the allures of upward mobility, are gleaned to construct representations of entire migratory processes. In doing so, and by practicing multi-sited methodologies of ‘following’ their research subjects, these researchers have shed light on how certain normative categorizations of migration used to depict Roma migrants are conceptually inadequate for the sociological conveyance of how networks and social ties across borders are formed and cultures of migration sustained.

Running in parallel and in conjunction with these works, this paper aims to comprehend the experiences and affects that border regimes produce. Security discourses that crystallize Roma migration as racialized objects of state power do exemplify the normalized apartheid conditions that Roma populations continue to endure; however, such an analytical position also homogenizes mobility as a realization of the emancipated myth of full EU citizenship that Roma must practice autonomously to access those rights (Aradau et al., 2009; 2010; De Genova and Yildiz, 2017) and experiences of cross-border migration. Furthermore, such an approach overprivileges a spatial conception of intra-EU border politics: the site of spatial segregation and the site of nation-state border crossings.

Pulling from debates in critical border and mobility studies, this paper presents border regimes as indeterminate structures that are made and re-made according to processes of both mobility and enclosure (Cresswell, 2010; Cunningham and Heyman, 2004). Articulated eloquently by Cunningham and Heyman (2004), the dialectical process of mobility and enclosure captures the vacillating quality of contemporary border politics. For analytical purposes, Cunningham and Heyman (2004) argue that enclosure is a social process that binds, or limits the movement of goods, ideas and people, while mobility enables and propels these movements (ibid. 293). The ‘border’, therefore, is not a fixed, ahistorical site of inclusivity or exclusivity, but a regime. Mobility theorists Glick-Schiller and Salazar (2013) propose a shift to the language of regimes because it ‘call[s] attention to the role both of individual states and of changing international regulatory and surveillance administrations that affect individual mobility’ and thus ‘*normalize* the movements of some travelers while criminalizing and entrapping the ventures of others’ (2013: 189, italics my own). Regimes of transnational border control inevitably produce and reproduce normalized inequalities of mobility and, by extension, variegated border effects. Borders are politicized on a continuum between mobility and enclosure. Furthermore, they are social institutions constantly renegotiated to differentially include based on prevailing cultural, economic, and social norms and values (Mezzadra and Nielson, 2011; 2013). From a spatial perspective, borders need to be rethought as biopolitical (global political economy - productive) and not solely as geopolitical (international state system - static) boundaries (see: Parker et al., 2009;

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Vaughn-Williams, 2009) and as sites of multiple visualities and effects (Rumford, 2006; Johnson et al., 2011). Temporally, the elasticity of border effects and their uneven distribution across status type have, has variegated, protracted and prolonged impacts on the lived conditions of migrants across divergent legal statuses (De Genova, 2002; 2010; Willen, 2007a; 2007b; Giordano, 2014). Additionally, a temporal lens also allows us to think of the politics of waiting and synchronous subject positions of the passive, feminine and docile genuine refugee in refugee camps, or the psycho-somatic effects of incarceration that escaping subjects endure (Bissell, 2007; Conlon, 2011; McNevin and Missbach, *forthcoming*).

For recent approaches to Roma migration, multi-perspectival lenses have prompted researchers to think through the more ‘unseen’ governmentalities of legibility. Advanced functions of virtual identification and biometric profiling now make up technologies of ‘dataveillance’ to sort deserving and undeserving subjects (see: Nagy and Oude-Breuil, 2015). Other researchers have begun to look at the politics of reclamation and counter-membership occurring in policed encampments populated by Roma inhabitants (Sigona, 2015). These approaches give us a tiered perspective on the complexity of governmentalities, adding breadth and scope to analyses of moving subjects, including the viewpoints of migrants, or migrants-to-be themselves. Reminding us of how Barak Kalir (2013) argues that studies of mobility would do well to import border perspectives through ‘the eyes of those involved in them’.

What is not conveyed in the approaches to Roma migration above is how simultaneous change in or intensifications of border regimes produce contingent expectations on mobilized or immobilized subjects in their everyday lives. By focusing on realities of extended border regime effects in sites, far from geopolitical borders, I wish to showcase how the dynamics of mobility and enclosure function simultaneously within the everyday. Various aspects of everyday life are highlighted to accentuate the contradictions that traverse the constant process of mobility and enclosure.

### *3. Case & Context*

To approach the politics of border regimes and Roma mobility, my research has taken me to the Northeastern Hungarian city of Miskolc. There are two factors of social and political inquiry that make Miskolc a critical site of research on Roma mobility and border regimes: the events of on-going displacements of Roma neighbourhoods, as well as the phenomenon of significant out-migration and asylum seeking of Roma families and households.

The reality of Roma forced evictions, resettlements and displacements has been an on-going, pan-historical period political reality in the city of Miskolc (Lengyel, 2009). The ethnification of property relations between Roma and non-Roma has been a politicized issue in the city and the region more broadly during the post-socialist period (Havasi, 2013; Ladányi and Szélnyi, 2006; Ladányi and Virág, 2009). Recently, in 2014, the city’s local government began a city-wide ‘slum’ (*nyomortelep*) eviction and eradication campaign to rid the city of settlements over represented by Roma inhabitants (Rorke and Szendrey, 2016) and the socially subsidized housing stock, more generally. ‘Slum’ neighborhoods slated for or policed for eviction, have been discursively constructed as hotbeds of crime, with disorderly

(*rendetlen*) tenants who have incurred too much debt (*tartozás*), lacking fences or clean yards. At the center of this campaign is the ‘Numbered Streets’ residential neighborhood.

Marches and anti-eviction demonstrations, part of the ‘We are staying in Miskolc!’ (*Miskolcon Maradunk!*) campaign, were organized by the Roma National Self Government and local activist groups in solidarity with the residents of the Numbered Streets. Additionally, civil rights organizations such as the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ) and the National Minorities Equal Rights Authority (NEKI) launched a lawsuit against the city for denying alternative housing provisions and have had a presence in the neighborhood through the local Roma National Self-Government. International attention from journalists, lawyers and human rights activists, as well as transnational actors such as the U.S. Department of State, the American Ambassador to Hungary, and the OSCE’s Office of Democratic Institutes and Human Rights (ODIHR) have all, to varying degrees, been present within the neighborhood and have spoken out against the eviction proceedings. International pressure has not halted the evictions outright, but rather changed the language and tactics of eviction and relocation of the residents.

The ‘Numbered Streets’ settlement was built by the state in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and used as housing units for labor migrants and steel factory workers during the socialist period. On the Western periphery of the settlement is the city’s Olympic sized football stadium project, which, beginning in 2015, received large quantities of national government funding to enlarge and rebuild. As a result, several of the streets were taken over, the residents evicted and the units demolished, all in the name of what Prime Minister Orbán Viktor calls the rebuilding of Hungarian ‘self-esteem’ (*önbecsilés*) (Boon, 2016). At the other edge of the neighborhood lie the Order of Malta Hungarian Charity Service<sup>4</sup> (MMSZ) offices, a humanitarian aid organization that has been granted *de facto* authority in the neighborhood by the local government’s mayor’s office. Their purpose is to build ‘community’ and to oversee an ‘integration’ and social housing project funded by European Union territorial rehabilitation and social cohesion funding (TÁMOP). While direct evictions have been curtailed, the protracted status of housing insecurity and uncertainty whether the social housing project will succeed or impeded by political agendas is still very much a part of the inhabitants’ everyday life.

Cutting through these local political issues, is the reality of significant out-migration and asylum seeking, or what Zsuzsa Vidra (2013) calls ‘cultures of migration’ within the Roma communities of Miskolc. While not causally linked with the eviction proceedings ‘per se’, many Roma families have left Miskolc due to housing and labor precarity, with a significant number of families seeking asylum in Canada. Over the past decade, however, the Canadian external border regime has isolated the city of Miskolc as an origin of ‘bogus refugee’ claimants (CBSA, 2012). In 2007, 34 claims were made, whereas by 2010 the asylum applications spiked to 2,298 (Tóth, 2013). Between 2009 (one year after visa requirements were first lifted for Hungarian nationals due to the country’s accession to Schengen and the EU) and 2012, roughly 9,000 Hungarian Roma sought asylum in Canada (Tóth, 2010; Vidra, 2013).

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<sup>4</sup> Hereafter: MMSZ.

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Rather than instate the interdiction technique of visa requirements, which set a bad precedent with Czech nationals in 2009 (Salter and Mutlu, 2011), alternative methods of deterrence have been continuously adopted. During the winter of 2012, the Canadian government funded a billboard and radio campaign in and around Roma populated communities in Miskolc warning any Roma potentially seeking asylum in Canada that their claims would be swiftly rejected. Additionally, the Canadian government instituted a Designated Country of Origin (DCO) list defining and naming ‘safe’ countries, thereby segmenting the possibility of legitimate refugee claims. As a consequence, many were deported back to Hungary, and in 2013, a year after the reforms were introduced, the number of asylum claims was ‘7... down 98 per cent from 412 in the same period a year earlier’ and deemed a ‘success’ by the then Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Jason Kenney: the ability to keep out ‘bogus’ refugee claimants (CIC, 2013). With the reforms to the Canadian refugee regime, many have either been deported or ‘voluntarily returned’<sup>5</sup> to Miskolc since. Between 2012 and 2016, 6,942 Hungarian nationals were ‘removed’ from Canada – 3.4 people were removed for every person accepted (McClearn, 2017).

What the data of Roma migrating to Canada does not tell us about is the experiences of those who are turned away at airports within the EU due to the newly instituted and required Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA)<sup>6</sup> formally introduced by the CBSA. It is the latest biometric interdiction technique with the purpose of collecting vital information pertaining to the travelling individual’s financial resources, criminal record, health record, and intentions upon arrival in Canada. The ETA is part of a bilateral agreement put in place between the United States and Canada in 2011, fully implemented in 2017 on the CBSA’s front. An email and credit card are necessary to purchase and receive the ETA, presenting multiple barriers to access and receiving the form. Earlier iterations of the form, from 2015 until early 2017, did not offer Hungarian instruction sheets, which presented difficulties to complete without the assistance of an English language speaker.

While difficult to empirically attribute airport boarding queue removals to the ETA mechanism alone, these are not isolated cases. More generally, experiences of EU citizens, with visa free travel authorization to Canada and the U.S., unable to board their flights accentuates a recent shift in border interdiction cartography that at least places Hungarian nationals, of a particular socio-economic and ethnic background, as marginalized within the formal routes of travel. Within the Numbered Streets, the ETA and the non-linearity of cross-border migration, is a reality that takes shape in the neighborhood and comes across in how individuals speak of migratory possibilities.

This phenomenon of significant out-migration of Hungarian Roma communities to Canada, has been studied from the angle of asylum seeker experiences enduring the various failures associated with return migration, home sickness and the deep family ties that render cross-border migration a difficult task (Durst, 2013; Vidra and Virág, 2013). Legal theorists have also criticized the

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<sup>5</sup> Voluntary return was a program put into motion by the International Organization on Migration (IOM) to ensure the ‘reintegration’ – loosely defined – of failed asylum seekers in their countries of origin by paying their return flights home and a payoff of 500-2000 CDN (based on size of family and number of children) (Rehaag et al., 2015). This program was cancelled in 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Referred to in Hungarian as the *beutazási engedély*.

institutional mechanisms of the Canadian refugee regime with its racial, and corrupt underpinnings (Beaudoin, Danch and Rehaag, 2015; Kernerman, 2008; Levine-Rasky et al., 2014; Macklin, 2013; Tóth, 2010; 2013). Yet, what necessitates further elucidation are the conceptual worlds that individuals build within a changing border regime: where new interdiction techniques, migration policies and security measures, alter the ways in which mobilities are curbed, expedited and created.

The Numbered Streets is a space of contradictory, and paradoxical relations: emblematic of slow processes of eviction and domicile, alongside the promise of community rehabilitation and integration programs, with a sustained economy of out-migration to Canada. By taking these divergent forms of mobility management – the reality of eviction and the management of out-migration – as a site of grounded research, I do not see the Numbered Streets as a site of migration ‘origin’, nor as a place of spatial segregation, but rather as a junction or ‘location of dispersion’ (Chu, 2011). By seeing the Numbered Streets as a location of dispersion, whereby multiple forces are inhibiting, propelling and ordering the mobility of Roma, I place emphasis on the narratives and experiences of circulation and how they inform us on the changing mobility management context at a more macro-level.

#### *4. Methodology & Positionality*

This paper draws on data collected from fieldwork conducted over the course of 18 months. Alongside participant observation, I have conducted informal in-depth biographical interviews with Roma inhabitants of the Numbered Streets neighborhood in the Northeastern Hungarian city of Miskolc. Portions of these interviews and observations compose the field sights and empirical backbone of this article. The snapshots are to serve as windows into individual connections within a field of mobility and border regimes.

Spurred by a political and epistemic interest in the lived experiences of deportation, preliminary visits to Northeastern Hungary began in 2014 and 2015. Informal meetings were coordinated by Roma and non-Roma civil societal organizations involved in the city of Miskolc and in its outer townships. These networks offered me initial contact, and granted me audience, with families around the city, but also in the Numbered Streets neighborhood. Research focus on the politics of the Numbered Streets began due to my initial analysis of the overlapping complexities of the neighborhood itself: on-going spatial workings of intra-city segregation, the temporality of waiting and eviction, the micro-histories of displacement and the nexus between development and security discourses with regards to Roma related integration programming and associational groupings that vie for power within a given space.

My non-native Magyariness pegged me immediately as an outsider, especially when I was introduced, or introduced myself, as a ‘Canadian researcher’. This designation became both barrier and access point of research. Experiences and memories of my interlocutors’ lives in Toronto were readily shared and granted windows for which I could see differentiations made between personal desires, livelihoods, expectations, and conceptions of ‘the good life’ attributed to the process of becoming migrant. Presenting myself as ‘Canadian’ also pitted me as a *de facto* immigration expert and thus resource with presumed political capital to exert pressure

on the Canadian government to reverse deportation verdicts, or to sponsor the claims of interlocutors or relatives of interlocutors themselves. These, particularly during early fieldwork encounters, presented challenges, but also ushered in reflections on how individual understandings and expectations with regards to my presence in the neighborhood and the city placed me in the web or economy of the migration industry. A measure that is virtually unavoidable in this type of research.

I lived a 10-minute walk away from the Numbered Streets, and went to the neighborhood daily by foot. Early days were spent re-acquainting myself with families I had met during earlier visits, and going door-to-door to meet new residents. During a second phase of fieldwork, I began to meet more frequently with social workers at the humanitarian aid organization the Order of Malta (MMSZ). Taking part in work performed by the community work program, and helping the laborers (all employees are residents of the neighborhood) with various tasks: repair and renovate housing units under the ownership of the Order of Malta, cut grass around the neighborhood, lay brick to board up vacant housing units, and pick up garbage, and various other tasks. Daily coffee chats, or gossip (*pletykázás*) meetings, with mainly the elderly and the unemployed during the day took up my afternoons, sometimes into the evenings when their spouses arrived home from work.

In the snapshots below, I highlight how preparations to move abroad are made, yet never materialize; how confusion, imperceptions, and uncertainties on how to navigate new border regulations and controls, capture the frailty of networks individuals enter or choose to disengage from; and how processes of waiting produce certain forms of action, inaction and adaptation. Elongations, unknowns, and processes of waiting, are very much a part of the politics of mobility. They are underanalyzed social contexts in literature concerning the politics of inequalities in EU and trans-Atlantic Roma migration and in studies on the changing dynamics of border regimes, writ large. I present them in an anecdotal manner to convey their experiences *in situ* and real time, as extensions of field notes. Demographically, my interlocutors ranged in age, employment status, and gender. All names presented in this article are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors. Some interviews were recorded, but most were written down in my notebook.

## *5. The Onflow of Indeterminacy: Migration and Displacement in ‘The Numbered Streets’*

### *5.1 Circulation within the streets*

Lajos arrives and plops himself on the crate beside us. Exhausted and reeking of sweat and petrol, he pulls out a plastic bag from his backpack full of cherries and hands them over to Ágnes, his wife. With his head cradled in his hands, he doubles over from an excruciating headache. Visibly in pain, he struggles to take off his shoes and leans back beneath the shadows that cover us from the searching sun. He was outside working near the Szinva River<sup>7</sup> with a string trimmer for well over 10 hours. Now, withdrawn under the walnut tree in their backyard, he can relax. Apart from his

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<sup>7</sup> A river that cuts through the city of Miskolc.

workman's overalls, his face scarred, sunken, layered with residual coats of gasoline permanently mark him as an employee of the public works<sup>8</sup> program. A job that adds a decade or so to his image. After gathering himself he begins chatting about the Euro Cup and we laugh at how 'Orbán will gain 10 kilos,' when the Hungarians beat the Austrians later this week. Ágnes comes back out with a bucket of water for the cherries and dumps them for us to pick through and clean, then proceeds to seat herself and roll some Ukrainian tobacco.

At this point, I had known Ágnes and Lajos for several months. This is how we spent our afternoons a couple of times a week during the spring and summer of 2016. Topics of conversation ranged from football, news from the Serbian–Hungarian border, the fear of 'refugee terrorists', neighborhood gossip and life in Canada. Like many others in the Numbered Streets, Ágnes and Lajos became housing tenants without rights (*jogcím nélküliek*) when their housing contract was not renewed, rendering them tenants liable for eviction.

At the beginning of September 2016, news pertaining to new MMSZ and MIK<sup>9</sup> housing units hit the Numbered Streets around the same time Lajos and Ágnes received bailiff papers notifying them of their impending eviction. This news presented both problem and solution for Ágnes and her family. I arrived at her place to speak with her son Jenő, but he had yet to arrive home. Ágnes put on a pot of coffee, came back out and handed me an eviction letter asking her, the tenant, to vacate the lot in 30 days' time. This, to Ágnes, became a possible rite of passage to Canada. With the date written, Ágnes flicks the paper in the air telling me that this is exactly what the Canadian government wants and needs to discern who is a genuine versus illegitimate refugee. She went on to say that it is 'fresh' (*friss*) denoting its currency and value. Earlier in the day, she brought the letter to the Order of Malta office and spoke with the director to have their eviction halted and see if they could secure a renewed housing unit from the Order of Malta's resettlement program, upon qualification. The director, however, apparently could not grant them any assurance leaving them with a waiting period.

One month later, Ágnes and Lajos were evicted from their house on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The walnut tree where they had sought refuge during sweltering summer heat waves, has long been cut down; windows and the front door, and furniture have become firewood reserves for the brutal winter. On that day, all they took with them was their clothing, stuffed into grocery bags, and the stroller for their newborn. Unable to move in with extended family a couple streets over, due to overcrowded living situations, they spent a few days in a small shelter part of a church in the nearby Vasgyár district. During this time, they begged the MMSZ to move them back into their house, but there was nothing the organization could do. Due to the local government's 'back and forth game' (*csapda játék*) with the MMSZ leadership, new housing units had not been granted to the humanitarian organization. Instead, Ágnes and her family were moved into a small summer kitchen (*nyári konyha*), fixed up in one of the residents' backyards. However, the rent was steep, and tensions quickly

<sup>8</sup> The mass public employer of lower income earners in the Hungarian economy. They work as street cleaners, as well as city and town landscapers.

<sup>9</sup> The local housing agency overseeing the maintenance, provisioning and asset administration of social housing in the city.

began to rise with the main tenant. According to Ágnes, the resident did not give them any personal space, no room to store anything, and the tenant constantly policed the orderliness and cleanliness of the small room, for which they paid five times the amount in rent compared to their initial housing unit.

After roughly half a year living in the summer kitchen, they moved one street over and into a small makeshift unit (*mellékkamra*). Despite renting the unit from another resident, MMSZ social workers were concerned that such a move would make them illegal residents (*önfoglalók* and *önkéntesek*) in the eyes of the local government. While it has turned out that their arrangement is allowed, in the span of eight months, Ági and her family went from living in an orderly (*rendes*) home to a 'here and there' (*össze-vissza*) mode of living within a three-block radius. 'All we can do is wait', she said. 'The MMSZ cannot help us, if we move back in though. Every time I pass the house now, my heart aches. We want to return, but if we do, we cannot receive a new contract', she explained to me, using some of the other families as examples. 'All we can do is wait'.

'Canada', as an imagined and a material place of success, income and work, is very much engrained in the everyday order of things of the Numbered Streets settlement. In Ágnes' life, especially. Her eldest daughter and son received refugee status in Canada two years ago, with her other son, Jenő, leaving for Toronto during the fall of 2016. Unemployed, and formerly part of the Order of Malta work crew, Ágnes receives welfare and childcare payments every month, as well as occasional remittances from her children in Canada through the local Western Union branch. Her kids have been pressuring her to move to Canada with the three little ones, a prospect she entertains on and off, about which I have spoken with her at length on numerous occasions. Her concerns rest with how such a move would divide the family, in many ways. Lajos earns more in income per month than other public works employees. His job is grueling, but claims to be paid well and does not wish to part from his work for the unknown instabilities of work abroad or processes of seeking asylum in Canada. He would much prefer finding manual labor somewhere in the EU. Furthermore, her extended family and sisters still live in the Numbered Streets, a place that became their home when her grandfather moved from the town of Sárospatak in the 1950s and 1960s to build apartment buildings found adjacent to the neighborhood.

The stop and start uncertainty that Ágnes' and Lajos' case reveals, is a thread of prolonged effects of banishment and anticipation. These elongated and variegated effects make-up 'spectrums of mobility' in Anne McNevin's terms (2014) and come to define a person's or a group's mobility over a lifetime. Spectrums, conjures the constitution of one's mobility by 'varying degrees of force and autonomy, subject to varying degrees of regulation and control, and experienced with varying degrees of risk, reward and hardship' (ibid.: 2014: 648). By highlighting the gradients of power that govern individual and group mobility, we can conceptualize how mobility regimes are multiple and function at various distances. Embroiled within the vacillating and oscillating reality of the city of Miskolc's eviction regime, also places them within a position vis-à-vis the Canadian external border regime as well.

Deferring an attempt to leave for Canada, despite having procured, what Ágnes has termed 'fresh' evidence by virtue of receiving an eviction order, is a decision that is considered and dropped constantly due to various motivations and impossibilities.

Some relatives and old neighbors, who are now awaiting refugee claims hearings (*tárgyalás*) or have received permanent residency in Canada, are passing along information about how all Numbered Streets residents will be eligible to receive refugee status if they come to Canada.<sup>10</sup> Yet others, who have attempted to travel to Canada in 2016 and 2017, have noticed that the ‘way is shut’ (*nem engedjük át*).

### 5.2 ‘The money all flowed away’

A few streets down, Laci and his wife Ibolya live with their two children and another on its way. Every time I attempt to visit them, no one is ever home. Unlike others in the neighborhood, their house is enclosed by thick and tall wooden stakes that line the one side of the property, tethered together by a long chain link fence that stretches to the back corner of his self-marked territory. The other side is a mix and match of aluminum and plastic siding placed one over the top of each other, and a door with their names scrawled under where the letter slot should be found. When I first met them a year ago, they lived on another street before their housing unit was taken over by the MMSZ for their office space. They were relocated in one of the newly renovated MMSZ housing units during the fall of 2016. Unlike their previous home, where Laci had set up a small knee high fence made of objects, and collected materials, this one seemed to have been made to last. This is a place for the kids to play, it is protected, and he can feel at peace leaving for work in the morning knowing that no unwanted strangers will be able to get in.

Laci, a tall, gregarious and hard-working man, held a year-long position with the community work program supervised by the MMSZ in the neighborhood. Now, he makes almost double working under the table for the rebuilding of the stadium, as well as from scavenging (*lomozni, horgyázni*). Day in and day out, he digs up gravel and dirt and old housing foundations of plots that used to mark the ends of the neighborhood he grew up in. While the possibility to work at the stadium is an offer that the company has extended to the residents of the Numbered Streets, according to Laci, he is the only one willing to work for them. His workdays range from 6am until 6 or 8pm, he earns 5,000 forints per day. Up front, each morning, he receives 2,000 forints, which is enough to buy a pack of cigarettes and food for his children at school. In the end, it is not much, and is quite dangerous, he claims, but much better than the money the public works program can ever offer.

Not soon after his fences were completed, however, Laci left for Canada. He had always joked about me sneaking him ‘inside my suitcase’ the next time I left Hungary. It was not long before murmurs of his departure turned into rumors of his return. Several elderly ladies (*figyelő nénik*) one day told me that the security officers in Rome did not allow Laci to board his Toronto bound flight, and that he told others in the neighborhood it would have cost him 200,000 forints to bribe the border security to let him through. This story raised suspicions of spun lies, and added to his already somewhat at odds relationship with other inhabitants. When I met with him

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<sup>10</sup> This is not necessarily fact and is only representative of one or two views of Roma who have been living in Toronto and have long since gone through the refugee status process. Whether true or not, it connects with the circulation of information that does not reflect the reality of those experiencing newer forms of border control previous migrants had not endured.

later that month, his description of events was quite different. Since he is one of the four residents granted the new housing units that the local government had given to the MMSZ during the fall of 2016, the others ‘cry’ about his privileged position, and stories circulate (*Körbe Körbe*) about him and his family. ‘The security guard (*tiszt*) did not even look at my tickets or documents, and told me that I was not allowed to board’. ‘They purchased my ticket back to Budapest, and gave us money to stay in a hotel for the night, but I did not receive the 900 dollars in reimbursement for my plane ticket’. By the time the airport transfer brought him back to his house here in the Numbered Streets, he had no money left to reimburse his brother for the plane ticket, who had sponsored his travel to Canada and purchased his ETA for him, let alone to purchase bread to eat. ‘[The money] all flowed away’ (*úszik az egész (pénz)*). His brother, who runs a mechanic (*vasszerelő*) business in Toronto, had filled out his ETA application for him and also purchased his tickets. There was no way of knowing why he was not allowed to board, only speculation.

For the moment, there is not much he can do except work for the stadium rebuilding project. While he gestures in the backyard to areas where he wishes to construct a storage unit for wood, and for the steel, glass, and old furniture that he has accumulated, his plan of working in Canada for his brother’s company has been derailed, yet seemed to take precedent. He is not certain if he can risk going back, considering the costs. Their housing contract, at the moment, is also on a fluctuating scale. ‘The first contract with the MMSZ was for three months, then it was four, then five, and now back to three’, he said, adding that even though the MMSZ has received 60 new housing units to renovate and rebuild the homes for these inhabitants, there is still uncertainty of whether or not it will only be a temporary fix. An attempt to ‘integrate’ despite a reality of zero long-term stability. The Numbered Streets may no longer exist in a year or so, despite the renovation of these housing units. ‘It will not go wrong once we have succeeded’ he told me, ‘and then we will be able to drink a cold Canadian beer together in Toronto’, he always reminds me with a smile.

### *5.3 ‘Refugees Welcome’*

Not dissimilarly, an elderly couple, attempting to reunite with their family who sought asylum in Canada roughly seven years ago, were not allowed to board their flight from Paris to Toronto. Their grandson, whom they have not seen since then, will be married later on during the summer. They want to be there to celebrate the ceremony together with him, but know that the chances will be slim. With tourist season, ticket prices will be more expensive and they may have to wait until the fall to go visit them. Yet, every day, Gyula bácsi checks the internet to see, in his words, ‘if Canada has opened its borders’. He knows what the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, said in January of 2016, after Trump’s electoral victory: ‘Refugees welcome’ as he put it to me, plainly, in quite possibly the only two words in English he knows. To Gyula bá, there are not two words that ring truer or bring more of a smile to his face. One minute, he could be speaking about state corruption, the funneling of EU money into the coffers of Orbán and his buddies (*havérok*), and conspiracy theories about whether Orbán’s last name is actually ‘Orsós’ and thus Roma; and the next, the fact that he has run out of housing options, with no certainty of abode on the horizon. The idea of ‘open’ borders in Canada, on the other hand, is something that brings a smile

to his face. Every time I see him, whether at the 'központ' office, or at his home, he asks me how things are in Canada, as if he were asking about the weather. Nevertheless, he checks his phone every day to see if the borders have *truly* opened. He puts on his glasses and holds his phone out at a readable distance, eyes crinkling in search of a sign on the interwebs. I ask him what he is searching for in particular, and how he would know if he could tell when the borders are open. But when I do so, he quickly hands the phone over to me, to read the articles and to search for more; as if my fingers were savvier than his own, and thus more capable of finding a solution. Maybe Google will tell us when the 'Free World's' darling's words begin to reflect the truth. 'So, did you find anything?' He would impatiently ask, a minute or two after taking a sip of cola.

These snapshots, while limited in their scope and depth, and surely only focus on the retelling of a specific relationship with emigration officers (*úsztek*) at the airport, point towards the on-going and persistent nature of security governance measures of interdiction and their palpable effects. They also lead us to understand how experiences are built into the persistent telling of a person's mobility. One that links with the overlapping of governance structures and the social relations that are conditioned by, and simultaneously condition, the way they ground themselves within specific social environs. In these cases, the ETA is not the only concern, but how a virtual border has crossed families and how gossip circulates with respect to an individual's inability to succeed at a border crossing.

Though tempting to create immediate causal links between precarious housing statuses, evictions and the endeavor to seek asylum, I see such a correlation as one-dimensional and less conducive to an approach that takes the politics of movement and mobility as a central concern. These snapshots paint a picture of motivations and legitimacies of/genuine refugee status, but also highlight how measures such as the ETA circulates as knowledge, and, following such a comprehension, how such material manifestations of security rationales are translated within different contexts. Pragmatically, due to the ETA's immaterial format, and due to a lack of linguistic, monetary and infrastructural (i.e. lack of personal wifi, email, credit) capital there is not a way for these inhabitants to know precisely what the ETA's effects even entail, despite having them approved. In a sense, if this were the reason for their inability to board flights, then there is a complete lack of knowledge concerning how such extra-legal security measures are diffused transnationally, and what economies are built around their diffusion.

Uncertainties in border openings and closures, in this regard create risks as well as adaptations on the personal level. Recurrences and attempts to potentially realize the possibility of cross-border migration, or to solidify one's own form of secure haven in the Numbered Streets, is a precarious and insecure undertaking. What becomes abundantly clear is how multiple mobility management structures, from local evictions to transnational security governance systems, function in tandem to continue a history of marginalization. A marginalization that is not solely derived from the inability to exercise mobility and movement per say, but the inability to exercise social, economic and political freedoms that still striate and subjugate the Roma in the EU today.

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## 6. Conclusions

Through field excerpts from on-going ethnographic research in the city of Miskolc, Hungary, this article has presented how Roma experience deep inequalities in changes in border regimes, as profiling mechanisms of cross-border interdiction transnationally, and as constituted statuses of evictability at the local scale. This paper has examined the extension and segmentation of border regimes through processes of mobility and enclosure with an emphasis on how these regimes have very immediate effects on how individuals are capable of navigating encountered migration uncertainties. Waiting and uncertainty, as we see in the cases of Ágnes, Laci and Gyula, is political. Access to certain knowledge sets, or to circulations of knowledge pertaining to border security navigation is increasingly beset by linguistic and socio-economic barriers that are difficult to circumvent. Moreover, waiting, as an embodied experience of time, is controlled and manipulated by power structures that define its very contours and challenge individuals to adapt or divide their lives accordingly. What I have proposed in this article is to think about how the protracted eviction process and the additions made to CBSA interdiction mechanisms, produce experiences that situate these particular Roma inhabitants at the interstices of mobility and enclosure dynamics. In doing so, such an empirical reality forces us to think of the multiple sites along paths of escape and removal that holistically challenge our conception of migration trajectories and also the impact border regimes have across extensive social space. The article was not able to engage with a full social composition of the neighborhood through experiences of mobility, nor does it delve into experiences of intra-EU labor migration, and deportations and removals by the CBSA. The elongated research project proposes to combine an analysis of the multi-directionality of mobility from within the disappearing Roma populated settlements of Miskolc.

In proposing the border regimes concept, and in light of the empirical evidence provided, we are left with additional questions to ponder. This conceptual rubric, examined through the case of the Roma in Miskolc, can be a piece of a larger genealogical puzzle concerning the logics of displacement and bordering practices across pan-historical dynamics in mobility and property regimes, and Roma political membership from the Habsburg Empire to the European Union today. This *longue durée* perspective in comparison with the history of forced resettlement and displacement of Roma throughout continental Europe is an important site of further research.

Moreover, there is the possibility to extrapolate and rethink, albeit situationally, the types of life that emerge in post-socialist provincial and economically precarious contexts. In Northeastern Hungary, particularly in settlements overrepresented by marginalized and impoverished Roma populations, the Hungarian state has all but retreated and exported their means of welfare and social security to non-state *de facto* authorities, such as the MMSZ. Critical examinations of actors who enter into the field of Roma integration management, can help rethink their practices as part of a field of mobility management and their role in either facilitating or inhibiting intra- and out-migration of Roma from villages and towns in the countryside (*vidék*).

On a normative level, development and integration projects coupled with advanced security governance structures, that pre-empt the migration of precarious

subjects, ought to be continued sites of research engagement and issue area visibility. This double valence produces a context where transnational publics must converge to communicate and simultaneously bring these concerns to the fore.

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**RALUCA BIANCA ROMAN\***

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

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\* [rr44@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:rr44@st-andrews.ac.uk) (Department of Social Anthropology,  
University of St Andrews, UK)

### **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.

*Keywords:* mobility, missionary work, mobilization, Evangelism, humanitarianism.

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## 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

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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)<sup>1</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Their status of traditional minority is grounded in the long-term presence of Finnish Kaale on the territories of present-day Finland.<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>2</sup> There are an estimated 10,000 Finnish Roma in Finland, with 3,000 more living in Sweden.

<sup>3</sup> The presence of Finnish Roma in the country has been attested from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> 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'. Coincidentally 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.<sup>4</sup> 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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<sup>4</sup> *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 (*Lähetysten 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 vähimmäistä*), 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,<sup>5</sup> 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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<sup>5</sup> 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 [Kaa]le 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 to 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 Kaa]le 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 Kaa]le 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<sup>6</sup> 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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<sup>6</sup> 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

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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 construction 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

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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

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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,

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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.

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JUAN F. GAMELLA\*

Marriage, Gender and Transnational Migrations in  
Fertility Transitions of Romanian Roma Women.  
An Ethnographic Case Study

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\* [gamella@ugr.es](mailto:gamella@ugr.es) (Universidad de Granada, Spain)

### Abstract

This paper explores how a group of immigrant Roma women are shaping their reproductive lives in the transnational context generated by the migratory flows of post-1989 Romania. The analysis is based on the ethnographic reconstruction of the reproductive lives of 124 women from seven Roma family networks residing in Spain and connected with relatives all over Europe. Although these groups are increasingly heterogeneous, some common patterns seem clear. Primarily, we observe that these women are transforming the *tempo* and *quantum* of their reproductive careers in a culturally specific fertility transition that is not based on the postponement of childbearing and marriage. Early, pronatalist and patrilocal marriage followed by adolescent maternity are powerful normative orientations in the groups studied. Spacing the second or the third child and stopping having children in their early 30s seem to be the most common strategies by which they are responding to the increasing costs and setbacks of high fertility. Their transnational experiences in Western Europe are contributing to this process in ideological, structural and instrumental terms. The demographic contrasts of many Roma groups with their non-Roma neighbours are a source of prejudice and ‘ethno-demographic anxiety’ that fuel populist, nationalist and illiberal sentiments and movements.

*Keywords:* fertility transitions, Roma/Gypsies, Romania, Spain, transnational migration, gender, marriage systems.

## *1. Introduction*

All over Europe the apprehensions generated by shrinking and ageing populations are exacerbated by the assumed excessive reproduction of autochthonous and immigrant minorities. In this process ‘the real or perceived growth of minority populations’ generate ‘ethno-demographic anxieties’ and ‘nationalist fears about the physical and cultural survival of the nation’ (Dumbrava, 2017: 1490). Those who see themselves belonging to the dominant ethnicity fear their ‘displacement into a minority position’ in their own countries (Coleman, 2006: 401).

International migration is changing the cultural and demographic profile of Europe (Coleman, 2008; Castles, De Haas and Miller, 2014). It is also deepening the ‘cleavage’ that has opened ‘between Central and Eastern Europe on one side and Western and Northern Europe on the other’ (Botev, 2012: 72). While countries such as Albania, Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania are losing population to emigration, Italy, Germany, Spain, the UK and others have gained immigrants from these and other countries (Frejka, Gietel-Basten *et al.*, 2016: table 1). This loss is aggravating the unprecedented fertility downturn and the ethnic transformation of many European regions (Horváth and Kiss, 2015; Coleman, 2009; Koytcheva and Philipov, 2008). In some of the CEE countries the situation has ‘no parallels in world population history’ as ‘the combination of low fertility and emigration exacerbates the effects of ageing, as it is young people who are more likely to migrate. This creates a double ‘whammy’ in terms of population ageing’, as young people are also the potential parents (Botev, 2012: 72). Predictions are often dismal and seem a new edition of apocalyptic demography (Gee and Gutman, 2000). For instance, in his study of the role of migration in the sustainability of European populations, Coleman concluded that ‘countries such as Poland, Latvia, Bulgaria and Romania will lose between 15 and 27 per cent of their population by 2055 with or without migration, thanks to their low birth rates’ (2008: 459).

Roma emigrants from CEE, particularly from Romania and Bulgaria, are at the crossroads of these processes that are dividing Europe. They are part of the stigmatized populations whose birth rates are seen as a problem both at home and abroad, as commonly they ‘are placed at the bottom of the reproductive worth’ (Dumbrava, 2007: 1500). The ‘unmanageable’ or ‘irresponsibly high’ fertility rates attributed to Roma families hence become a key element of the intense anti-Roma prejudice so widespread in Europe. In Bulgaria, for instance, some nationalists fear what they describe as a process of ‘gypsyisation’ that is distorting the ‘historic legacy of the country’. Allegedly, this process is not only reducing the size of the core ethnicity but it is also seen as ‘worsening of the national human capital – e.g. level of education, professional skills and civic culture of the population’ (Kotzeva and Dimitrova, 2014: 778, 767). Similar accusations abound in other countries with sizable Roma populations, such as Romania and Hungary (see Rat, 2009; Süli-Zakar *et al.*, 2016).

The exaggerated fears and misgivings generated by Roma fertility embody one exemplar of the intense ‘politicization of demography’ gaining ground all over Europe (Dumbrava 2017). Roma’s reproductive vitality is commonly perceived as aggravating their supposed resistance or incapacity to social integration and their attachment to ‘cultural values incompatible with Western modernity’ (Kaneva and Popescu, 2014:

506). This prejudice reached an extreme form in the coerced sterilization of Roma women in several European countries in recent times (Cahn, 2017; Patel, 2017; Zampas and Lamačková, 2011; Tomasovic, 2009).

### *1.1 A neglected area of research*

In the light of the political and popular reactions it generates it is surprising how little attention has been paid to issues of reproduction and fertility in the recent outpouring of publications on Roma groups, and in the activism in favor of their rights. This gap is particularly notable in connection with the critical analysis of political and policy frameworks, particularly in the analysis of family policy and in the role of family networks in international migrations. The lack of interest is also remarkable concerning the multiple intersections of family and gender systems with fertility changes (Masson, 1997; 2001). Interestingly, the growing Roma feminist critique (Brooks, 2012; Ilisei, 2012; Kóczé, 2016; Corradi, 2017) seems to have neglected key aspects of reproductive regimes as constitutive elements of gender ideologies and gender roles, and therefore as key factors in gender stratification and the empowerment (or disempowerment) of women (for exceptions see Rat, 2009; Magyar-Vincze, 2007). This is even more puzzling as even a superficial observation of most Roma groups shows that their reproductive strategies are at the core of their social organization and their cultural expression. They are also a source of differentiation with the majority populations among whom they live. This cultural emphasis in reproduction has to be seen in the context of the historical discrimination and exclusion suffered by most Romani groups. It may have worked as a form of resistance, as 'weapons of the poor' (Scott, 1985) facing exclusion, shorter lives, and uncertain futures.

Moreover, childbearing and childrearing are central to the daily life of many Romani groups to a level unknown today to their neighbors both in Romania and in the other countries where they have moved. In fact, the present Roma migrations often have a familiar and reproductive character. Commonly families with children move together and reproduction is not stopped by moving abroad or by living in slums in very difficult conditions (Matras and Leggio, 2017; Beluschi-Fabeni *et al.*, 2015; Beluschi, 2013). The intensive and prolonged migration of Roma after the fall of communist regimes is making Roma reproduction a transnational process that often develops across borders. This reproductive vitality is seen almost exclusively as a problem, never as an opportunity.

### *1.2 Some antecedents: studies of Roma fertility in CEE countries*

There are valuable studies of fertility change concerning Roma minorities in Central and Eastern Europe. However, they are mostly kept at the margins of scholarly literature and policy making. The most relevant of these studies have been based on three main sources of data that implied diverse theoretical and epistemological

approaches.<sup>1</sup> First, some important studies integrated a micro-demographic study of local sources, with longitudinal historical and ethnographic evidences (see for example: Mann, 1990; Durst, 2002; 2010; Ladányi and Szelényi, 2006). Secondly, we found studies that used national or regional surveys in which some of the respondents were identified or identified themselves as Roma. These surveys provided transversal comparative data on fertility trends and family arrangements, but in some cases they were able to study longitudinal trends by comparing the results concerning different cohorts of women. For an example of this approach see the work of Muresan and her collaborators using Romania's *Generations and Gender* national surveys<sup>2</sup> (Muresan, 2007; Muresan *et al.*, 2008). Thirdly there are studies who used the information from censuses that included data disaggregated by ethnicity, which exist only in some countries. For instance, see the work of Potančoková and her partners, partially based on the work of Vaňo (2005; 2001) concerning Slovak Roma (Potančoková *et al.*, 2008), or the work of Koytcheva and Philipov on Bulgarian ethnic groups (2008), or the work of Preda (2010) on Roma from Oltenia.

Together, these studies seem to support four important hypothesis:

1). That differences in fertility patterns are key factors in the ethnic differentiation of most Roma groups. These differences seem to have grown in the last two decades when most CEE societies have experienced profound changes congruent with the framework of the Second Demographic Transition (Frejka, Gietel-Basten *et al.*, 2016; Frejka, 2017; Muresan, 2007).

2). The differences in the reproductive patterns and trends among Roma groups are the product of complex intersections of cultural difference and socioeconomic exclusion. Those Roma groups that suffered less segregation and deprivation seemed to be converging demographically with majority populations. Nevertheless, when socioeconomic and educational differences are controlled some differences in reproductive patterns remain (Koytcheva and Philipov, 2008).

3). The classic or first demographic transition started in most Romani groups in CEE countries decades ago, commonly in the 1950s and 1960s with the reduction of infant and child mortality. There are also evidences of fertility decline among most Roma groups in the following decades. Setbacks in these processes, however, have been common when the structural and political changes resulted in harsher and less predictable environments for local Roma communities.

4). The fertility transitions of different Roma groups may have varied according to national conditions and policies. In our case it is necessary to consider that since 1967 the communist regime in Romania maintained a 'uniquely coercive approach towards reproduction by banning abortion and promoting childbearing as a means of national regeneration' (Dumbrava, 2017: 1491).

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1 A new source of valuable data is also emerging from surveys of Roma communities concerning reproductive health (see, for instance: Battaglia *et al.*, 2017; Sedlecky and Rašević, 2015).

2 Romania's *Generations and Gender* national survey carried out in 2005 included a small proportion of Roma respondents (1.5%) that allowed some comparison with the Romanian (89.7%) and the Hungarian (7.7%) participants (Muresan, 2007: 57). In her analysis of these groups Muresan found 'impressive differences' both in the level and the timing of fertility of the Roma participants. Thus 'Roma one-child mothers have four to nine times greater risks for a second birth in the age groups 18-21 than Romanians or Hungarians, almost three times higher risk in age group 22-25, and two times greater risks in age group 26-29' (2007: 58).

### *1.3 Analytical and theoretical framework*

In our study we assumed that human reproduction is bound up by social structures, and that fertility transitions are institutional processes (McNicoll, 1994). Hence our approach has been influenced by works that situate demographic processes in their cultural and institutional contexts (Greenhalgh, 1995; McNicoll, 1980; 1994), and particularly those that studied the role of gender and family systems in fertility change (Mason, 1997; 2001), and that traced the implications of gender relations and gender equity for fertility trends (Goldscheider *et al.* 2015; McDonald, 2000; 2013).

We have also used Demographic Transition models as analytical frameworks that helped us to interpret data and to compare it across groups and periods. We are aware that demographic transition models have been associated with prescriptive and deterministic views of historical changes that are, by definition, undecided, open, and very diverse when observed at close range (Greenhalgh, 1995). We see the FTD (First Demographic Transition) both as an account and a model of the permanent decline in death and birth rates observed first in most European populations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first fertility transition consists primarily of ‘a transformation from extensive reproduction where many children are born yet few survive, to the reverse, and a transformation from generally unplanned to planned parenthood’ (Frejka, 2017: 91). This process is still happening in many developing countries (Strulik and Vollmer, 2015; Reher, 2004). The model predicted that these processes would result in older and stationary populations corresponding with replacement fertility (two children on average), high life expectancies, zero population growth and ‘no ‘demographic’ need for sustained immigration’ (Lesthaeghe, 2014: 18112). Since the 1970s, however, new demographic phenomena emerged in many industrial societies that contradicted FDT expectations. The most important were the generalized postponement of marriage and parenthood, the spread of sustained sub-replacement fertility, the rise of cohabitation and out-of-marriage parenthood, and the spread of alternative forms of domestic organization beyond the conjugal family. These changes broke most of the equilibriums predicted by the FDT, leading to older and diminishing populations, hence needing to be complemented by immigrants (Lesthaeghe, 2014). The Second Demographic Transition (SDT) refers to the most influential theory that tries to connect and explain these interrelated transformations. Originally formulated by Van de Kaa and Lesthaeghe in 1986 (Van de Kaa, 1994), it has been used to model the demographic and family-formation developments happening in an increasing number of industrial societies, including most of those in Central and Eastern Europe. Its prospects are gloomier than those of the First Demographic Transition. ‘On the whole, the SDT brings a variety of new social challenges’, including those associated with population decline and aging, the viability of health care and social security systems, the integration of immigrants in societies that are growing more plural, less stability in partnerships, and ‘high levels of poverty or exclusion among certain household types (e.g., single persons of all ages and lone mothers)’ (Lesthaeghe, 2014: 18112). The shortcomings of these theories, their social and cultural assumptions, and the proposal of alternatives are a very active area of

debate and research (see: Zaidi et al., 2017; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Coleman, 2004).

### *1.4 Aims of the paper*

In this paper we analyze the strategies followed by a group of immigrant Romanian Roma women who were living in Spain between 2013 and 2015. We present here the profile of an exploratory case that should be tested in larger and more representative samples.

Firstly we explore how the agency of these Roma women and couples are generating specific processes of fertility transition. We try to discover the main strategies they are following and their institutional foundations in marriage and gender systems. Secondly, we explore the differences in the reproductive patterns of the different groups studied. Thirdly we also explore the ways in which the transmigration processes to Western Europe are facilitating and transforming the process of fertility decline in these Roma groups.

A main hypothesis of the paper is that most Roma groups are still living their First Demographic Transition while the Romanian and Spanish populations among whom they live are presently enmeshed in these complex processes described by the Second Demographic Transition framework. These contrasts complicate policy implementation and intercultural relations.

## *2. Methods, sources of data and samples studied*

In this paper we use data from a multi-sited, three-year ethnography of seven family networks of Romanian Roma who were living in four Andalusian cities and towns from 2013 to 2016. The immigration of Romanian Roma has been primarily based on kinship and family networks. Therefore, we made these networks the building blocks of our surveys. These networks have been defined and categorized by the informants themselves who helped us to know all their relatives residing in the study areas. They include relatives by filiation and marriage and also kin of kin (see Beluschi *et al.*, 2015; Gamella *et al.*, 2017). Locally we found groups of siblings, mostly brothers with their children and grandchildren in a sort of ‘cousins’ republic’ with a patrilineal bias. These groups may also include sisters, brothers-in-law and their families living in the same neighborhood. We followed chain referral sampling methods (Atkinson and Flint, 2001; Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) to include all members of the chosen family networks living in the study area. It was a theoretical but also a sampling strategy, as we could not establish accurately the population of Roma immigrants living in any region.

These local networks are embedded in larger transnational social fields and spaces (Petermann, Molina and Herz, 2015), which originate in five Romanian regions and that live today in over 45 localities of a dozen different countries. Today news, messages, photographs and videos circulate among nodes of these networks instantly due to the wide use of digital technologies (see Beluschi’s paper in this issue).

Our research tried to account for the heterogeneity of Roma immigration. It included a variety of groups coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. The original

cultural-linguistic groups are denoted by terms that may vary with the perspective of the speaker. Three of the networks link people who spoke a *Korturare* dialect and come from three localities in the Cluj region of Transylvania. People in other networks define themselves as *Spoitore* Roma and come from the region of Călărași, and as *Kangliare* coming from Țândărei and Fetești; finally, the people in the two other networks come from the regions of Oltenia and Slobozia respectively and defined themselves as *Ursare* Roma, and as *Laițeși*. These ethnonyms referred originally to traditional occupational or residential specializations, but today are open to much negotiation and variation by both members and outsiders. All these groups speak several Romani dialects (Matras, 2013) except people in the *Laițeși* network who have Romanian as their mother language.

### *2.1 Methods for gathering data*

In gathering data we have used a mixed methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques informed by long-term ethnographic fieldwork. These techniques included semi-structured interviews that sometimes were recorded, as well as informal conversations in our subjects' homes, schools, health centers and maternity wards. Also we participated in community gatherings and in weddings, baptisms, and in Easter and Christmas festivities. In all interviews we tried to explain the nature and goals of the project in a form that could be understood by respondents, and asked for their informed consent. We also used personal and family documents when available to establish dates and places of birth and to complete reproductive histories. Data was immediately codified to render it anonymous. All names used in examples are pseudonyms.

We have also conducted 19 expert interviews with professionals that worked with people from these networks. We also organized three one-day workshops with about 50 professionals each time in three successive years. They came from health centers, social work agencies, schools, the administration, etc. We have also visited relatives and friends of our informants in Madrid's region and Catalonia, as well as in the UK, Germany, Ireland and Romania.

The richness and validity of demographic, ethnographic and genealogical data could not be obtained merely by the application of typical one-time questionnaire surveys. In order to get reliable data we had to contrast and triangulate data from multiple conversations and documents in a very time-consuming process.

We were helped by three Roma research assistants and by their spouses and relatives who helped us meet and talk with people from other families. Our research team included men and women, both Roma and non-Roma, and the interviews and conversations took place mostly in Spanish and Romani languages. The participation of Roma researchers and friends in the collection and understanding of data was decisive to this paper and the author fully acknowledges their contribution. Roma assistants facilitated the access of all researchers to people and homes, helped us all with an intercultural exchange that often required much translation, not only of words but also of categories, goals and worldviews. The contribution of Roma assistants to the research process deserves a detailed and critical consideration that escapes the aims this paper (for detail on the joint project, see: Matras and Leggio, 2017). We

have discussed our results and interpretations with them and plan to continue doing so and publish about their views on our collaboration in the future.

## *2.2. Research samples*

Our survey included 678 people from seven family networks. They were part of a young and fast-growing population with a high proportion of children and teens, and few elderly. We collected data on a total of 108 households<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, in the seven networks surveyed we were able to reconstruct the reproductive careers of 124 women who had been married officially or have been in a union sanctioned by their community<sup>4</sup>. These were about three quarters of all the married women we encountered in the surveyed networks. These women were 14 to 69 years of age and belonged to three generations that can be broadly seen as those of grandmothers, mothers and daughters. Their basic reproductive histories included their date of birth and that of each of their living children and partners, their present use of contraceptives and their declared desire to have more children. Seven of these women did not have children when we completed our survey. Two of them were trying to get pregnant unsuccessfully. The other five got married in 2015 and had children in 2016. We did not include these newborn children in our survey, which was completed by the end of 2015.

Almost all of these women have little formal education, vocational training or professional experience. Two thirds read or write with difficulty. Even those who can read, rarely do so. All but two of these women are unskilled and had few hopes of finding permanent jobs in Spain. They have all worked at menial jobs, in domestic services, as cleaners or seasonal agricultural workers. Most of these women have begged in the streets for long periods.

In about a third of these cases (39 women) we also were able to record other aspects of their lives, including marital and parenting histories, the loss of children or pregnancies, the use of contraception, and their ideas, values and orientations about the number and gender of the children they expected to have. With some of these women we developed close and friendly relationships, and shared many moments in their lives and those of their families. We had many conversations with them, and tried to develop a deeper understanding of the institutional base of their life decisions and outcomes. In some cases we were able to record these interviews with the

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<sup>3</sup> Following participants' understandings we see households here as social units made of people who share a dwelling and a common income and feel they must care for each other as kin. When several related couples with children live in the same household they may keep separate budgets and savings, but share regular expenses such as rent, utilities, food, etc. The task-oriented and the familiar sense of the domestic realm coalesced in almost all cases studied. These Roma households remained rather stable when in favorable conditions, but showed much flexibility and capacity to incorporate relatives when circumstances required it.

<sup>4</sup> By marriages in this context we mean heterosexual common law unions that are socially (and most often ritually) sanctioned by the whole community, and that generate rights and obligations between the partners and their offspring, but also between their respective families. Hence the unions generate important affinal relationships that are culturally prescribed and that are recognized by the overall community. In second unions, made after separation or divorce, there may be some liminal periods in which the status of the union may be indeterminate, but if it consolidates, it is commonly recognized by both family branches and the bond is instituted as mutually binding.

subject's informed consent, and explored carefully both the form and content of the narratives. All the personal information was immediately coded and made anonymous. The qualitative part of this work will be presented in future publications.

### *3. Results*

Some important patterns emerge from the analysis of data concerning the fertility processes of these women and their embeddedness in marriage and gender institutions.

**Table 1. Estimated total fertility rates, age of mothers at childbearing, and crude birth rates for the population of seven Roma family networks living in Spain, 2011-2015 (N: 678)**

<b>Year Period</b>	<b>TFR</b>	<b>Mean Age of mothers</b>	<b>Women (N)</b>	<b>Children (N)</b>	<b>Population (N)</b>	<b>CBR</b>
<b>2011</b>	4.8	25.8	141	25	577	43.3
<b>2012</b>	3.2	22.1	150	21	603	34.8
<b>2013</b>	4.2	24.5	157	20	628	31.8
<b>2014</b>	3.8	23.1	166	21	654	32.1
<b>2015</b>	3.4	24.1	170	19	678	28.0
<b>2011-2015</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>628</b>	<b>34.0</b>

Source: Ethnographic surveys of seven Roma family networks, 2013-2015 (MigRom-UGR team)

TFR: Total fertility rate, estimated number of children per woman

Mean age of mothers: mean age of all women who give birth in the corresponding year

Women (N): Number of women from 15 to 49 years in the sample in the period considered

Children (N): Children born in the studied population in the year considered

Population (N): Total population of the sample, estimated for years 2011 to 2013 from data of 2014 and 2015

CBR: Crude birth rate, number of births per thousand people

#### *3.1 Fertility levels in the seven networks*

In the sample of 678 people we were able to calculate some key demographic variables. As can be seen in table 1, for the whole group surveyed, in the 2011 to 2015 period, the crude birth rate was 34 per thousand, the total fertility rate was 3.9 children per woman, and the mean age of women at childbirth was 23.9 years. This results point to a high and early level of reproduction among these Roma groups. It contrasts particularly with the Spanish and Romanian majority populations (see section 4).

A consequence of these fertility patterns is that almost all of the Roma homes studied include babies and small children. This requires much domestic work and care, a task that is almost completely carried out by women. In this sense, young mothers may benefit from larger households and the presence of relatives assisting in cooperative childrearing living nearby.

### 3.2 *Reproductive patterns observed (124 married women)*

#### 3.2.1 *Universal, early and arranged marriages*

There is no woman in our sample who remained celibate after 25. Total celibacy was rare in the families of these women, both in Spain and elsewhere. These results cohere with the declared goals and values expressed in conversations and formal interviews. The ideal life of an adult is that of a member of a sexual, fertile couple with a gendered division of tasks and responsibilities. Hence, marriage is less seen as an individual choice than a culturally patterned necessity. While vernacular understandings of common law marriages often do not coincide with official definitions by state authorities, it seems inadequate to consider that many births in these families happen ‘out of wedlock’. In our research we have tried to follow the vernacular understanding of marriage: a bond socially recognized that implies not only individual commitments but multiple familial responsibilities (see note 3).

In these families ideally marriage must come early. Teenage marriage is the moral and statistical norm in these groups. In the seven networks explored the prevalent normative orientation was for women to marry between 16 and 19 years of age. Husbands tend to be from the same generation as their wives but a bit older; in the cases studied, 2.4 years older on average. There are a few cases in which the husband is much older than the wife. There are also some cases in which the wife is older, but these are seen as exceptional and often inappropriate. In most of these cases this was not the first marriage for one or both partners.

Almost all marriages in these networks took place within their own linguistic-cultural and territorial communities. Endogamy is a powerful *habitus* in all the groups studied. The norm is that the fathers of the spouses arrange their marriages. In all groups this is considered a right of the *Paterfamilias* or the person in his role. Arranged marriages usually involve a complex system of economic transactions and gifts including some form of bridewealth or bride-price. There is considerable variation among families, however, in the voice and agency given to the young in marriage agreements. Besides, the young often have a chance to elope and preempt their parents’ decisions. This often leads to conflicts and conflict-resolution procedures that can be informally negotiated or resolved through the adjudication of a *Kríz*, a Roma Court, a procedure particularly popular among the *Korturare* groups. Today, social media resources offers a growing space for the matchmaking of these Roma communities (Ogáyar, Gamella and Muntean, 2018).

In most families we found urgency among parents and teenagers in establishing the right matches. The risk to lose an attractive partner is present in most marriage deals. Most of the studied Roma networks are enmeshed in competitive marriage markets. Beautiful, ‘well-taught’, virtuous and virginal girls from ‘good families’ are in high demand. Hence, girls of marriageable age are the source of much monitoring, evaluation and surveillance not only by aspiring boys, but also by their parents and close relatives.

### 3.2.2 *Pronatalist marriages*

In almost all cases, common law marriage and childbearing are part of the same culturally patterned sequence. Common law unions, particularly first marriages, must be followed by pregnancy without much delay. The birth of a child confirms the union, the adequacy of the newlyweds and their maleness and femaleness (Teșăr, 2012). In all the families surveyed children are highly valued, and infertility is seen as a disgrace. It is often judged as a sufficient reason for breaking the marriage. In the sample studied, two women have been married for several years and have not borne children. Both are saddened and humiliated. Their husbands also suffer the rebuke of their peers. For instance, Alina was only 14 when she married Reitan a distant relative, whom she had met in *Facebook*. After a year without conceiving, Alina went to a clinic to treat her apparent infertility. Her husband's friends half-jokingly ridiculed him for his inability to get his wife pregnant and offered their services to achieve that goal.

In all the networks studied sons are preferred, even needed, although the most desired number of children commonly include daughters as well. The preference for male children is related to the strength of the patrilocal pattern of post-marital residence, and the subsequent formation strong patri- and fratri-groups. As girls leave their families at marriage and rise their children in their husband's communities (increasingly in another countries) most parents sense that girls are raised for the benefit of others. The preference for male children tends to increase child parity overall. In the networks where young couples start soon to live independently from their parents, the preference for male children may be somehow reduced.

Most women come to their marriages assuming unequal partnerships and differentiated and asymmetric gender roles. Brides are expected to move with their husband's parents as *boria*, incoming daughters-in-law. The young *bori* is expected to work hard for the whole household. The practice of paying a monetary compensation for the bride increases her sense of duty to give children to her husband's family. Hence, in the early years of their marriage wives may have less autonomy, including in birth control decisions.

**Table 2.** *Age of mothers at the birth of their first known child, and total number of known live children. Romanian Roma women in seven family networks living in Spain, by 10-year age cohorts. December 2015. (N: 117)*

Age of mothers	Age at first child			Total number of children			N	Birth of mothers
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median		
60 to 69	17.0		17	8.0		8	1	1946 to 1955
50 to 59	17.2	1.7	17	6.3	0.3	6	9	1956 to 1965
40 to 49	17.2	2.1	16	4.8	0.5	5	13	1966 to 1975
30 to 39	17.6	2.6	17.5	4.7	0.3	4.5	40	1976 to 1985
20 to 29	17.4	2.3	17	2.7	0.2	2	43	1986 to 1995
14 to 19	16.1	1.8	16	1.2	0.1	1	11	1996 to 2001
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>1946 to 2001</b>

Source: Ethnographic surveys of seven Roma family networks, 2013-2015 (MigRom-UGR team). Sample of 124 Roma women, 117 of them with children

### 3.2.3 Age of women at birth of their first child

The age of women at their first birth is a key element in their reproductive careers. It affects the total number of births that a woman might have and hence it influences the size, composition and the level of completed fertility of the population. The postponement of childbearing has gained much importance in the transitions to very low fertility occurring in the last decades in many European and East Asian societies (Kholer, Billiari and Ortega, 2002). In our case, as can be seen in table 2, the average age of these women at their first birth was 17.3 years. Median age at first birth has remained between 16 to 17.5 years for all cohorts. A quarter of these women (26 per cent) had their first child at 13, 14 and 15 years of age. Half of them had had their first child before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, 85 per cent before their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. These data are conservative, as there may have been pregnancies and births not included in our reproductive histories. Hence it seems that in these Roma groups teenage childbearing has remained a common practice for over half a century<sup>5</sup>, through key historical transformations, such as the tough pronatalist policies of the Ceaușescu regime (Kligman, 1998; Hord et al., 1991), the end of Communism and the displacement to the West.

Underage marriages and pregnancies, often portrayed as ‘child marriages’ and ‘child pregnancies’ (see, for instance, Hotchkiss *et al.* 2016; Čvorović, 2011), are a source of stigmatization for Roma communities. Their occurrence is easily manipulated by mass media reports that often focus on the most extreme cases and

<sup>5</sup> Some of the youngest mothers in our sample, born between 1990 and 1999, seem to be having children earlier than their mothers and grandmothers. Consider, however, that they are the most precocious mothers of their generation. When all the women in these age groups got married and had children the average age of first births will rise.

present them without qualification or contextualization<sup>6</sup>. Besides, in many developed countries there is today a negative attitude towards teenage births, which are associated with low education levels for girls and with social and medical problems. In fact in several countries there are national plans against teenage pregnancy, seen as a serious social problem (Linders and Bogard, 2014).

### *3.2.4 Fertility decline: A decreasing number of children*

As can be seen in table 2, the 117 mothers in our sample had 3.8 living children on average. The maximum number of children is 9. Probably this data underestimate the fertility rates of women from older generations, particularly because of the lack of sufficient data on child mortality and other sources of under-registration in our sample. Hence, in the cases in which we were able to gather information on the sensitive and painful issues of child death, induced abortion and children given in adoption the number of pregnancies of these women increased between 10 and 20 per cent. Thus, among the grandmothers of these women, born in the 1930s and 1940s we found a number of cases of women who had 12 children or more.

Table 2 also shows that each younger cohort is having fewer children. This is significant in relation to those cohorts whose reproductive histories may have ended, mostly the women born between 1945 and 1985. They include two generations of women: grandmothers and middle-aged mothers. They had fewer children than their mothers but still they have more than 4 children on average. These women may belong to the first generations of Romanian Roma women in which the norm of unrestricted fertility did not apply. In our conversations most elderly women say they did not use artificial contraceptives until the 1990s. But this requires a more extensive ethno-historical research than we could develop, particularly in Romania.

### *3.2.5 Stopping early: The birth of the last child*

The tendency to stop childbearing long before menopause has been described as a sign of the onset of fertility decline in populations (Knodel, 1987). As shown in table 3, the older women in our sample seem to be completing the reproductive stage of their lives in their early thirties, and the new generations seem to follow the same pattern. In the in-depth study of cases we found that women born in the 1950s, particularly in the second half of that decade started to control their childbearing, mostly by stopping their childbearing career earlier than their mothers or elder sisters. This may have started in the late 1980s but happened more easily and systematically after the fall of the Ceaușescu regime. International migration also helped some of these women in these decisions. For instance, Stela, a *Korturare* Roma born in the region of Oradea, moved to Germany with her husband and three of her six living children in 1991. Her eighth child was born in Germany in 1992, when she was 32. She underwent a Caesarean section. Her husband was seriously ill at the time, and she did not want more pregnancies. Therefore she asked the help of a 'German doctor who

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, see how the tabloid press covered the case of the Roma girl, allegedly 10 years old, giving birth in an Andalusian hospital: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1326193/Father-baby-born-gypsy-girl-10-Spain-13-year-old-boy.html>

spoke Romanian', and she was subjected to a tubal ligation as part of her surgical procedure.

**Table 3. Age at the birth of their last known child, and years since the birth of last child. Romanian Roma women in seven family networks. Grouped by the age cohort of mothers. Mean, standard deviation and median of the women in each cohort. December 2015 (N: 117)**

Age of mother	Age at last child			Years since last child			N	Birth period of mothers
	Mea n	Stan d. Dev.	Media n	Mea n	Stan d. Dev.	Media n		
<i>60 to 69</i>	37.0	-	37	30.0		30	1	1946 to 1955
<i>50 to 59</i>	30.7	3.9	29	24.4	3.7	24	9	1956 to 1965
<i>40 to 49</i>	28.5	5.5	28	15.8	7.6	14	13	1966 to 1975
<i>30 to 39</i>	28.6	4.2	29	5.9	4.4	5	40	1976 to 1985
<i>20 to 29</i>	21.8	2.9	21	2.9	2.5	2	43	1986 to 1995
<i>14 to 19</i>	16.9	1.4	17	1.1	1.3	1	11	1996 to 2001
<i>Total</i>	25.2	5.7	25	7.1	7.9	4	117	1946 to 2001

Source: Ethnographic surveys of seven Roma family networks, 2013-2015 (MigRom-UGR team). Sample of 124 Roma women, 117 of them with children

Table 3 also contains data on the years that have passed since the women in our sample had their last child. The three older cohorts, those born in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, appear to have ceased having children many years or even decades ago. The women born from 1976 to 1975 who are still fertile have been without children for almost 9 years on average. For women in their 40s the mean age at last child is 28.5 years. Women in their 30s appear to be stopping their reproductive careers at around 29 years of age. On average, this age group has been six years without a new child. Our conversations with women from these cohorts point to purposeful efforts in this direction by these women, although the present data is only provisional and tentative.

Some of the younger women are trying to stop having children in their 20s, after they have reached the family size they desire. This is confirmed in several of the cases studied ethnographically. For instance, Bianca was born in 1989 in a town near Segarcea. She was married at 15, but separated from her first partner a few months later. 'It was a mistake', she told us. They had no children. A few months later she met her present husband, Sorin. After living together for a few months, she got pregnant with her first son, who was born in 2007. Three months later she became pregnant again and had a daughter. In 2008 she moved to Spain with her husband and children to live with her in-laws, who were working in seasonal agricultural work. The family found a large and affordable house in an Andalusian town of about 50.000 people and established their base there. Bianca didn't have any more children for the next eight years. She and her husband used withdrawal, condoms, and the pill. However, Bianca had got pregnant twice, and used the public family planning services in her neighborhood in order to terminate her pregnancies. In 2014 she got pregnant

again. Her *sasuj* (mother-in-law), converted to Pentecostalism, tried to convince her to have this child. Bianca left for a cropping season in another province and on her return her pregnancy had disappeared. Often she repeats that she does not plan to have more children. 'Two are enough. Children need many things today', she explains.

In sum, even accounting for the exceptions, the trend is clear: these Roma women are using their agency to end their reproductive lives many years before menopause. Various ideological and attitudinal changes are contributing to this pattern. For instance, several women in all networks have repeated that they do not want to be pregnant while their *boria* (daughters-in-law) are also with child. 'Having a belly while your *bori* also has one? That is very shameful today', told us a young Roma grandmother. Most women concurred with this when asked. The shorter age difference among generations induced by early motherhood makes these overlaps more likely.

### *3.2.6 Delaying the second or third child*

The second dominant pattern of fertility control we observed in these women is the effort to delay the birth of the second or successive children after early motherhood. The first cohort that actively spaced childbearing was that of women born in the 1970s. They are the youngest group that may have completed their reproductive careers and is well represented in our sample. Younger women are spacing the birth of their second or third children using contraceptive methods, both traditional and modern. They are resorting increasingly to the family planning facilities available in their neighborhoods. Therefore having a new child has become the subject of individual and couple decision and planning. Hence 21% of all women born in the 1950s and 1960s waited four or more years for their second or third child. This proportion rose to 27% among women born in the 1970s, and to 40% among those born in the 1980s. This pattern of 'spacing' births is found among women in all families, but is more common in some of them, for instance, among women in the network 2, made up of *Spoitore* Roma from the Călărași region. For instance, Mirela was born in 1992 in a small village in this region from a *Spoitore* Roma family. At 16 she married Nicolae and moved to Spain, where Nicolae had been living and working with his parents and siblings. Ten months later she had her first child, a daughter. In the following five years she had IUD (intrauterine device) implanted in Spain. 'My Spanish girlfriends advised me to get it, and my family doctor helped me getting it'. In our first conversations with her she told us she would like to have more children, but only when their economic situation improved. Her husband wanted more children and nagged her about it off and on. Finally, by late 2013, an infection forced her to get rid of the IUD. She wanted to wait and thought that her husband would 'take care', withdrawing when they had sex. He din't, and she got pregnant. By late 2014 she gave birth to a second daughter. She would have preferred a boy, but was content with her two daughters. Mirela does not plan to have more children in the future unless there is a major boost in their resources.

Many of these women often disagreed with their in-laws about having more children, and feel pressed into new pregnancies. When they work together with their

husbands and/or their mothers-in-law in achieving common reproductive goals, it is much easier for them to control childbearing.

In the years of our fieldwork we found many unwanted pregnancies in the women observed, particularly those of third and higher parities. Many of them suffered failings in the contraceptive methods they use. Some of the women in these circumstances resorted to voluntary abortion. When this pattern was repeated there may be conflicts with health professionals and social workers. The most extreme cases become the source of a kind of urban legends in professional circles, increasing the salience of the 'irresponsible' behavior of *gitanas rumanas*. Some Roma women, however, reject abortion and see it as immoral, but their stance on this issue is rarely stressed. Thus, the birth control of many of these women is not easy. They experience many misunderstandings with the health professionals they visit. These professionals are usually unaware of the family environments where these women live, and of the values, norms and cultural frameworks that underlie their reproductive decisions.

**Table 4. Differences among the seven networks studied concerning mothers' ages, their age at their first birth, and the number of their children. January 2016**

Network	Age of women			Age at first birth			Number of children			Mothers	Women
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	Mean	Std. Dev.	Median	N	N
NET01	35.1	15.0	30	16.7	2.2	16.5	4.8	2.4	5	20	21
NET02	32.3	12.0	29.5	17.1	1.6	17.0	2.9	1.4	2	16	18
NET03	29.9	8.5	31.5	18.1	2.2	18.0	3.7	2.2	4	36	38
NET04	30.8	8.9	30	16.8	2.0	16.0	3.3	1.7	3	11	11
NET05	38.7	10.7	41	20.5	0.7	20.5	4.0	1.4	4	2	3
NET06	26.8	8.3	25	15.9	1.9	15.0	3.7	1.7	4	19	19
NET07	33.9	13.1	34.5	18.2	3.0	18.0	3.9	1.8	4	13	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17.3</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>17.0</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>2.0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>124</b>

NET01. *Korturare* people from a town in the Cluj region

NET02. *Spoitore* Roma from the Călărași region.

NET03. *Korturare* people from a rural commune in the Cluj region

NET04. *Ursare* Roma from the region of Craiova in Oltenia.

NET05. *Laișii* people from the region of Slobozia

NET06. *Kangliare* Roma from Țândărei and Fetești

NET07. *Korturare* Roma from a rural commune in the Cluj region

### *3.3 Growing heterogeneity: Differences among networks*

Our study confirmed that these Roma groups are following different paths and rhythms in their fertility transitions (see table 4). There are important differences among the networks studied that somehow parallel their cultural, socioeconomic and political differences and their different experience of transnational mobility.

The three *Korturare* networks (networks 1, 3 and 7) from Cluj's region show considerable internal variation in their migratory experience. People in network 1 have moved from a single town settlement to over 40 localities in a dozen of European countries (Gamella *et al.* 2017). The other two *Korturare* networks (networks 3 and 7) have a simpler migratory history. People in network 3 moved to Spain influenced and supported two affinal relatives in network 1 who lived there. Some families in this group also moved to the UK, and recently to Scotland. Their international dispersion is much more limited than that of families in network 1. Network 7 included about 35 families from a rural commune near the Apuseni mountains. These families spend over half of the year in Andalusia collecting scrap metal with carts, and return in summer to work in their native mountains and forests. Their children attend (with some irregularity) Spanish schools. Norms, values and institutions are relatively similar in these three networks, but their lifestyles somehow differ. People in network 1 are more urbanized and cosmopolitan, as members of this network have travelled to different countries and continents, and they were pioneers and pathfinders in the migration process. Moreover some families from this network are granted respect and higher status by their rural neighbors, often associated to their ability as rural-political brokers and their economic success.

People in the *Spoitore* network (network 2) from the Călărași region have worked in construction, petty trade, and in recycling discarded materials that they sell in street markets. They have also practiced several forms of begging. The elders have a migratory experience that goes back to Communist times, when they migrated to Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey as seasonal workers. In the last decades they have favored the UK, Italy, Germany and Spain. This group is the most advanced in the fertility transition in our sample (see table 4).

People in network 4 travelled from the region of Oltenia, and defined themselves as *Ursare* Roma. They have pursued mostly jobs as seasonal farm workers in the cropping campaigns in various Spanish regions. They have favored Spanish agro-towns over cities for their more stable settlement.

Network 5 is made up by three *Laięsi* families. They had relatives in another Andalusian town, about 150 km away. People from this group have lived mostly in median towns, where they apply themselves irregularly to menial jobs, both in local factories or farms and in cropping seasons.

The network 6 is made up by *Kangliare* Roma coming from Țândărei and Fetești. They have a complex migratory history that expands several countries, and their children have been born in different Spanish regions as well as in the UK and in France. In the research period we found them living in a middle town in the metropolitan area of an Andalusian city. Some of their income-generating activities remained opaque to us.

As can be seen in table 4, the seven networks studied show considerable heterogeneity in their patterns of family formation and childbearing. Age at first birth oscillates considerably, but on average remained in teenage years, with the exception of the three *Laiçsi* women. Among *Kangliare* women in network 6 we find more precocious mothers, as half of them had their first child at 15 years of age or earlier. Women in the *Ursare* network (network 4) have started maternity particularly early as well.

The *Spoitore* families of network 2 seem to be very advanced in the reduction of fertility, with a majority of women having 2 or 3 children. Most of them are controlling births in agreement with their husbands. They tend to space the birth of their second children. See in table 4 that the 16 women whose reproductive history we could study in this network had an mean age of 32, above the total mean, but they had 2.9 children on average, well below the total mean of 3.8. Moreover 50 percent of these mothers had two children or fewer.

The *Laiçsi* group seem to have smaller families and reproductive patterns more similar to that of poor Romanians, with less fertile couples and more variation in the ages at marriage and at the beginning of motherhood.

The least advanced in the path to fertility control seem to be the *Kangliari* network from Țândărei. Their women are younger on average and show a pattern of very precocious maternity and high fertility. The *Korturare* groups show much internal variation but still a high fertility for European standards. These families occupy a mid position among the seven networks concerning birth control and fertility reduction, particularly in the younger cohorts.

### *3.4 Migration and fertility change.*

The emigration to Western Europe is stimulating and transforming the process of fertility decline in these Roma groups. We observed an intersection of structural, institutional and ideological factors contributing to these processes. Firstly, the sustained residence in Western European countries has changed the ‘environmental and institutional conditions that change costs, income or preferences and thereby trigger fertility declines’ (Mason, 1997: 444). The new places of residence offer both incentives and pressures for controlling and reducing their fertility, while they also increase their means to do so (González-Ferrer et al., 2017). Most women in our sample agreed that they enjoy better and systems of public health care, education and family benefits than in Romania. However, they also perceived that these increased social benefits incorporate a more exhaustive system of control and discipline embodied primarily in the actions of social workers. Most Roma women, particularly those more in need often declare their fear of having their children removed by social services.

On the other hand, these women are well aware that the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of children have increased. Even mothers who beg need to leave their children supervised and cared for. Their daughters must be in school. So increasingly they are taking them to crèches and kindergartens. The discourses of these women abound in complains about how children today require ‘many more things’ and ‘much more time’. They feel the pressure to devote much attention, care

and investment to their 'quality children' in the new environments of migration, compulsory education, and wealthier consumer societies where they now live. Thus, increasingly we find women who are using birth control methods and considering carefully if 'to have another child'. In their vicinity they find free family planning services, where they can access cheap or free contraceptives and even encouragement to use them. Almost all women under 40 in our sample have used both modern and 'traditional' contraceptive methods during the study period.

Contraception was seen primarily as a woman's concern. Men give their approval and would often accompany their wives to family planning services and gynecologists. However 'care' (withdrawal) or contraception was seen as something that operates on the body of their women, not theirs. Males rejected the use of condoms almost unanimously when having intercourse with their spouses, but not if they had sex with other women, particularly with prostitutes. Vasectomy was also unacceptable. There were many failures in contraceptive methods, and many misunderstandings concerning their correct use and their effects.

The relationship between fertility transitions and transnational migrations is complex and cannot be portrayed as a difference between the 'here' and the 'there' of families living in different countries. Movements and lives across borders have today a multidirectional and recursive nature. A majority of Romanian Roma women or their closest relatives have experienced childbearing and childrearing abroad. In our case there is a whole network of families (network 7) who spends time both in Spain and Romania every year. Therefore, the process should be seen as one of a complex cultural transformation of family lives lived in several countries and in permanent communication and mutual influence.

### *3.5 Gender transformations*

These women are also becoming increasingly aware of new ideologies of gender equality being enacted around them. They are being exposed to new sets of values, beliefs and norms in schools, in the mass media and in their interaction with their *Gadje* (non-Roma) friends and acquaintances. They are also observing couples with more equalitarian gender relations in which men contribute more to domestic tasks and to the care of children and other dependents. They are also exposed to new family, domestic and sexual arrangements. For instance, Bianca, the *Ursari* woman whom we presented before, has become friends with a female couple who lived together in the house across the street. These women were partners and were raising a child together. She was puzzled and asked us in need of clarification: 'How is this possible? How do they do it, two women?' It was the normality of their living arrangements and the acceptance of people in the vicinity that both surprised and educated her.

Moreover, some of our informants told us how often they felt the need to justify their own gender and family arrangements to their non-Roma friends, or to teachers, nurses and doctors. This was a revealing experience for them. Often they reacted defensively and developed feelings and discourses of resistance and reaffirmation of their culturally distinct norms and institutions. However, in these intercultural encounters their mentality was also transformed.

Besides some of these women are developing more articulated and critical views of their own family and gender arrangements. These are not exclusively negative, but more nuanced and dialectical. They would negotiate differently their own living arrangements and, even more so, of their children. Two discursive themes are recurrent: 'I don't want to be like my mother', and also: 'I don't want my daughters to be like me'. In this sense, one of their first concerns is to have fewer children.

Moreover, a growing number of these women expressed feelings of frustration by the many duties and tasks in their hands and show discontent with their overburdened situation (Oprea, 2004). Some of them are questioning openly some of the institutional frameworks and rules that guide their decisions and lives. A more equalitarian gender system is emerging. We found couples that are living, in many respects, companionate marriages, as they base their relationship on trust and the complicity of partners. However, we have also found domination and abuse by husbands in many couples. Besides, a considerable level of communication and respect is still compatible with a considerable asymmetry in gendered tasks and obligations, and in the restriction of autonomy of women in their movements and their capacity to maintain independent social relationships, including those developing in social media (Ogáyar, Gamella and Muntean, 2018).

The trend towards more equitable roles and duties is more visible in some networks and, particularly, in some families. It may accelerate in the next years when the generation of Roma girls now in schools all over Europe reaches adolescence. The long stay of some of these families in different European localities is favoring process of educational integration and the development of bicultural mentalities and identities.

#### *4. Conclusions*

We have explored how a group of Roma women from various Romanian regions are transforming their reproductive lives in the transnational context brought about by their displacement to Western Europe. International migration is contributing to the transformation of their fertility patterns. Moreover transnational encounters and experiences take new meaning when considering reproduction.

This exploration showed that birth control has become a key issue of conscious choice by these Roma women, their partners and their families. However, the birth of the first child is less open to choice and planning once marriage takes place. It is particularly the choice of having another child that is becoming an area of individuals' and couples' agency that requires know-how and expert support. Hence the evidence collected shows that these women are undergoing a culturally specific fertility transition compatible with the strong institutional pressures favoring early pronatalist marriage and teenage motherhood. Two major strategies seem decisive. First, the most mature of these women are trying to stop having children in their late 20s and early 30s, at the age when most Western European women are considering motherhood. Secondly, the younger cohorts are delaying the birth of second and subsequent children. In this second strategy we find more heterogeneity among groups and families. Besides, the changes in the timing and level of their fertility are introducing key changes in their lives. Most of these Roma women are dedicating a

smaller portion of their adult lives to childbearing and childrearing. Their increasing access to family planning services is helping them to better balance reproductive and non-reproductive goals.

Secondly, in some ways fertility decline and birth control in these families is acting 'as a lever for more equal gender relations' (Malhotra, 2012: 3), although this is following different rhythms and pathways in the various groups studied. Husbands are still key actors in the process of reproductive choice, as in many other contexts (see Mason and Smith 2000). However, we found that in the couples where partners agree in their reproductive goals women tend to be much more able to use birth control effectively. However, women do not decide alone, and the pressures of husbands and close in-laws are also contributing to fertility change. Thus we contemplate here a cultural transformation and not only a turn to an individualistic view of birth control.

Thirdly, these women in their different roles are transforming the meta-institutions of family, marriage a gender by their actions and responses to the demands of their transnational experience. Teenage motherhood, for instance, is being retarded by the exigencies of schooling and education these families found in the new places where they live. The process is varied and is increasing the heterogeneity of the younger cohorts. Thus none of these institutions must be portrayed as a feature of an unchanging Roma culture, but an adaption to factors and pressures both internal and external to the communities studied. In their life abroad women are exposed daily to new models of gender equality and the sharing of domestic and care tasks. Attitudes and normative expectations are opening generation gaps between mothers and mothers-in-law and daughters or *boria* in respect of the contribution of men to household and childcare tasks. Sometimes these gaps are appearing between older and younger sisters as well. Often the couples that are more isolated from the pressures of kin and family show less asymmetry in their gender roles, and more cooperation in domestic tasks and in birth control. This supports the classic thesis of Bott about the connection of strong family networks and gender segregation (1971). Moreover, 'the extensiveness of kinship networks and the degree of the relatives' assistance with childcare' may decrease the costs of new children (Berezkei, 1998: 238). However, there are mediating variables affecting these relations, and we found increasing internal variation both among families and among the networks studied, both in terms of institutional and structural change and in the mutual trust, respect and cooperation of couples.

Our observation showed that the transnational experiences of these Roma are increasing their interactions with women with 'lifestyles, career and consumer aspirations' (Basten, Sobotka and Zeman, 2013: 83) that were relatively alien to them and that are increasingly incompatible with early and high fertility patterns. Along a more theoretical line, this case shows that gendered theories of migration (for a recent review, see: Brettell, 2016) need to consider how reproductive strategies intersect with domestic gender relations and ideologies in the intercultural encounter brought about by international mobility.

Finally the reproductive regimes observed in these Romani groups contrast sharply with those prevalent both among the majority populations in Romania and in Spain, as well as in other countries where these families have moved recently, such as Germany, Italy and the U.K. Precisely, Romania, and Spain, as most of Southern and

Eastern European countries, have remained for over two decades in the group of countries with very low levels of both period and cohort fertility (Frejka, 2017). Both countries also started their ‘postponment transitions’ form early to late age of childbearing decades ago (Kohler, Billari and Ortega, 2002: 645). Recent aggregated data provides a measure of these demographic disparities.<sup>7</sup>

It seems that marriage and the extended family remain key institutions in the social organization of reproduction of these Roma groups. This somehow contrasts with the trends observed among the overall populations of the Western European countries where they have migrated. These divergences are generating misunderstandings and conflicts both with their neighbors and with social and health professionals. However, contrary to popular discourses on the ‘irresponsible’ Roma mothers, our case shows that most Roma women and couples are ready and willing to control their fertility. However, (to use the classic formulation of Coale, 1973) most of them are not completely able to do so in their present circumstances.

It is clear that the efforts of these Roma women to control their childbearing require more adequate health education and more culturally sensitive planning services. There is a need for a more positive view of the demographic vitality of Roma people, and for an understanding of the different instituted logics of action (DiMaggio, 1997) at work in the intercultural encounters. This calls for a rephrasing of family policies and health efforts targeted to Roma women and their needs, particularly those from the more marginal and excluded groups.

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<sup>7</sup> By 2015, the final year of our survey, Romania had a TFR of 1.58 and Spain of 1.32, that is less than half that of the Roma groups surveyed that was 3.9 children per woman. The mean age of women at the birth of their first child was 26.3 for Romania and 30.8 for Spain, compared to 17.3 for the Roma mothers in our sample (see table 2). Other familial processes associated with the Second Demographic Transition have also rose steadily in both countries, although following different demographic and social pathways (Frejka, 2017; Muresan, 2008). Thus by 2015, over 44 per cent of children in Spain were borne outside marriage to to 31 per cent in Rumania. That year the divorce rate in Spain reached an all time high of 60 per cent compared to 25 for Romania (Eurostat 2017: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/population-demography-migration-projections/births-fertility-data/database>, updated Nov. 11. 2017).

responsibility for the shortcomings and mistakes of this paper rest entirely with him. We also warmly thank the Roma women who shared their views with us. We hope we are portraying their experiences and understandings accurately, and apologize if the questions we posed sometimes may have seemed too personal and invasive to them. We also answered the personal questions they asked us, but acknowledge that it was an asymmetrical exchange, and we are aware of the power imbalances generated by differences of education, class, income, gender, ethnicity and nationality. We could only hope that we are using the transient and precarious power that we might have had in those exchanges for promoting an understanding of processes that we consider crucial to the welfare and empowerment of these women.

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ANDREEA RACLES\*

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

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\* [[andreea.racles@sowi.uni-giessen.de](mailto:andreea.racles@sowi.uni-giessen.de)] (Institute of Sociology, Justus  
Liebig University, Giessen, Germany)

### 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.

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## 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'<sup>1</sup> (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,<sup>2</sup> a Roma woman from Rotoieni<sup>3</sup> (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 Mureş, as their place of origin. This identification implies a

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> To preserve the anonymity of my research participants, all the names were changed into fictional ones.

<sup>3</sup> 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” (*înapoiat*) 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*<sup>4</sup> 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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<sup>4</sup> *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 *Țigănie*.

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).<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>7</sup> or Suceava<sup>8</sup> 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'<sup>9</sup> (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),<sup>10</sup> was known by the people in the *Țigănie*

<sup>5</sup> Source: The Romanian National Institute of Statistics.

<sup>6</sup> 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\\_\(ARPE\)](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:At_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion_(ARPE))

<sup>7</sup> Located at about 379 kilometres South from Rotoieni.

<sup>8</sup> Located at about 100 kilometres North from Rotoieni.

<sup>9</sup> '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.

<sup>10</sup> 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,<sup>11</sup> 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/municipioencifras/?pn=zamora&pc=NGT70>

<sup>11</sup> 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 approximately 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’ (*țara 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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 approximately 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

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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'.<sup>12</sup> 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'<sup>13</sup> 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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<sup>12</sup> 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).

<sup>13</sup> 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’ (Tesár, 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,<sup>14</sup> *because I*

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<sup>14</sup>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<sup>15</sup> as belonging in the sense of

<sup>15</sup> 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-carpet 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’ (Engebriksen, 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

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ANA NICHITA IVASIUC\*  
Social Mobility and the Ambiguous Autonomy of Roma  
Migration

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\* [ivasiuc@staff.uni-marburg.de] (Center for Conflict Studies, Philipps  
University of Marburg)

### Abstract

Since the institutionalisation of the ‘nomads camp’ as housing policy for the Roma in Italy, various securitising discourses have ambiguously incorporated the motifs of mobility and stasis to construct Roma as a highly mobile – hence potentially ubiquitous – threat, while deploring their perceived social and cultural immobility through the tropes of their unwillingness to ‘integrate’ or to become ‘civilised’. Against the backdrop of these securitising narratives surrounding Roma (im)mobility, the article will bring to the fore the lived experiences of movement of two Roma women currently living in Rome; as they try to navigate economic hardship, the (im)mobility and pressures imposed by states’ or local authorities’ regulations of their lives, and personal contingencies, they contest, side-track or submit to the regimes of (im)mobility imposed on them. Applying a transnational and intergenerational lens to their social mobility projects contributes to nuance the autonomy of migration thesis within mobility studies: while some of their moves do challenge the categories upon which state power is predicated, in other respects they submit to prescribed paths of social mobility.

*Keywords:* autonomy of migration, social mobility, subversiveness, securitization, Roma women, nomadology.

## 1. *Introduction*

Roma mobility has been contemplated as paradigmatic and revelatory for transformations and enactments of the European citizenship; subsequently, scholars have found it useful to conceptualise the contradictions and ambiguities of the emerging European citizenship regime (Squire, 2011; Aradau et al., 2013).<sup>1</sup> Very recently, it has also been argued (Yıldız and De Genova, 2017) that the mobility of Roma may offer a critical perspective to mobility studies, too. My argument is situated within recent efforts to link Romani studies literature, in ‘splendid isolation’ (Willems, 1997) – however decreasingly so – from broader theorising efforts, with scholarly debates developing on wider themes. I will build on mobility as lived and experienced by two Roma women from Romania who settled in Rome in the last two decades. By means of life stories, they recount their various spatial moves, imposed or chosen, but invariably inscribed in projects of social mobility, which implicate their families on a transnational and trans-generational scale.<sup>2</sup>

The aim of my argument is to contribute to one of the conversations, which has developed in mobility studies in the last decade around the concept of the ‘autonomy of migration’ (Bojadžijev and Karakayalı, 2007; Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos, 2008; De Genova, 2010; Mezzadra, 2011; Mezzadra and Nielson, 2013). The general argument of this thesis is that migration is an autonomous, subversive social movement questioning, and thus implicitly challenging the very categories upon which state power and the global capitalist order are predicated. Recently, there have been convincing attempts to nuance what for some critics seemed like an over-celebratory appraisal of mobility within the autonomy of migration thesis (Scheel, 2015), emphasising, against the romanticisation of mobility and resistance, the inherent ambivalence of migrants’ subjective practices (Mezzadra, 2010). I wish to contribute to this argument and propose conceptual and methodological tools to further safeguard the thesis of the autonomy of migration against the risk of romanticising migrants’ strategies and tactics of resistance to attempts at confining and disciplining their movement. I argue that by extending the examination of migrants’ (im)mobilities across borders (against methodological nationalism), but also across generations, ethnographic research may reveal a wider, and more complex perspective on the ambivalence of migrants’ tactics grounded in projects of social mobility.<sup>3</sup> These are inevitably always intersecting, transforming, appropriating, or submitting to the

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<sup>2</sup> The ethnographic research conducive to this article took place for six months between 2014 and 2017, and was carried out within the project ‘Dynamics of Security: Forms of Securitisation in Historical Perspective’ (SFB/Transregio 138), funded by the German Research Foundation. The material on which I rely in this article has been gathered through in-depth life story interviews carried out over several sessions in 2016.

<sup>3</sup> In speaking of (im)mobility, I wish to emphasise that the lived experiences of the Roma women I interviewed, like of many other migrants, alternate between moments of mobility and moments of stasis; according to the particularities and contingencies of each life trajectory, mobility and immobility are invested with different – and ambivalent – meanings.

constraints imposed by the exclusionary regulation of mobilities, and of residence and citizenship regimes. Examining to what extent the migrants' aspirations and projected pathways of social mobility intersect with prescribed 'integration' categories is key to avoiding the romanticisation of Roma mobility as inherently subversive.

In the first section, a short incursion in the development of the *campi nomadi* in Italy and the political context in which Roma mobilities have recently been securitised will provide the background information to situate the life stories of the two women and the constraints they had to circumvent or to appropriate. In the second part, I discuss some of the key arguments of the 'autonomy of migration' scholarship, which conceptualises mobility as subversive to existing categories, and explore how this argument resonates in recent Romani studies scholarship building on Deleuze and Guattari's nomadology. The third part of the article develops on the stories of Speranța and Monica, showing how enlarging the perspective on (Romani) migration beyond methodological nationalism and articulating spatial and social mobility helps to nuance, in some regards, the autonomy of migration thesis. By tracing the endpoint of these women's life projections, I warn against the pitfalls of conceptualising the strategies of Romani people as inherently subversive to current orders of political economy, as well as of the view that migratory 'lines of flight' can always be seen as a social movement attempting to create escapes from the global capitalist order.

## ***2. The securitisation of Roma mobility: nomadism and campi nomadi in Italy***

In the spring of 2008, soon after its election, the Berlusconi government declared the state of emergency in the regions of Latium, Lombardy and Campania, comprising the three largest cities in Italy. This time, against the rule that the state of emergency could only be declared in the event of natural catastrophes, no flood, earthquake or other disaster was at the origin of the decree. What was posed as an existential threat demanding extraordinary measures was the presence of 'nomad' settlements (*campi nomadi*), that is, of groups of people categorised as 'nomads', or '*zingari*', particularly from Eastern Europe, who had migrated to Italy in waves starting from the '60s in search for better living circumstances, or, later, to flee the Balkan wars. In the case of many of them, their precarious conditions pushed them to improvise shacks in the urban interstices and peripheries of Rome, Milan, Naples, and other urban centres. The securitising move (Buzan et al., 1998) articulated by the government posed that these settlements were inherently dangerous, removing the issue of Roma immigration from deliberative politics into the realm of exceptionalism.

The wider context in which must be placed this particular problematisation of the mobility of Roma from Eastern Europe to and within Italy is the rise of the security paradigm: a social and political organisation in which security became one of the main structuring and productive dimensions of social life, generating (political, social, financial) capital, legal norms and acts, and social and institutional practices aimed at reducing perceived or existing insecurity on a multiplicity of levels. The security paradigm restructured socialities in the security register, leading to the securitisation and subsequent greater state control of many aspects of social life,

including migration (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 2006; Walters, 2008; van Munster, 2009; Feldman, 2011). In several Western countries, starting in the '90s, migrants were increasingly portrayed as a danger to national and urban order, to particular ways of life produced as Western and thus 'civilised', and to the already eroding social security systems in late capitalism. In Italy, the link between migration and criminality – thus insecurity – stabilised in the '90s (Cole, 1997); my own research shows that in the '80s, discourses securitising the presence of immigrants on the urban scene – among whom, Roma from Yugoslavia – were already emerging in national and local newspapers.

In Rome, the politics set in motion by the *emergenza nomadi* – the declaration of the state of emergency – focused on moving Roma<sup>4</sup> around: the then ruling Alemanno mayoral administration dismantled several of the largest *campi nomadi* of Rome and evicted many informal settlements. A number of families agreed to move to the large official camps called 'villages of solidarity', which in 2014 came to host approximately 4,400 people (Associazione 21 Luglio, 2015). Some families were moved to so-called 'reception centres' managed by non-governmental organisations with direct funding from the local administration; the remaining families, for whom there was no place, or who refused the dubious alternative conditions proposed, settled again informally in other places: interstices of urban tissue, such as the spaces under bridges or highways, difficultly accessible areas in public parks and on the banks of the Tiber or Aniene rivers, or abandoned industrial buildings. In these places unauthorised for settlement, the Roma took the risk of undergoing repeated evictions, and in fact, since 2008, many families have been kept on the move under subsequent local administrations, in an entrenched condition of 'evictability' (van Baar 2017).

The genealogy of *campi nomadi* in Italy is often traced back to French legislation for the *Gens du voyage* implemented in the '60s. 'Roma' culture was – and still is – essentially, often erroneously, and always in oversimplified ways interpreted as revolving exclusively around the practice of nomadism. Camps were initially envisaged as spaces in which nomadism could be nourished and somewhat tamed, while kept away from the spaces where it could disturb the cultural sensibilities of the sedentary population, in spatial and social isolation. However, beyond the French inspiration for Italy's policy of camps, several authors (Piasere, 2006; Picker et al., 2015) trace the genealogy of *campi nomadi* to the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial era, as the spatial expression of domination and racial exclusion. Much has been written about camps as spatialisations of biopolitics (Clough Marinaro, 2009) and as technologies of governance of racial exclusion (Picker et al., 2015), so I will not dwell on these themes. What I do wish to underline is the ambiguity of the camps in the Italian imaginary, both as spaces of protection, and as spaces where the danger posed by '*nomadi*' could be confined.

The ways in which the inhabitants themselves relate to camps is rife with contradictions, too. A general consensus is that informal settlements are better in

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<sup>4</sup> There are many groups in Italy that are generally subsumed under the umbrella term of 'Roma', the misnomer '*nomadi*', or the racial slur '*zingari*'. They come from different Eastern European countries, have various social organisation systems, and claim belonging to various groups such as Căramizari, 'Romanianised' Roma, Dassikhané, Khorakhané, Xomá, etc. Evidently, although I do use the general category of 'Roma' for linguistic parsimony, I do not claim the homogeneity of these groups' strategies of migration and social mobility.

every way than authorised camps: they are embedded in the social urban fabric and develop organically in autonomous ways, while evading state control and offering openings for informal economic activities. Once the ethnographic lens is used in research, it illuminates certain ambivalences in official camps (Sigona, 2015): for instance, the authorised camps are sometimes perceived as able to offer a sense of security to the ones who submit to the rules of the camp – no visitors overnight, no absences of over three months, no swapping containers in unauthorised ways. Authorised *campi nomadi* are insalubrious, overcrowded places rife with tensions; yet moving out of the camp is a wish that is not always easy to act on: despite the will to leave the camp, many families who would be able to produce all the documents to apply for social housing do not do so. In turn, a significant share of the academic literature on *campi nomadi* in Italy often falls short of ethnographic thickness in accounting for forms of agency of camp inhabitants, and particularly in the way that camps and their effects may sometimes be subverted and used for particular life projects.

For many inhabitants – although not all – the camp is a temporary, often imposed stopping place in a larger envisaged project, a place they hope to escape as soon as possible in the transition to a higher socio-economic status. The stigmatising effects of living in a camp, and the ways in which the camp is an obstacle to finding work and to a ‘normal life’, are recurrent themes in conversations, and they mark the peculiarity of their inhabitants’ experience of migration and post-migration social mobility efforts, in contrast with other migrants unaffected by the stereotype of nomadism. While the Roma strive to maintain forms of autonomy in the movements which are imposed on them, their decisions to submit or, to the contrary, to evade the disciplining power of the state, must be placed in the wider context of their projects of social mobility, in a multigenerational and multispatial analysis transcending methodological nationalism.

### *3. Subversive agency: the autonomy of migration thesis and nomadology*

Romani mobility in Italy has often been framed in terms, which do not underscore sufficiently the agency of Roma, predominantly portrayed as powerless victims of state intervention. However, accounts grounded in ethnographic thickness have challenged the representation of Roma groups in Italy as entirely devoid of agency (Daniele, 2011; Rossi, 2011; Solimene, 2013; Sigona, 2015). As an overarching concern, my epistemological commitment is to write about the Roma in ways respectful of their agency, thus of their world-making abilities, against the pervading narrative which centres disproportionately on their victimhood through the exclusive focus on the processes to which they are subjected (Ivasiuc, 2018). This concern to represent agency echoes a recent emphasis within migration studies (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010), seeking to bypass the problematic public opinion binary between victimhood without agency, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, agency grounded exclusively within deviance and criminality; on a theoretical level, this emphasis attempts to transgress the oversimplified analytics of the structure versus agency debate in migration (Squire, 2016).

In a similar vein, the ‘autonomy of migration’ thesis has developed as an agency-oriented approach, posing that the often subversive tactics of migrants invite a re-examination of the very categories upon which state power is predicated; instead of being the victims of migration policies, in fact migrants trigger change by forcing policymakers to react to their mobilities and flows (Bojadžijev and Karakayalı, 2007; Papadopoulos, Stephenson and Tsianos, 2008; De Genova, 2010; Mezzadra, 2011; Mezzadra and Nielson, 2013). Thus, migrants’ agency is seen to both *precede* and *exceed* power and the attempts at arresting mobility. The autonomy of migration scholarship emphasises the proclivity of human mobility to circumvent borders, obstacles, and control, and to maintain the autonomy of desires, projects, and aspirations despite states’ attempts to discipline the movement of migrants, and beyond existing and enforced regimes of immigration, residence, and citizenship. Some scholars (Mezzadra, 2004; Bojadžijev and Karakayalı, 2010; De Genova, 2010) have suggested that migration can be seen as an essentially global, bottom-up anti-capitalist critique, in the attempt at autonomising a labour force rebellious to its own captivity to particular regimes of labour.

Agency-centred approaches, however, inherently entail the risk of romanticising the acts of the subordinate, while overstating the outcomes of such acts and downplaying the repressive character of the control against which the subordinate act. The autonomy of migration perspective has been duly criticised in this regard (Mezzadra, 2010; Scheel, 2013; 2015), although its sophisticated arguments have generally been able to withstand this critique (Mezzadra, 2011). Sometimes perhaps too abstract, the argument may be criticised for what Sherry Ortner (1995) would call ‘dissolving the subject’ into abstract positions disconnected from lived experience. Against this latter criticism, Scheel (2013: 283) proposes, for instance, to see migration through the lens of ‘embodied encounters’ in order to ‘[bridge] the tension between particular practices, struggles and experiences of embodied subjects and general conclusions about the autonomy of migration’.

Recently, there has been a positive reinvestment of the conceptual frame of ‘nomadism’ in theorising Romani mobilities, through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari’s nomadology. In a recent article, Ada Engebriksen (2017) argues that the nomad, as conceptual figure, inhabits subversive possibilities, and although the nomad is the ‘subject of the law of the other’ (de Certeau, 2002), she never subsumes to its power (Engebriksen, 2017: 48), but perpetually challenges the very classifications essential to the preservation of state power. Against criticisms pointing out the disconnection between this particular figure of the nomad applied to migrants and their lived experiences of exclusion, racialisation, and oppression, she argues that Deleuze and Guattari have grounded their nomadology in ethnographic accounts, and advances that in many ways, the Roma from Norway may be fruitfully analysed through this particular lens. In line with previous ethnographic work (Engebriksen, 2014), she sees the refusal of Roma to submit to the rules of the majority, and their tactics to escape education and wage labour as mechanisms of subjection to the state, as a productive and subversive critique of the latter, a nomadic ‘war machine’ (Engebriksen, 2017: 50). Her argument engages, although secondarily and rather lightly, with the autonomy of migration scholarship (Papadopoulos and Tsianos, 2007), when she draws a parallel between the figure of the nomad devising tactics of

evasion and resistance, and the undocumented migrants escaping state control (Engebriksen, 2017: 50-51).

Through my examples, I wish to show how expanding the spatial and temporal focus on the trajectories of Roma migrants – both across borders and generations – may be helpful in avoiding the romanticisation of their tactics and an unqualified ‘aestheticising apology of nomadism’ as subversion of existing orders (Mezzadra, 2011). Thus, building on the argument emphasising the need to transcend methodological nationalism in mobility studies (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2002; De Genova, 2013; van Baar, 2017), I argue that an intergenerational analysis carried out transnationally makes it possible to grasp broader dynamics of social mobility bringing together apparently contradictory processes: what in one setting seems like a subversive evasion from state power, in another place may become submission to it; conversely, what may be seen as forced spatial immobility may be appropriated for an envisaged social mobility in a future temporality.

#### *4. Questioning subversiveness through the lens of social mobility*

The spatial mobility of the subaltern is a key theme of concern for the dominant (Cvajner and Sciortino, 2010). Social mobility, as a dynamic of betterment of one’s social standing, however tightly linked to the people’s motivations to leave for better conditions, is only secondarily and ambiguously intertwined with discourses securitising the mobility of migrants. The case of the Roma is paradigmatic of the perceived immutability of social hierarchies. Their spatial mobility, through the emphasis on the dangers it poses, is seen in disconnection from their own projects of social mobility: it is often axiomatically said of the Roma that they are unable, or do not wish to ‘integrate’, in a culturalising move producing them as inept or deviant others. While some of the autonomy of migration scholarship addresses the critique of the integration rhetoric (Bojadžijev and Karakayalı, 2010; Mezzadra, 2011), such a critique can only be viable when it takes seriously the aspirations of migrants themselves regarding the betterment of their social standing, *from their own perspective*.<sup>5</sup> This vantage point problematises one of the arguments of the autonomy of migration scholarship representing migrants’ tactics as essentially rebellious to conceptions of upward social mobility derived from the capitalist system (Mezzadra, 2011): what happens, then, when such conceptions are claimed and appropriated by migrants themselves, in a move ambivalently weaving evasion and submission?<sup>6</sup>

##### *4.1. Speranța: Evading/submitting to state power*

Speranța<sup>6</sup> is a 40-year-old woman from the Southeast of Romania. Born in one of the largest Roma neighbourhoods in the country, she comes from the Cărămizari subgroup; traditionally, they were producing bricks, either for private consumption or for the state’s agricultural facilities during the communist times. The collapse of state

<sup>5</sup> In the case of the Gabor from Transylvania, Martin Olivera (2012) has made a convincing case about the relevance of examining how they see and produce their own ‘integration.’

<sup>6</sup> The names are fictive.

economies post-1989, as well as the pauperisation of many Romanians during the 'transition' period, has diminished the demand for the Cărămizari's bricks. Many inhabitants of the settlement in which Speranța was born subsequently took the path of migration, mostly towards Italy. Speranța owns a small, two-room house in the same neighbourhood, but since it has been disconnected from the power grid due to arrears, it is impossible to live there, especially in the cold Romanian winters. She spends most of her time begging in a relatively well-off Roman neighbourhood in the Northwest of the city, where she established many connections with the locals. Occasionally, she also does small cleaning jobs for her contacts. Although in extreme precarity and under perpetual threat of being evicted, she earns more than she ever could back in Romania. A few years ago, she worked for a while in a sewing workshop, where she was making theatre costumes that would sell for considerable money on Rome's rich cultural scene. With the financial crisis, the workshop closed and Speranța was left unemployed.

I met Speranța through one of my key informants in Rome, whom she had asked for help to register her at his address so she could receive financial state support in the form of food tickets. We went together to the post office where he had to declare that she can receive her mail at his address, and the long queue and complicated procedure involving long waiting times allowed us plenty of opportunity to talk. She quickly recounted the story of her arrival, but what in our unstructured discussions she privileged was the topic of how the authorities had threatened to take away one of her children, when they found her begging on the streets while carrying him in her arms. That event was clearly key in her story, and her fear of authorities' attempts to remove her children a central theme throughout several of the episodes she recounted. Her fears were well-grounded in the recurrent practice of Italian authorities taking away Roma children from their families, if they suspect that the child is being abused, neglected or exploited.

Speranța arrived in Italy in 2001, with a three-months visa, which she overstayed. She went to the authorised camp in which her brother and sister in law were staying with their children. As she was not officially registered in the camp, she built a shack next to it. There were often police controls during the night, in order to evict, and subsequently deport, the families which had not been granted permission to stay in the camp; their shacks were regularly destroyed, and then rebuilt again. Speranța recounts one of these controls in which she had to take her four-months old baby through a vicious storm and hide in the bushes while trying to protect him from the weather. She comments with irony on her life at that time as being the opposite of what she had expected when she decided to move to Italy. However, poverty back in Romania and the necessity to ensure a bare minimum for her three children pushed her to stay. The camp next to which she initially stayed was destroyed in a fire. After the fire, she recalls:

[t]he social workers came to get us, took us and put us in a centre, all of us who had small children, (...) up to ten years of age. Just the mothers and the children. They did not care about the men. We had to go willy-nilly. Now there were many rumours: 'Well, if they took us with our children, it's because they want to take our children away.' We were all afraid; we were about thirty mothers, with two-three children each. (...) They took us, brought us there, and they begged us not to go (...). Me, [I kept

thinking] no, they want to take my child away. (...) I didn't know the rules, the law, I was at the beginning, fearing, 'cause the social workers had taken other children away, and that was our fear. We escaped from there; all of us ran away wherever we could, no one stayed.

The fear of having her children removed kept haunting her. She moved from camp to camp, and then from centre to centre, when the authorities closed down the camps. Recently, the authorities have started closing down the centres, too, following the corruption scandal known as *Mafia Capitale*: in 2014, it was discovered that many politicians were profiting from the direct attribution of contracts for the management of either *campi nomadi*, or centres for migrants. The last time the authorities closed down the centre where she was living, they offered as only alternative a shelter for the homeless. She refused ('too many crazy people there, and violent, and smelly'), and, together with an older woman who had become her roommate after she broke up with her husband, she built a shack on a green area inside the city. Evicted from this small settlement months later, she rebuilt a shack in another area, far from sight but well within the urban tissue.

In the interview that she granted me on the next day, Speranța recounted how the social worker who was overseeing her where she begged on the street kept warning her about the risk of having her child removed by the authorities. One day, while her husband was away buying food at the nearby market, the social worker came with the police, and they wanted to take away her child. She resisted as much as she could, kicking and screaming, to the point they had to call in reinforcements. When her husband returned from the market, the police handcuffed him and told her she had to follow them, or else he would be put in prison. They wanted to submit the child to a medical check up, and accused her of having drugged him. Fearing for her husband's freedom, she followed them to the police station, where she told her child in Romanes to wreak havoc in the office, which he did, Speranța recounts amused. In the end, they took her and her son to the hospital, where she was lucky to find a doctor who defended her. The check up was flawless, the verdict came: the child was both very healthy and very clean. She was then sent home together with her child, but she did not dare to leave the camp again, for fear they might follow up on the threat the social worker addressed to her: that if she would catch her again with her child on the street, she would take him away for good. She decided this was no life, perpetually fearing to have her child taken away from her. She brought him back to Romania. Her three children are now raised in two different homes by her sister and her former mother-in-law, and she sends them every penny she can. Pondering on her existence, she concludes that it is not a worthy life, reinvesting with a bitter meaning a move, which once seemed to open a better future. She wishes her children were with her and misses them desperately, but the only reason she is still in Rome is to get money for them, so they can get a better education, and, later on, a good job. She recounts with indignation how they do not teach children anything in the school to which her younger son goes, and proudly narrates how she spoke to his teacher and prompted her to do her job, 'even if we are Gypsies.' She continues to hope that her children will get a good education that would justify her sacrifices.

Although her social mobility is stagnating at best, if not outright downward, her money feeds the projected upward social mobility of her children. On most days, she

can barely make ends meet, but for her it is crucial that her children do not miss anything they need, and most of all, that they get a proper education now and good jobs later. Although she clearly enacts all sorts of evading strategies and tactics, escaping state power in Rome by fleeing from one unauthorised settlement to another, she has other plans in mind for her children, and sees them well within prescribed social mobility paths, with education and wage labour at the core. Her own evasion from state power sustains her children's submission to it, and the fact that these processes happen in two different places and through different people may occult their interrelatedness, and, indeed, the embodiment and relationality inscribed in mobility projects (Scheel, 2013).

#### *4.2. Monica: the autonomy of entrepreneurship*

Monica is a woman in her late '40s, born and raised in a small town in the Southeast of Romania. She speaks Romani with a soft, but commanding voice, asking her daughters to bring us coffee on the patio in front of her container in one of the largest *campi nomadi* of Rome. She recounts with pride that her extended family are thriving and respected people back in her town. Some of the family's members have held positions in local institutions; there has even been a mayor in their family. They have always kept busy and have always managed, in all circumstances, to thrive, by doing trade and shifting to whatever opportunities opened up in Romania.

I met Monica in the summer of 2016. At the end of a full day at the camp, I went to look for one of the young men who provide taxi services to and from the camp. Located outside the ring road, the camp is detached and isolated from nearby neighbourhoods. Public transportation is at least three kilometres away, and to get to the nearest bus or train stop, one must walk a circulated road without sidewalks. Some of the Roma do that: women frequently walk by the road, pushing prams with small children or topped with bulky objects that they recover from containers and re-purpose to sell. However, this is a dangerous option, with cars driving at high speed past the camp, so many Roma use Mario's taxi services. Five euro to the nearby neighbourhoods, five euro back again, the gains from this informal entrepreneurial activity seem substantial, and, above all, regular: hardly 15 minutes would pass before someone would drop by to ask for Mario's driving services. In fact, he often has to refuse clients because he cannot handle them all. I found Monica, his mother, preparing the evening meal at the table in front of their container. Monica arrived in Italy in 1999 and settled in the Casilino 700 camp, where she had some relatives and knew some people from her region back in Romania. 'It was good there', she recalls the camp, 'we all knew each other, we helped each other.' At first, she made a living by shoplifting, even though she morally condemns the practice, especially since she became a Jehovah's Witness and reads the Bible regularly. 'I was obliged to steal, 'cause no one helped us at all.' She was caught stealing and served time in prison, then decided to quit. Then, together with her husband, she started collecting scrap metal: they were paying taxes regularly, and it was a benefit for all: 'We worked for us, but we worked for the state, too, and the people were happy because we were cleaning up.' In 2000, the Casilino 700 camp was 'broken', like the Romanian Roma say: the authorities tore down the shacks and evicted the inhabitants, assigning them to

different other camps throughout Rome. Her family was moved to the camp where she has been living for the last 16 years. During these years, she changed container once, to move from an area inhabited by the Khorakhané – Bosnian Roma – to one of the Romanian areas in the camp. She brought her youngest daughters from Romania and registered them at the nearby school, where they like it very much. The girls almost do not speak any Romanian anymore.

Her husband left her for another woman and moved to another country, but she had the inspiration to keep all her children on her name, so he could lay no claims on them, and they all stayed with her, except for the oldest daughter, who is in Romania, and has her own house ‘with everything she needs’. After her husband left, she opened an informal bar in the camp, and, although the profit margins are rather small, she ‘made good money’, as she puts it (*am făcut bani frumoși*).

She deems her life in the camp a good life. True, the camp is ugly and dirty, but she maintains their space clean, she says, pointing towards the space under her container and prompting me to check its cleanliness for myself: ‘I use a bottle of chlorine a day to clean, it’s so clean you can eat off the floor.’ The container is ‘almost like a house, see for yourself, the way it is inside it’s just like a normal house, and we keep it clean.’ The two living spaces of the container are shared by Monica, her two teenage daughters, her 20-year-old son, his wife and their newborn son. Monica is the architect and evident leader of a social mobility project encompassing three generations. The English resonance of her grandson’s name, whose baptism they had just celebrated, testifies to the dreams and desires of social ascension that they cherish.

Monica also earned her living with various cleaning jobs. She is confident that if she had to, she could find a job in no time, were it not for the fact that when people hear she is from the *campo nomadi*, they are reluctant to offer her a job. In fact, the plan is to remain in the camp until her family gets the Italian citizenship, and ‘with a bit of help from God’ they will get the social housing for which they have filed a request in the spring of 2016. ‘When we have documents and a house like the Italians, not like the Roma on the camp, there won’t be racism any longer.’

Her contentment with the life conditions in the camp is a dissonant voice among the camp’s inhabitants. Monica is one of its oldest inhabitants, and it certainly does sound as if her entrepreneurial skills could have gotten her family out of the camp earlier; she claims this herself. Her immobility, however, must be linked to the use of the camp as economic strategy. In this respect, others, too, explain the advantages of the camp: there are no expenses and no rent. When these saved costs add up to the fruition of entrepreneurial openings inside the camp, just like Monica and her son, the camp facilitates accumulation with relatively low expenses, allowing for family projects of social mobility.

Living in the camp can thus be an economic strategy, as it is for some Roma who in the meantime have managed to buy land in the Eastern periphery of Rome. Temporary spatial immobility – often deplored and reified as such in some academic accounts lacking ethnographic thickness – is used as strategy of upwards social mobility in this case, revealing the agency of women like Monica to take advantage of ‘the system’ and appropriate the camp for her own social mobility projects. The space of the camp, her immobility and the imagined future mobility, both in spatial and social terms (‘when we have a house’, ‘when we have the Italian citizenship’), are

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reinvested with the meaning of a long-term social mobility project initiated with the migratory move nearly 20 years ago. The exploitation of an entrepreneurial niche and the logic of maximising profits while minimising costs is essentially what Monica's family has designed as social mobility strategy. Thus, the migratory 'line of flight' that Monica has undertaken runs counter to the argument that such projects inherently contest the exploitative capitalistic order. Undoubtedly, Monica's labour is not captive, nor does she exploit others' labour; yet, her family economically exploits the remoteness of the camp – the very obstacle that many other camp inhabitants name when they deplore their own social immobility and being spatially stuck.

### *5. Conclusion*

The mobility turn in migration studies has been criticised for privileging the stories of those with the right amount of capital – both financial and social – to cross boundaries in what seems to be unimpeded movement, and for its celebratory overtones betraying a tendency to romanticise and aggrandise movement, while ignoring the immobilities, difficulties, dangers and defeats in the projects of mobility of many underprivileged. Mobility may be an essential mode of being in the world (Urry, 2000), but for those of the 'wrong' citizenship, class, religious background, and 'race', it is often punctuated by significant instances of immobility, of 'getting stuck' while waiting (Hage, 2015). In a similar vein, the thesis of the autonomy of migration is grounded in the emphasis on the 'politics of incorrigibility' of migrants (De Genova, 2017) as challenging the existing categories upon which state power rests, as well as the global capitalist order. In this article, I have argued that the autonomy of migration thesis may be nuanced by the careful examination of the intersection between spatial and social mobility through the lens of transnational and trans-generational projects of social mobility. Taking a cue from earlier criticism of facile oversimplifications or romanticisations of projects of resistance (Abu Lughod, 1990; Ortner, 1995), I warn, through the examples of my fieldwork, against a thinned, decontextualised concept of subversion. The life experiences of Speranța and Monica uncover the ways in which they reinvest their (im)mobility with meaning.

Speranța's story – illustrative of the sacrifices that many other migrants make in order to bring about the social ascension of their children – suggests that the conceptualisation of the logic of evasion from state control as subversive needs to be placed in the larger context of multigenerational projects of social mobility which migrants devise for their families. If Speranța is clearly evading state control and the spatial technologies through which this control is exerted – the camp, the homeless centre – she does so in order to navigate her own fears and the constraints imposed on her mobility, but also to protect the access of her children to a better future through the money she is – although not always – able to send to Romania. If she remains completely at the margins of Italian society, living in the bush and seemingly not submitting to state control, it is so that she maintains her ability to pursue the project of social mobility she has in mind for her children. Yet, were she offered a steady job and housing, she would not refuse them: she is far from embodying the subversive nomad challenging prescribed ways of being in the world.

On the other hand, Monica's economic strategy of shoplifting used in her youth could, at that time, be seen as a way to evade state control and the rules which come with one's submission to it. In the course of her life, Monica's evasion gradually turned into an embrace of the rules of entrepreneurial profit-making, as she and her son became entrepreneurs exploiting the very effects of the camp, which otherwise hamper the life projects of many Roma. Monica's strategy of using the camp's remoteness as entrepreneurial grounds for financial accumulation equally nuances the celebratory conceptualisation of migration as an anti-capitalist movement. The remoteness of the camp allows for forms of exploitation, the outcome of which is upward social mobility for those camp inhabitants who are able to navigate the system to their benefit, embracing and operating precisely those entrepreneurial skills acclaimed by neoliberal rationalities of profit-making.

I do not wish to effect a trenchant definition of their tactics and strategies as ultimately *submissive* to existing categories, orders and pathways, either. Their resistance to be incorporated as 'living labour' is a non-negligible particularity many migrant Roma share in Italy, which unsettles one of the constitutive arguments within the autonomy of migration thesis, which sees migrants as exploitable excess to be subjected, through their differential inclusion, to the capitalist mode of production (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2010; Mezzadra, 2011; De Genova, 2013). Rather, Roma migrants' agency is ambiguously interwoven with dynamics of rejection, at time, and embrace, at other times, of dominant ways of being and of social mobility paths prescribed by contemporary political economies. In order to grasp these ambiguities, analyses of mobility must account for spatial and social mobility dialectically and across generations, highlighting the ruptures and contradictions resulting from migrants' conscious strategies, the constraining or enabling effects of public policies, the appropriations of those by migrants, and the contingencies of personal lives.

Perceiving subversion in the life strategies and tactics of migrants raises the unavoidable issue of a politics of representation which risks relying on 'writing things into existence in order to subvert dominant ways of thinking' (Rosenow, 2013: 432). Just how much political wishful thinking taints the way in which we interpret real people's lives is a crucial question – one that anthropology has often raised under the critical examination of one's positionality. Conceptually, it is crucial to distinguish between a scholarly radical critique of existing orders, and the subversive potential of migrants' agency; tracing the end-point of migrants' desires may support the intellectual project of engaging lucidly with this distinction. Methodologically, approaching migrants' experiences through life stories privileges the re-interpretative moment of movement and immobility, of their trajectories, and of the values they come to inhabit at particular points in time (Rogaly, 2015), thus relinquishing to our interlocutors the power to interpret and signify their own acts at a distance from our frames. Turning towards a 'nomadic science', like Ada Engebriksen (2017) suggests, must not preclude reflection on the representation of our interlocutors as political subjects, and the entanglement of our own subjectivities in writing.

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**STEFANIA PONTRANDOLFO\***  
**Social Mobilities in the Transnational Migration of  
Romanian Roma to Italy**

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\* [stefania.pontrandolfo@univr.it] (Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Verona, Italy)

### **Abstract**

The article can be included in the contemporary debate about the role that transnational migrations play in modifying the European social order. There is general agreement about the fact that, in the modern-day global framework, while transnational migration can improve the living conditions of some, they can also make things worse for others and can contribute to creating new forms of inequality rather than curtailing old ones. Scholars agree that international migration can lead to profound social changes through social remittances or cultural mobilities, but they are skeptical about the possibility of considerable re-stratification both in receiving and origin countries.

The article therefore investigates changes in status within some Romanian Roma migrant networks in Italy based on a set of qualitative and ethnographic data compiled during the European project *The Immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, Effects and Future Engagement Strategies – MigRom*.

This article demonstrates how Romanian Roma migration is only able to produce status changes in migration partially, and highlights how these changes are the result of a diverse combination of factors, such as Roma migrants' motivation, ambition, and opportunities, but above all migration policies and anti-Gypsyism in the origin and receiving countries.

*Keywords:* transnational migration; social mobility; Romanian Roma; Oltenia; Italy.

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## *1. Introduction: Social Inequalities, Social Mobilities and Transnational Migration*

The aim of this article is to investigate the social transformations induced by contemporary transnational migration by analyzing the case studies of several networks of Roma migrants from Romania to Italy.

This introduction mainly provides an update about the connections between social inequality, social mobility and transnational migration studies, thereby positioning the work from a theoretical and methodological perspective within the scientific debate about these topics.

Social inequalities are constantly increasing in Europe as a consequence of globalization economies and policies (ILO, 2008; ILO, 2016; Harvey, 2005; Navarro, 2007). A number of scholars have highlighted how, in this context, transnational migration constitutes one of the main exercises of agency of more vulnerable populations (e.g. Kaneff and Pine, 2011). However, scholars have also accentuated how transnational migrations are processes based on inequality and discrimination, or in other terms, how the right to be mobile is now more selective than ever (e.g. Bauman, 1998). Faist (2014) recently underlined the urgent need for critical reflection and empirical studies about what he defines as 'the European transnational social question.' Within the framework of today's increased flows of people, capital, objects, ideas and practices across national borders (Appadurai, 1996) that are influenced by neoliberal policies and economies, reflecting on the role that transnational mobility plays in modifying the social structure of Europe has now become essential (Favell and Recchi, 2011; Faist, 2014).

In cross-sectional transnational migration and social mobility studies, what has mainly emerged so far is the significant need to renew this areas of research. Social mobility is a classical and central theme in sociology and almost all the principal authors in this disciplinary field have dealt with it. However, a new approach is now needed to overcome the so-called 'survey paradigm' (Bertaux and Thompson, 2006) that has long been the dominant research model. In fact, for a long time in the history of sociology, social mobility studies were mainly based on national statistics and surveys regarding the occupational status and incomes of men in the working age bracket, and within national employment markets.<sup>1</sup>

The economic and social changes of the last few decades have demonstrated, however, the ineffectiveness of this survey paradigm for including the different realities that have long been invisible to social mobility studies. For example, women (unemployed housewives, part-time workers, temporarily and/or irregularly employed women); young people (unemployed or temporarily and/or irregularly employed); and the elite rich on the one hand and the ever-increasing numbers of poor on the other (which now includes temporary workers and many migrants) (Bertaux and Thompson, 2006; Friedman, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Of the plentiful sociological literature that has been produced through the survey paradigm, I will only mention one classical work in the international context (Goldthorpe and Erikson, 1992), and one for the Italian context (Pisati, 2000).

Furthermore, social inequality also depends on extensive distribution systems and resource stratification and the chance of accessing these. For this reason, we can define poverty as reduced access to resources, and upward mobility as movement towards greater access to these. However, resources can be of various types: economic (e.g. employment), social (e.g. social networks), cultural (e.g. consumption patterns) and political (e.g. recognition). This is why social (im)mobility studies should not merely take figures about the income of one part of the population (such as working men) into consideration. It is necessary to go beyond employment status when studying social mobility and to investigate the social and cultural dimensions that effectively contribute to it (i.e. social network protection, or changes in consumption models that can transmit and favor upward mobility as well as racialization processes that can impede upward mobility, even if incomes increase, etc.).

Several scholars have also underlined how these extensions in the field of study must necessarily be accompanied by a new combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. Qualitative research should be extended to fill the gap that the survey paradigm leaves by gathering data about less statistically relevant but certainly no less sociologically and anthropologically relevant aspects of reality. A new and more balanced combination of quantitative and qualitative methods could be part of the ongoing analysis of social and cultural change, together with that of macro and micro structural factors, top-down and bottom-up processes, structural violence in exercising power and the coping strategies of those who are systematically excluded from power (Bertaux and Thompson, 2006; Favell and Recchi, 2011). From this point of view, socio-cultural anthropology, and particularly the anthropology of migratory processes, whose approach centers on studying the global/local connection and social and cultural changes in their historical dimensions (Brettel, 2015), can make a significant contribution to the study of connections between social mobility and transnational migrations.

Moreover, from a methodological perspective, it has been underlined how it is equally important to substantially overcome methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) in social mobility studies (so far overly anchored in the various national contexts) (Favell and Recchi, 2011; Faist, 2014), and to delve further into particular 'regimes of mobility' (Glick Schiller and Salazar, 2013) currently in force in Europe. This would certainly provide a more complex and more realistic picture of current dynamics.

Studies of the interconnections between transnational migrations and social transformations are in general agreement that the intensification of transnational migration, in a globalization context, has a considerable transformative impact on modern societies (Vertovec, 2004; Castels, 2010). They also generally agree that the consequences of transnational migrations can be positive, negative or ambivalent. In some cases, they can contribute to reproducing or reinforcing established orders (Portes, 2010), while in other cases they can help create new forms of inequality rather than curtail existing ones (Faist, 2014). They can sometimes, at least partially, lead migrants to successfully achieve their goals of improving their own living conditions (Kaneff and Pine, 2011), often after a long process involving later generations than those that originally migrated (Portes, 2010).

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Migration-induced social transformations may be considered in terms of behavior and value changes, as well as in terms of societal re-stratification and power re-distribution (i.e. the re-organization of socioeconomic status order and hierarchy in both the origin and receiving countries). Scholars agree about the possibility that international migrations can lead to profound social changes through social remittances (Levitt, 1998) or cultural mobilities (Salazar, 2010), but there is more skepticism regarding the possibility of considerable re-stratification both in receiving and origin countries (e.g. Portes, 2010; Castles, 2010). What seems to happen more frequently is not the overturning of the social orders that existed prior to migration, but the consolidation of old orders reinforced by migration (e.g. Lampert, 2012; van Houte et al., 2014) or the creation, through migration, of new stratifications among migrants and non-migrants (e.g. Carling, 2004; Adams et al., 2008).

Scholars who study migration from Romania and who have dealt with the impact of migration on Romanian society thirty years after the onset of migratory flows, which even now regularly involve a significant proportion of the Romanian population, have also come to similar conclusions (Anghel and Horvath, 2009; Anghel, 2010, 2013; Alexandru, 2012).

Studies on Romanian Roma migration also confirm these findings, unfailingly highlighting the fact that Romanian Roma migration is part of the massive post-1990 transnational movement of Romanian citizens (Matras and Leggio, 2018). Some studies in particular have emphasized how Roma actively employ geographical mobility as an instrument for achieving social mobility. The peculiarities of these migrations seem to be having a considerable impact on improving the consumption standards and living conditions of this minority in Romania. These migrants make an enormous collective effort towards desegregation and accessing upward mobility and essential citizens' rights by means of migration. Nevertheless, deep-rooted forms of anti-Gypsyism, both in Romanian society and the destination countries, often impede their progress in terms of status. Real re-stratification on a local level, both in the communities of origin and destination, seem to be very difficult. More frequently, new cleavages are created in the home country within Roma communities and between migrating and non-migrating Roma (e.g. Dion, 2014; Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2015; Anghel, 2016; Toma et al., 2018).<sup>2</sup>

This article aims to contribute to the debate on transnational migration as a process of social transformation by investigating efforts made towards status changes within some Romanian Roma migrant networks in Italy. The article is based on a set of qualitative and ethnographic data collected during the European research project *The Immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, Effects and Future Engagement Strategies - MigRom*. The choice of an ethnographic method was linked to the decision to investigate the connection between migrations and social transformation drawing attention to the grassroots level of social life and to the Roma migrants' own visions of migration and mobility. The choice of method was also linked to the decision to focus on micro- and meso-level processes; that is, on the localized nature of social transformations induced by transnational practices (Fauser

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<sup>2</sup> Similar observations have been made about Roma migration from other Eastern European countries (Grill, 2012; Benedik et al., 2013; Durst, 2013).

and Nijenhuis, 2016). The privileged point of view that is reported here is therefore that of the country and places of migration where the studies were mainly carried out.<sup>3</sup>

The article dedicates the greatest possible space and weight to stories and experiences as told by Roma migrants encountered during the research effort. Indeed, these Roma's individual trajectories incorporate the widest sociocultural and economic-political scenarios that the study attempts to investigate and understand. The article is based on the conviction that the details in these migrants' life stories are not redundant but instead offer the possibility to extend our understanding of contemporary migration and social mobility dynamics that should not emerge only from institutional, mediatic and political public discourses, which are often simplified and stereotypical. For example, the different impacts of various local immigration policies on Roma migrant social mobility opportunities clearly emerge in the different individual and family trajectories, as do the coping strategies they enacted in an attempt to overcome these obstacles.

In the first part of the article, I introduce the research methods that were adopted and describe the family networks with which the research was carried out. I then provide a short description of Italian local immigration policies and their impact on Roma migration patterns. Next, I introduce five family stories that represent a selection of very different social (im)mobility cases to highlight how status change opportunities can be conditioned by different factors. Among these are the migrants' desires and motivations, but above all local reception policies and levels of anti-Gypsyism<sup>4</sup> in both receiving and origin societies. In analyzing these stories, I highlight some trends that I consider relevant to the migratory processes under discussion, such as the negative impact of local policies on Roma social mobilities and the Roma's efforts to overcome obstacles through strategies like 'multifocal migration.'

## *2. Methodological notes and description of the fieldwork*

The agreement signed by the MigRom project partners foresaw sharing of part of the data produced by the research among the researchers in their various teams. The aim was to increase the opportunity for confronting and comparing the results of the various national research contexts. More precisely, we foresaw the sharing of a series of semi-structured interviews conducted by researchers with the help of Roma research assistants in the interviewees' mother tongue, and the use of a semi-structured and qualitative interview grid that researchers from all the teams compiled together. Consequently, all the MigRom partners shared the following items: audio recordings in the migrants' mother tongue, transcripts in Romani or Romanian, and translations in the national languages of the migrants' reception countries in some of their interviews. The researchers involved in the various national teams collectively

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<sup>3</sup> Although the MigRom project researchers also carried out several brief ethnographic visits to the places from which Roma migrants in Italy originated (Romania), and also to other migration destination locations, such as the United Kingdom and Germany.

<sup>4</sup> Anti-Gypsyism can overlap and sometimes coincide with reception policies, but cannot be reduced to these. It can be defined, in fact, as a broader 'social, psychological, cultural and historical phenomenon that sees in those it identifies as 'Gypsies', a subject for prejudice and negative stereotypes, discrimination and direct or indirect violence' (Piasere, 2015: 11).

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produced part of the data. Therefore, in the case of the Italian team, for example, while the interviews were carried out by Suzana Jovanović and Marianna Agoni with a Roma network in Milan, and by Dainef Tomescu and the current author with a Roma network in Bari, and by Angela Petre and Sabrina Tosi Cambini with a Rudari network in Florence; the aforementioned researchers, together with team coordinator Leonardo Piasere and other researchers involved in the project, contributed to defining the interview grid, identifying persons for interview, transcribing into Romani or Romanian, translating from Romani or Romanian to Italian, and the initial analysis of content. Interviewees were not selected on the basis of predefined sociological variables (such as gender or age), but rather by snowball sampling; that is, by following the interviewees' social networks as revealed by ethnographers embedded in the field. This collaborative work is now reflected, for example, in how I have cited some interviews carried out in Milan in some of my articles, and the fact that interviews I did in Bari are referenced in my colleagues' work (see, for example: Jovanović et al., forthcoming). Other data collected on an individual basis (other interviews or purely ethnographic data) are, however, used singularly in the work of each individual researcher. The Italian team shared six interviews in Romani collected in Milan, four interviews in Romani recorded in Bari, and five interviews in Romanian collected in Florence within the Italian team and with the other MigRom project teams. This article specifically includes some data from the shared interviews conducted in Milan and Bari and ethnographic data collected during the author's individual fieldwork.

This article is therefore based on data collected during fieldwork with two Roma family networks originating from Oltenia (Southwestern Romania), who migrated to Milan (North Italy) and Bari (South Italy) and with whom a significant part of the MigRom research was conducted by the Italian study team between April 2013 and December 2015.

The first part of the fieldwork produced a series of semi-structured interviews in the Romani language conducted by researchers Marianna Agoni and Suzana Jovanović in Milan and the Milanese hinterland with a network of Roma families originating from some villages and small towns in the district of Olt. Some of these families live in extremely precarious conditions in tents and makeshift huts in informal settlements that are constantly dismantled and rebuilt in the north-western suburbs of Milan. Others, after a lengthy experience of similar housing conditions, are currently living in rented houses or accommodation provided by private social associations in Milan.

The second part of the fieldwork produced some semi-structured interviews in the Romani language conducted by Dainef Tomescu and myself and an ethnographic study that I carried out in Bari with a network of Roma families from the city of Craiova (district of Dolj). These families live in the only authorized 'Nomad camp' in Bari and have therefore been living in reasonably stable conditions for over ten years.

They are, therefore, two different family networks who both define themselves as Roma, but whose identity refers mainly to the density of parental, friend and neighbor relations that existed in their places of origin in Romania and which they have maintained or recreated in their respective migration zones in Italy. Two family networks that, while both from different places in Oltenia, share a similar historical and geo-political background, as well as similar initial migratory experiences

(Pontrandolfo, 2016). The reasons for migration were those most common to all the members of both social networks.

Interviewees affirm that their migratory experience started at the end of the 1990s (from 1997 to 2000). In their opinion, the economic crisis inherited from the Ceaușescu regime, worsened by Romania's entry into a free market system (in the political framework of a weak and young democracy), was the decisive push factor for their migration towards Western Europe. Another important push factor, in their words, was the desire 'to be like the others',<sup>5</sup> that is, to drag themselves out of a situation of need and poverty, provide for their families, and improve their living conditions in Romania by, for instance, buying or building themselves a house. Nevertheless, some were motivated by a desire for social equality that cannot be interpreted purely in terms of income. Through the recurring expression of the desire 'to be like the others', these Roma underline that their migration is an attempt to withdraw from systematic exclusion from enjoying the rights of fundamental citizenship in its social (e.g. right to a house and job, access to social services – healthcare, education, etc.) and political dimensions (e.g. participation or recognition of cultural diversity), both in their own country and in the country of destination. The desire 'to be like the others' should therefore not be interpreted as a desire to no longer be Roma, but rather as a desire to access the rights guaranteed to all other citizens while still maintaining their own cultural Roma identity.

Although the aspirations and motivations were similar, the two family networks' migratory routes in the Italian context turned out differently, mainly due to different local immigration policies.

### *3. Immigration policies and Roma patterns of migration in Milan*

Milan<sup>6</sup> is a large metropolis with a Roma presence in the total population of 0.3 per cent. Here, the Roma and Sinti groups are highly complex and diverse since they include some members that have been living in the city for centuries, or at least for several decades, and others that arrived only recently or are simply passing through. The group includes Italian, foreign and stateless people, those who live in apartments, the so-called 'Nomad camps', and informal settlements with tents and shacks. There are Roma and Sinti families with different stories, different socio-cultural constructions, and different economic and juridical situations. Despite this complexity, Milan Council's policies regarding Roma and Sinti that have been planned and implemented over the last twenty years have always been based on a homogenizing vision of extremely diverse sociocultural realities. Although the particular administrative categorizations used to define them have changed over the years

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<sup>5</sup> While the individuals concerned in this article will remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms, references will often be made to the places, dates, and contexts of extracts from ethnographic interviews and conversations. However, some expressions repeatedly used by many interlocutors during various ethnographic conversations and/or interviews have also been used. Expressions like 'to be like the others' and others are authentic leitmotifs that were repeated so often that I have only inserted them in quotation marks so as not to burden the text with too many references.

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed account of local policies regarding Roma and Sinti adopted in Milan over the last 20 years, see: Agoni (2018).

(initially 'Gypsies' or 'Nomads', but now 'Roma, Sinti, and Caminanti'), the homogenizing approach, which tends to categorize those affected into a separate group from other citizens and/or migrants, has not.

Faced with problems substantially linked to the harsh living conditions of some populations that had migrated to the urban territory (recently, predominantly Romanian Roma), the Milanese authorities responded by either activating emergency reception provisions or evicting migrants and driving them away, and seldom resorted to the use of ordinary welfare instruments, like social housing, to solve problems. Although the legal provisions did try to activate reception policies as well as expulsion, issues remained. The maximum capacity of reception centers established between 2012 and 2013 was and remains much less than needed, and social housing is not in a much better situation. Therefore, hundreds of people still have a housing problem and are forced to undergo the endless evacuations and constant relocations they have been experiencing for years. Just to give an idea of what the eviction policy in Milan implies: from 2013 to 2015, 1284 people were evicted, with an average of 1.3 evictions a day.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of dwelling conditions, some of these Roma families from Olt live in tents and huts in informal settlements in the Northwestern outskirts of Milan, while others live in temporary reception centers set up by Milan Council. Others, often with the help of third sector associations, have managed to rent an apartment.

Almost all the Roma families living in informal settlements practice a temporary and circular type of migration featuring frequent round trips between Milan and their villages of origin in Romania. This circular pattern is strongly conditioned by local policies, which make it almost impossible to have a permanent arrangement. Living in an informal settlement indeed means living in extremely precarious conditions, constantly waiting for the next eviction, no matter how much the Roma try to make it a homely place to live in. This is why, in the majority of cases, families leave their children in Romania when they migrate. It is usually the adult members of extended families that alternate stays in Milan and Romania so that there is always someone in Romania to take care of the children, house and land. The harshness of life in a makeshift hut and tent camp is accepted and acceptable only as a temporary strategy for sustaining the family. In fact, these families usually spend some months in Italy, interrupted by some stays in Romania. The decision to leave is often due to frequent evictions, especially when people lose all their belongings and the law enforcement authorities continue to search for them around the city, preventing them from making a new arrangement. These individuals have lost count of the number of evictions they have experienced over the last 20 years. Despite this, they still persist in coming to stay in Italy. They consider their migration to Italy as a temporary but necessary phase of their existence that will end, sooner or later, with their definitive return to Romania. In

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<sup>7</sup> Figures issued by *Milan Council's Security and Social Integration Office, the Local Police and the Civil Protection and Voluntary Service Association* on evictions and expulsions. See for example: *Campi Rom, dal 2013 quasi uno sgombero al giorno a Milano (English: Roma camps, since 2013 almost a daily eviction in Milan)*, 6 November 2015, available at: [www.ilgiorno.it/milano/campi-rom-sgomberi-1.1458920](http://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/campi-rom-sgomberi-1.1458920); *Oltre venti favelas eliminate in tre anni (English: Over twenty favelas eliminated in three years)*, 7 November 2015, available at: <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2015/11/07/oltre-venti-favelas-eliminate-in-3-anniMilano01.html?ref=search>.

reality, despite their desires to fulfill their plans to return, migration often remains fundamental for sustaining the family's daily life, both of members living in Milan and those still in Romania. In this way a definitive return to Romania is continually postponed and migrants continue to spend a good part of the year in Italy.

The highly restrictive limits that local policies impose on these families' agency in the migratory context can also be clearly seen in comparison to the situation of those families that live in more stable conditions. The fact of living in social housing or rented apartments and, with varying degrees of stability, being integrated in the employment market with children enrolled in schools in Italy, changes the way in which these families see their migration and plans for the future. According to respondents, as time passes by, trips back to Romania become less frequent and the definitive return is postponed.

#### *4. Immigration policies and Roma patterns of migration in Bari*

Bari<sup>8</sup> is an average city with a Roma presence of about 0.1 per cent of the total population. In the last 20 years or so, the Bari local authorities have had to deal with the presence of Roma groups, each very different, but mainly originating from Romania. Relational histories between the various communities and the local authorities are all different and experiences have varied, but the first dealings between Bari Council and Roma occurred when the number of the latter group within the city territory was considerably smaller than today (about 30 people in 1999 and around 80 in 2007). This situation probably helped in activating direct negotiations between those Roma families and public administration, something which at the time of my research seemed much more difficult to achieve. From 2007, new communities began to make their way to the Bari area, some from the same parts of Romania (from Southwestern Oltenia), others from different areas (from Northeastern Moldova). While the council opened its first authorized Roma camp in 2007 to host the pioneering migration families, further informal settlements, both large and small, sprang up here and there in the city, some more permanent and some more visible than others.

Bari Council's center-left administrations have made a variety of public interventions aimed at the social inclusion of the families who currently live in the only council-authorized Roma camp. However, the same administrations have instead appeared indifferent to, or have merely 'tolerated' those who arrived after these pioneer families. In contrast to what happens every day in Milan, the administrative tool of eviction has only been adopted in Bari in exceptional cases over the last 20 years. So, even if many of the families that arrived in Bari about 15 years ago still live in informal settlements or in the authorized camp, they do so without the constant nightmare of being evacuated at any moment, something that contributes greatly to the relatively positive activation of projects for migrant families.

The migrant Roma from Craiova have had the possibility to appropriate the area conceded by the city council and autonomously organize their lives within it.

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of the history of relations between the various Roma communities and Bari public administration, see: Pontrandolfo (2018b).

This stability of living has led to an increase in the life opportunities of inhabitants, mainly by giving them a greater chance of finding work which includes a combination of various economic practices: among these, the creation of a Roma cooperative society (operating in the cleaning and clearance sector for small removals, goods transportation, gardening, and material recovery) has proved to be one of the most advanced successes of the inclusion initiative in Bari.

Housing stability (despite all the limitations in terms of segregation and inconvenience that a settlement of self-built huts can have) for about 10 years in the same place has also allowed families to reunite with some of their extended family members. The Bari camp is made up of a set of related families who, over the years, have gradually joined the families who first set out to migrate to Bari. Furthermore, over time, parents, with all their children, have arrived to join their families. While in the initial phases of their stay in Italy these families left their children in Romania (as many migrants in Milan who live in informal settlements still do), once allowed to stay in the authorized camp in Bari they were joined by all their family members. Moreover, as of that moment, many children have been born in Bari and are growing up immersed in an Italian sociocultural lifestyle through which they also acquire different expectations than those of their parents. Many of them, once they have come of age, decide to migrate to other countries in search of better living conditions than those experienced in Italy.

### *5. Migration stories*

In this section, I synthetically report some of the stories told by the Roma migrants in Milan and Bari. The former either live, or have lived, in informal settlements, reception centers, rented houses, and the council-authorized camp in Bari. Each story shows some of the variety of ways in which migration and mobility paths can unfold. The stories selected here, although not 'representative' of others, certainly have many features in common with other stories collected during the fieldwork because, to various extents, they encapsulate the same political, economic, social, and cultural scenarios. All of these stories actually show how individual and family experiences are subject to the influence of particular factors, such as the migrants' particular motivations and aspirations; the duration of their migratory courses; reception policies in Italy with their consequences in terms of migrants' increased visibility and marginalization; and relations between their status in Italy and in Romania.

Below are five stories reconstructed on the basis of their protagonists' narratives. My analysis of these stories can be found in the underlying paragraphs where I mainly highlight the relevance of each story from the point of view of social mobility and migration-induced transformations - all this in the awareness that each story includes much more information both about the complex life paths of these individuals and on contemporary migratory dynamics. It is, however, important to underline how often the desire 'to be like the others' came up in interviews and in ethnographic conversations, or, more generally, how often the topic of social mobility spontaneously emerged in the words of our interlocutors in the field. The interview grid, for example, did not actually foresee specific items of social mobility, yet repeated

references to this topic in the words of the Roma migrants we met in the field obviously show its importance from their point of view, as the stories below attempt to highlight.

### 5.1. *Mihai and Nadia*<sup>9</sup>

Mihai and Nadia are about 30 years of age and have four children. They arrived in Milan from a small town in the district of Olt. Before migrating, which occurred after Romania became a member of the EU, they coped by doing a variety of casual jobs for other Roma or *gaḡé*.<sup>10</sup> In Romania, they were among 12 people living in a small house 'made of clay' belonging to Mihai's parents. At the time of the interview, they were living in a hut in an informal settlement on the outskirts of Milan. They had always lived in this - constantly evacuated - type of settlement since they began their circular migration in Italy. They had stayed in a reception center for a short period but had been moved on from there apparently for not having respected the obligation of sending their children to school (due to the lack of flexibility of the bureaucratic school enrolment mechanisms), and for having taken Mihai's mother (who had come from Romania for surgery) and one of their daughters (who had been staying with her grandmother in Romania) into the center without the consent of the organizers. Unstable living conditions and irregular earnings from *mangimós*<sup>11</sup> have not allowed them to improve their initial conditions very much at all (it takes a great deal of effort and energy even to find enough money to travel home), but in Italy, at least they manage to eat.

M: In Romania [...] I worked as a day laborer [...], I earned money for food but it wasn't enough, then [...] we said: 'Let's go, too, so that we can sort ourselves out' [...]. And yet here it's even worse... [...] We thought we would have lived better, but nothing has changed, nothing, nothing! We left the rubbish heap and we returned to the rubbish heap!

### 5.2. *Octavian and Adina*<sup>12</sup>

Octavian and Adina are about 30 years of age, have three children and come from a small town in the district of Olt. Before migrating, they worked with their families as seasonal farm laborers until mechanized farming vehicles in the area made the work of so many similar casual laborers superfluous. As Octavian says, 'there's a lot of technology now, and this technology has left men without work.' Octavian came to Italy in the wake of his father before getting married. With money from *mangimós*

<sup>9</sup> Interview, Milan, 26-06-2014.

<sup>10</sup> Non-Roma in Romani.

<sup>11</sup> Non-Roma generally translate the Romani word *mangimós* as 'begging.' However, according to a number of Roma, *mangimós* refers to a set of activities that also includes various forms of exchange. A widespread form of *mangimós* that families in Milan and Bari practice is, for example, begging at supermarket entrances, but they also receive donations from charitable organizations in the form of food, clothes, school equipment and so on.

<sup>12</sup> Interview, Milan, 18-12-2013.

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in Italy, they managed to re-build his father's old house and, above all, put together the bride-wealth for his marriage to Adina. Once married, in 2004 Adina and Octavian decided to set off for Italy together without a valid residency permit. They lived in informal settlements on the outskirts of Milan for years practicing, from 2004 to 2007, circular migration and surviving essentially on *mangimós*, leaving their children in Romania with their paternal grandfather and aunts and uncles with whom they alternated their circular migration. From 2007 to 2012, Octavian worked semi-permanently for a building demolition cooperative, even if contracts were either informal or on-and-off. In the same period, Adina, with the help of some Italians she met during *mangimós*, began to find some non-declared jobs as a housemaid. The earnings from these jobs were not enough to allow them to leave their life in the informal settlements, but they did allow their children to join them in Italy, and they were able to build a new house for everyone back home. In 2012, the fatigue of years of living precariously, difficulty of staying in constantly evacuated informal settlements and the desire for regular jobs led Adina and Octavian to accept, after the umpteenth evacuation, a local institution's offer of housing at a reception center, and to start an employment integration courses that the council proposed. At the time of the interview, Adina and Octavian had been living for two years with their children in one room in a kind of large container divided into several rooms in which other Roma families also lived. The children were all enrolled at school, even the youngest had just started playschool. Nevertheless, both Adina and Octavian were out of work. Within the first few months of their stay at this place, Octavian accepted a training/work experience course at a bakery with the idea that he would be taken on full-time at the end of the course. Adina also started a sewing course, but both soon regretted these decisions. Octavian did not receive a salary for the training course but was instead paid in food vouchers, and the bakery was a two-hour drive from home every day. When he could no longer use the car (sequestered due to a lack of insurance) and, above all, when it became clear that the bakery had no intention of employing him at the end of the training course, Octavian stopped going. At that point, he once again found himself having to resort to *mangimós*. Life had certainly been hard when they were living in informal settlements, but at least they were free to find profitable work, even if it was non-declared.

S: Compared to when you left Romania at the very beginning, is your situation better or worse now?

O: To tell you the truth, in these last two years or so, we have gone backwards. From 2007 to 2011 things were going very well. I was working and I built the house...

A: We were fine while we were in the camp... [...] Now we are telling these people 'It's your fault that we lost our jobs! We had work while we were living in the camp, we built a house, look, I'll show you...', and they tell us 'Ah yes, you had money in the camp, but you didn't have a house, you didn't have electricity, heating!'. And I tell them, 'Yes, but you come to Italy to build yourself a house, not to live in Italy forever!' 'Ah, but we give you free food, you live without paying, you don't pay anything!' And with that they shut us up!

O: They say: 'As you were living in the camp, you can live here just the same, while at the camp they kept turfing you out!' This is the problem. They keep turfing you out, sending you away. This is the problem, because, if it weren't for the evacuations, we were fine there and when we went home, we had our own houses...

### *5.3. Sabin and Ana*<sup>13</sup>

Ana and Sabin are about 30 years old and come from a village in the district of Olt. Before migrating, both earned their livings as day laborers on farms and were often paid in goods, such as flour or corn cobs, instead of cash. Sabin began circular migration to Milan, Italy in 2001. In 2005, the couple managed to build themselves a small house so that Ana and her three children could move from her father-in-law's house into their new home. Ana initially lived alone for long periods and then with her three children as they came along, until 2011. At that point, she began insisting on reuniting the family since they were all suffering from being apart. Sabin, who had always lived in informal settlements in Italy, had tried to keep the family in Romania for as long as possible so they would not have to experience the hardship of living in this type of camp. In fact, when Ana arrived in Milan with their three children, she was indeed shocked that all five of them had to sleep in one tent. After three months, during the first evacuation, Ana together with the children agreed to go to a community for mothers and children in the Milanese hinterland, where they stayed for seven months. Sabin went to live in another informal camp by himself. After this new experience, however, with the help of a third sector association, they managed to rent an apartment on the second floor of a small house in a village in the Milanese hinterland. They are currently waiting for a reply regarding the assignment of a council house in Milan. Sabin has managed to maintain his family, buy a house in Romania, and pay the rent on his current home because he has always worked, even if intermittently, in the building sector. Ana has also managed to find various jobs as a housemaid for Italian families with the help of people she met when she was living in the mother and child community.

S: We have had a very hard life, really tough. It's still tough but at least it's more liveable now, we have more hope. You see, I have done 4-5 hours' work today so I know that, either tomorrow or the next day, I will get the 20-30 euros I earned today, and so I know the children will be all right because, with 30 euros, I can do the shopping and we'll have enough to eat for two or three days and we'll be okay [...]

Our children have grown up, I have been here for many years, now she has got used to it. Okay it's not so nice here but we do find some work, every now and then someone helps us, some *gağé*... [...] we have more chance of survival here, while in Romania, we have no chance at all... [...] At the beginning we thought we would go back because all my family is there. I thought I would be away a year or a few months and then go

<sup>13</sup> Interview, Milanese hinterland, 28-09-2013.

back [...] from 2002-2003. Until almost 2010, I was going backwards and forwards. I would stay in Italy for one, two, three months and then go back to Romania. I stayed there one or two months and then came back here. I don't do that anymore. My children are here now, I have my family here... [...] they go to school, they're doing well, they are getting on well here in Italy. It's a good thing for them to be here, they have everything they need. Why should I go back to Romania?

#### 5.4. *Dan and Lavinia*<sup>14</sup>

Dan and Lavinia are about 50 years old and came to Italy in 1999. They were among the first to migrate to Bari. They had a house in Romania in the *țigania* of Craiova (district of Dolj). During the Ceaușescu regime, they had always worked with their families in farming cooperatives and a hand-made brick business, combining these jobs with other informal activities like rearing animals and selling textiles and clothes at markets. Before coming to Italy, Dan had tried commuting between Romania and Serbia for the so-called suitcase trade and Lavinia had been in France for a while supporting herself with *maugimós*. Together, they had also spent time in Madrid, Spain. Their arrival in Italy during a period when crossing the frontier was considerably limited, had cost them about six million lire (corresponding to about 3,000 euros now). To repay the loan they had taken out at the time of departure, they had had to give their home to the Roma who had lent them the money. They had four children at the time of their arrival in Italy but had left with only their two middle daughters, leaving their oldest daughter and youngest son in Romania with their paternal grandmother. Their arrival in Bari coincided with a season of bargaining with the local authorities, which established Dan in the role of political representative for his community, fundamentally made up of a network of Dan and Lavinia's siblings, and the creation of the only camp authorized by Bari Council, in which the community currently lives. The setting up of the camp in 2006 meant that the families of all the camp's inhabitants, including the children that had initially remained in Romania, were able to join them and several other children were born in Bari. Dan and Lavinia's fifth child was born there.

They have lived in Bari for several years. Dan has undergone various training courses as a cultural mediator with temporary contracts with some local institutions. Together with other Roma in his network, he founded a social cooperative which allowed him to live well for many years before the current crisis led to a decrease in work.

In recent years, Dan and Lavinia have been able to buy another house in Romania and even buy land on which to build a house for their children.

The effect of the economic crisis on the cooperative, and a stalemate situation in political relations at a local level (meaning that interventions to improve the living conditions at the camp cannot be foreseen in the near future) have recently forced the couple to ask other Roma in their network for a huge loan to make a different

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Dan, Bari, 29-11-2013; Interview with Lavinia, Bari, 02-12-2013; Ethnographic fieldwork in Bari since 2013.

investment: the migration of their eldest son (with wife and daughter) to the United States.

D: We spent a long time in Romania this summer, much longer than usual, because we needed to sort out documents in the offices there. At the beginning, I was happy, I liked to see things again, people, but then, after a while, I realized that [...] I was bored ... Always the same things, always the same people, always the same questions... I could never go back to live in Romania, I can only go there for a holiday [...] I bought the house there purely because it cost less. I couldn't do it in Italy... But I just can't see myself going back to live there now... (Bari, ethnographic conversation, December 2015).

L: We have asked for a loan so that Viorel can go to America! I hope it all goes well! If we have invested, it is because we hope he can do well there and manage to call us for a reunion in the future... (Bari, ethnographic conversation, March 2016).

### *5.5. Ioana and Marcel*<sup>15</sup>

Ioana is Dan and Lavinia's second daughter. She is about 30 years old but she joined her parents in Italy, in Bari, when she was nine. She went to school in Italy and obtained a secondary school diploma, and then she married Marcel. Her husband also came to Italy as a child, migrating to Sardinia with his family of origin. He met Ioana during a trip to Bari to visit relatives and they married shortly after. They lived together in the Bari camp for over 10 years and had three children. Marcel always worked with the Roma cooperative his father-in-law founded, combining this work with other casual labor in the car demolition sector. Following the cooperative's recent crisis, the couple decided to leave Bari and go and live in the United Kingdom in an area of Greater Manchester. They moved in the summer of 2016 and their fourth child was born there. They now live in a terraced house in the UK, which they rent from its Pakistani owner, and Marcel works regularly in an Indian restaurant. With the savings Marcel has been able to put by with his job and benefits from the British welfare system, the couple were soon able to buy a house in Romania.

I: I came to Italy in 2000. I went to school and had a few problems because I was a Romní. I suffered from several episodes of racism until my father began to work. He eventually got sorted and worked at a church [...] They look on us a little better now... [...] I'm getting on well now, but there was a really bad period. It's better now though because I'm used to it, I'm 'naturalized',<sup>16</sup> I've been here for 13 years and it's like home [...] Yes, because when I go to Romania, I only go to visit. When I

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Ioana, Bari, 02-12-2013; Ethnographic fieldwork in an area of Greater Manchester (2017).

<sup>16</sup> Ioana has not officially been granted Italian nationality but she feels like a 'naturalized' Italian.

go there, Romania is a foreign place for me. I grew up here, I'm 'naturalized.' My home is here (Interview, Bari, 02-12-2013).

M: Since we've been in Manchester, a year and a half now, I have managed to do what I wasn't able to do in Italy in 10 years! (Greater Manchester, ethnographic conversation, January 2017).

### *6. Analysis of the stories: changing statuses in transnational migration*

As the above stories clearly show, in some cases, the only thing that Roma migrants' efforts to improve their life conditions and status achieve is to ensure sustenance for their family members. The case of Mihai and Nadia is one which can be defined as migration for subsistence (see: Toma et al., 2018). The former left the *țigania* in their home town in Romania with very few means and it is significant that they only had the chance to do so after Romania became an EU member state. Before that it would have been too expensive. They therefore left with a low status that their migration to Italy has not improved, either in Italy or in Romania. If possible, their status in Italy has become even lower due to their marked visibility and, therefore, their greater exposure to discrimination to which they are subject by living in constantly evacuated informal settlements in the Milanese suburbs.

In other cases, however, things have gone better. Octavian and Adina come from the same *țigania* as Mihai and Nadia, but their migratory path has lasted longer. They are still highly visible in their destination country but they have been able to achieve some of their objectives: Octavian managed to build a house for his father and to scrape together the necessary amount of money to marry Adina. The couple were later able to build their own house. In this case, a reduction in status in Italy corresponded to an increase in status in Romania (a country in which the couple still project themselves into a more or less short-term future). Nevertheless, their experience also says a lot about the fact that paths do not necessarily lead in the same direction. As other studies on social mobility have also highlighted (see: Friedman, 2013), at any moment, for causes beyond the migrants' control, the path of increasing status can come to a dead-end, or even go backwards compared to migrants' previous positioning. For this reason, all paths should be considered from a historical perspective (see: Vermeulen, 2010).

Sabin and Ana's story, on the other hand, tells of a relatively successful experience in which a lengthy migration to Italy took a family from a situation of significant poverty to one of relative ease, from a situation of high visibility and discrimination to one of invisibility and reasonable integration, allowing them to improve their status both in Romania and Italy.

Dan and Lavinia's story is interesting because it allows us to reflect on the fact that sometimes the solidarity of a group can mitigate the effects of spatial segregation and high visibility. The decision to live together in a Roma camp, in agreement with Bari's local institutions,<sup>17</sup> allowed the network of families gathered around Dan and

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of these families' negotiation processes with the local Bari authorities, see: Pontrandolfo (2018c).

Lavinia's family to cooperate and help the members along their migratory paths. When these families were able to work, they managed to make investments in houses, land, and cars which, in turn, allowed them to maintain a higher status than in Romania in the past, even if their status level in Italy was still relatively low.

Marcel and Ioana's story is a one of migratory success. The family has been able to increase their status in Romania and in the country of destination. This is an extremely interesting case because it once again gives us the chance to highlight how national and local reception policies can affect individual or group migratory paths. In fact, in order to increase their status, the couple were forced to leave Italy and go to a country where anti-Gypsyism sentiments are weaker and where reception conditions provide greater invisibility and integration.<sup>18</sup>

Each of these stories, while only truly representative of itself, is not unique. Many Roma families I met in the field live in similar conditions and all were incessantly making every effort to improve their own position. These efforts are strongly affected by their (un)stable living conditions. Migrants who are not allowed to settle permanently in one place long enough to achieve their social mobility goals find themselves in the most difficulty. This mobility depends on ample resource stratification systems and opportunities to access them. Resources can be of various types: economic (e.g. employment), social (e.g. social networks), cultural (e.g. consumption patterns) and political (e.g. recognition). Each of the stories I have presented here could be analyzed in terms of the variable results obtained from accessing different types of resources. Here, I mainly consider access to resources in terms of material assets and earnings<sup>19</sup> since the migrants I met in the field have achieved notable results from their efforts in this direction. Indeed, through migration, they have all managed to survive and, for many of them, this level of survival is in line with Italian standards of consumption, which are now thought of as indispensable in Romania (see: Agoni, 2016). Many migrants have managed to buy land or materials to build a house; others have renovated their old houses or built new ones. In some cases, the purchase of a house has also led to spatial desegregation since they have moved from the *țigania* to an area much closer to the center of the town or city of origin. In some cases, upward mobility has occurred thanks to the possibility of maintaining a job as well as a permanently rented house in the migration destination country.

What seems certain from the stories collected in the field, both in Milan and Bari, is that migration has created new forms of social stratification between migrant Roma and Roma who were not able to leave, or who left later, or who were not away from home long enough, or who, for various reasons, were not able to accumulate enough material capital.

What, on the other hand, is less evident, is evidence for new forms of stratification, both in Romania and in Italy: strong social, cultural and political resistance hinders the emergence of any kind of valid social re-stratification in these countries.

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<sup>18</sup> Several studies show that Italy is currently the EU country with the highest rate of anti-Gypsyism (e.g. European Commission, 2008; Pew Research Centre, 2014; Meneghini and Fattori, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Refer to Pontrandolfo (2018a) for a more detailed analysis of the social transformation process in terms of cultural mobilities.

In the areas of Romania from which the migrants we met originate, the visibility of migrants' success in terms of an improvement in their living conditions or in terms of desegregation from the *țigănie* does not alter the stereotypes that other Romanians hold. The *țigănie* are still there. And it is also true that, when they can, successful migrants choose to invest in other places, often in a new migration, rather than in their homeland.

Roma migrants in Italy are located in the most marginal brackets of the population, so much so that, after having experienced the impossibility or meagre probability of making significant improvements, those who can try to leave Italy for other destinations: Germany, the United Kingdom, Canada, or the USA, countries whose migration policies offer Roma integration modalities with less stigmatization, ethnicization or racialization.

Last, one of the effects that migrations have had on these two Roma family networks which is important to underline is that they have led not so much to a reduction over time in migration, but rather to an extension and expansion. Currently, many extended families have split up and are living separately in several European countries or in North America. Their transnational condition is not simply 'bifocal' (Vertovec, 2004), but permanently 'multi-focal.'<sup>20</sup> This multi-focal aspect is the most effective way for families to escape from different forms of anti-Gypsyism, both institutional and otherwise, and their consequences. It is therefore the most effective way to access different forms of upward mobility. I believe that these families' ability to remain united, even while living apart in different countries and maintaining enormous multi-focality over time, is one of the aspects of Roma migration that needs to be researched more deeply in the future.

## *7. Conclusion*

This article investigated attempts to enhance processes of social transformation and upward mobility through transnational migrations, starting with an analysis of efforts to change status by some networks of Romanian Roma who have migrated to Italy and elsewhere.

Analysis of the qualitative data collected using methods of socio-cultural anthropology reveals some elements that weigh negatively on migrants' chances of modifying the social order and the position of the Roma within them through transnational migration, such as the negative impact of reception countries' local policies and deep-rooted anti-Gypsyism. However, the analysis has also shown how the Roma individuals continue to constantly apply their agency to overcome these obstacles and fight for desegregation, upward mobility, and access to basic citizenship rights through specific migration strategies, such as those that I have defined as 'multifocal migration.' Even if their efforts have not yet produced any notable re-stratification either in receiving or origin countries, social remittances and cultural mobilities have been enhanced and individual cases of upward mobility can be

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<sup>20</sup> Other studies have already underlined how the practice of living in families with 'a powder structure', i.e. spread over different territories, has led many Roma groups to maintain themselves as such over time (see, for example: Piasere, 2004; Sutre, 2017; Gamella et al., 2018).

documented. I hope this article will contribute to making their stories more visible and increase the political recognition of their unceasing effort.

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ALEXANDRA CLAVE-MERCIER AND MARTIN OLIVERA \*

## Inclusion and the 'Arts of Resistance'. How Do Roma Migrants Develop Autonomy in the Context of Inclusion Policies?

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\* [\[a.clavemercier@yahoo.fr\]](mailto:a.clavemercier@yahoo.fr) (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Centre Emile Durkheim); [\[martin.olivera@yahoo.fr\]](mailto:martin.olivera@yahoo.fr) (Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis; Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique)

### Abstract

During the last 20 years, processes of social, spatial or economic exclusion suffered by a growing number of people identified as Roma in Europe were progressively investigated and better documented, as, for instance, legal (or para-legal) measures implemented against Roma migrants living in precarious settlements in Western Europe. Over the same period, international or European institutions, national authorities and many NGOs significantly developed local or regional initiatives for Roma inclusion. From ethnographic investigations conducted during several years in two French cities which have implemented social support and housing projects toward Roma immigrants families (Bulgarian in one case, Romanian in the other), this article firstly aims to highlight the effects of the contradictions and paradoxes characterizing the launch and running of many inclusion policies which, like exclusion policies, are frequently based on stereotypical conceptions of Roma as well as of social integration. Reversing the point of view, we will secondly light the way the target families of these projects may nevertheless succeed to preserve leeway and to develop different forms of local insertion, using (or not) resources provided by public policies as well as personal and family resources. In so doing, this paper proposes to address the role and value of informality and productive misunderstandings in these dynamics of emancipation and *effective integration* taking place in a strongly binding context.

*Keywords: policies of inclusion, autonomy of migration, exclusion, resistance.*

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*September 17, 2008, in the Paris area, near the suburban railway station Massy-Palaiseau. A hundred people including about 30 children are gathered on a parking lot, surrounded by a large group of police. These families have been living there for a few days, most of them under igloo tents. They arrived after being evicted from the shelters they had built in the woods a few hundred meters away, along the A10 highway. A few days later, the scene is being re-enacted with the same actors - except for the few families who decided in the meantime to try and find a better place somewhere else. Access to the car park is closed. Social workers have started carrying out quick 'social diagnoses' to identify the most 'vulnerable' individuals, essentially pregnant women or those accompanied by children under one year of age. Finally, fifteen people are selected and driven by minibus to the nearest support center in Palaiseau city, before being accommodated at the State's expense in hotels located either in the same district (Essonne) or more than 40 kilometers away. About half an hour later, the rest of the group which is still being detained in the parking lot by the police start to move as an officer cries: 'to the station!' The police cordon is gradually reconfigured to form a corridor leading to the platform. Hesitating to proceed, some adults start asking: 'to go where?' The question remains without answer. Officers tirelessly repeat that everyone has to go forward and wait for the next RER train. Destination? Corbeil, via Juvisy. It does not matter in the end. The goal is for the crowd to leave Massy and its surroundings. The goal is to evacuate the group. A train enters the station. It stops a little longer than expected, long enough to 'convince' those who are still offering resistance to get on. However, the police are also participating in the journey and the group will be forbidden to get off before the terminus. The few who try to escape are quickly caught. Upon arrival in Corbeil, the whole group is directed to the local Red Cross and the police disappear. Three hours later, the families have all left Corbeil for Gare du Nord in Paris. Within a few weeks of the event, most of the evacuees had rebuilt a shantytown about 40 kilometers away from Massy. Although they kept on going through similar kinds of evictions, they never gave up, and continued to come back and resettle nearby. Others returned to Massy where they are still living today.*

### ***1. Introduction: Critical Ethnography of Public Policies***

In the early 1990s, as the Roma issue was emerging at the European level (see: for example Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Olivera, 2011a, Legros and Rossetto, 2012; Vermeersch, 2012), public policies targeting groups identified as 'Roma' started to multiply in France, both locally and nationally, initiating a dynamic which is still ongoing today. As illustrated in the case described above, these policies are usually aimed at keeping away people considered as undesirable immigrants (most of them from Romania and Bulgaria, see: Nacu, 2010; Olivera 2011b; Legros and Vitale, 2011; Cousin and Legros, 2014). However, 'inclusion projects' and 'contractual integration' are also occasionally offered to Roma migrants (Legros, 2010; Clavé-Mercier, 2014; Olivera, 2014; Lurbe i Puerto, 2015). Confronted with these practices of either exclusion or selective inclusion, migrants generally do not protest. Apart from taking part in a few events organized by local NGOs or support committees, they do not oppose the police or social services, nor do they require any form of political

or cultural 'recognition'. Neither do they contest the categories that authorities have been utilizing for more than 20 years to objectify them and justify institutional practices. However, as is apparent, these families do manage to stay, retaining, and even in many cases increasing, the resources and the flexibility they have to strengthen their social and territorial ties.

In this context, this paper is written to describe the way in which those families not only succeed in consolidating their presence but also secure their local integration and autonomy under unfavorable circumstances. Beyond the skills migrants can deploy, or the set of urban, economic and relational resources they manage to tap in to, we argue it is also worth looking at the subjective and collective foundations of what we decided to call their 'non-resistant resistance'; that is, a resistance that never presents as such - 'without protest and without organization' (Scott, 1987). To this end, we examine how 'beneficiaries of integration/relocation projects' adapt to the injunctions and constraints of public hospitality institutions, taking into account that inclusion policies themselves involve forms of domination. Indeed, since the pioneering work of James Scott on the 'weapons of the weak' and infrapolitics (Scott, 1985; 1990), the various ways in which 'subalterns' happen to adjust to repressive policies, the competencies this requires and the forms it takes, are now better documented (for a recent review about 'subaltern resistance', see: Chandra, 2015). However, especially in Europe, the set of answers that people targeted by 'integration' or 'inclusion' policies come up with remains to be understood.

The set of data we use is based on ethnographic material gathered in the field in two different French cities within two 'integration projects' of five and eight years duration, respectively, specifically implemented for Roma migrants living in shantytowns.<sup>1</sup> Conducted between 2009 and 2015, the first of these projects includes 100 Romanian families, mainly from the regions of Arad and Alba in Romania. The second one, which started in 2010 and is still ongoing today, involves about 60 Bulgarian families from the Pazardzhik region. Over the projects' lifespan we conducted intensive field research with Roma families (both in France and in their countries of origin, using their native languages - Romanian, Bulgarian and/or Romani as appropriate). We also carried out daily observations and interviews with social workers as well as with political and institutional stakeholders.

In order to guarantee anonymity to the actors involved in these sensitive projects, the names of persons or localities involved will not be mentioned throughout the paper. For any given situation, necessary contextual elements will be provided but pseudonyms will be used. Beyond being motivated by ethical considerations, this choice is made even more relevant by the existence of strong similarities between our fieldwork areas, however diverse local situations and project 'beneficiaries' can be.

This text also draws on the work carried out by the European Urba-rom<sup>2</sup> Observatory. It specifically leverages collaborative research developed under the

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about these two projects (especially their history, design, implementation, as well as on the actors who were involved), see: Clavé-Mercier, 2014, and Olivera, 2016b, which further detail the work we used to develop the analyses presented in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> <http://urbarom.hypotheses.org/>

MARGIN project<sup>3</sup> framework (2015-2018, coord. O. Legros, T. Vitale and C. Bergeon). Spanning a range of 20 cities in France, Italy and Spain, this program aimed at analyzing the social effects of anti-poverty policies on Roma migrants, mainly from Romania. In connection with the various works that have been conducted within *Urba-rom* since 2010, this paper uses a constructivist approach of ‘public problems’ (Gusfield, 1981) to develop analyses of public policies directed at so-called ‘Roma’ or ‘Gypsy’ groups grounded on critical ethnography (May, 1997). Rather than trying to establish a relationship between these policies and naturalized or essentialized definitions of the ‘Roma identity’, we question the logics and functions of categories used to define these populations and the socio-political interests that motivate these categorizations. In other words, we assume there is no causal link between any supposed singularities of the ‘Roma identity’ and the policies of exclusion or inclusion that are carried out in Europe today. Indeed, as numerous ethnographic studies have shown in the field of anthropology over the last 30 years, the social and cultural diversity of people who either call themselves or are called Roma/Gypsies is overwhelming.<sup>4</sup> As a result, it seems impossible (if not dangerous) to try and reduce it to a few traits and patterns which would justify the ways in which public authorities have been treating them as a homogenous whole (Asséo, 2004).

While trying to better understand and document the ‘non-resistant resistance’ deployed by Roma migrants, this article aims at highlighting the many contradictions, paradoxes and consequences of ‘inclusion policies’ in France. We will first show how, beyond their local specificities, these projects are based on stereotypical definitions of concepts such as ‘Roma’, ‘inclusion’ and ‘social integration’. Interactions based on these stereotypes may lead to misunderstandings between migrant families, public authorities and social workers. Conversely, we will then see how project ‘beneficiaries’ may nevertheless succeed in increasing their autonomy while using public, as well as personal and family resources to develop new forms of local integration despite, and sometimes *thanks to*, the misunderstandings with which they are confronted. Looking at the various relations between migrants, social workers, elected officials, institution representatives, etc. makes it possible to measure the weight of equivocity in the production of social relationships (Sahlins, 1985). In the second part of this paper, we show how such an ethnography of misunderstanding is fundamentally empirical. Indeed, far from resorting to notions such as ‘the unsaid’ or ‘representations’, it involves first and foremost *situations*, uses, practices and conversations in context. This thick description (Geertz, 1973) of interactions allows us to restore individuals’ status as subjects while highlighting the genesis, functioning and value of misunderstandings in a highly constraining context marked by strong power asymmetries.

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<sup>3</sup> MARGIN (‘MARGinalisation/INclusion: les effets à moyen et à long terme des politiques de régulation de la pauvreté étrangère sur les populations-cibles: le cas des migrants dits ‘roms’ dans les villes d’Europe occidentale - France, Italie, Espagne’) is a collaborative research project funded by the French Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR) and carried by CNRS unities CEE (Paris), Citeres (Tours) and Migrinter (Poitiers).

<sup>4</sup> See Stewart and Williams, 2011; and for the Romanian situation: Olivera, 2010.

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## *2. The logics of inclusion. Exclusion and inclusion policies: two sides of the same coin?*

It may be easy to think of inclusion policies as the opposite of exclusionary policies. However, studying the design, development and implementation of 'integration projects' led us to observe that they are usually based on the same conceptual framework as exclusion policies and concretely happens to *work* in the very same way. Indeed, both of them are motivated (or justified) by a stereotyped perception of 'Roma' and, hand in hand with this, a phantasmagoric conception of social integration or 'inclusion'.

Moreover, it seems difficult to understand the ins and outs of 'inclusive policies' in France without taking into account the policies that *at the same time* aim at keeping Roma migrants away, either by expelling them from the territory or by denying them the rights attached to it.

A very clear illustration of this can be found in various initiatives aimed at solving, in 1990, the brand new 'Roma/Gypsy issue.' The shantytown of Nanterre stands as a typical case. After a few months, the place was evacuated, some inhabitants sent back to Romania with some money, while others were dispatched to 'holiday villages' far from Paris to be 'accompanied' and 'integrated.' However, many were not taken care of at all and ended up rebuilding a new slum nearby. Interestingly, all the 'tools' used by public authorities to solve the 'Roma issue' during the following 25 years are already represented here: the evacuation of settlements, expulsion to the country of origin, selective public hospitality, and ignoring many families.

While Romanian and Bulgarian immigration became more significant in the early 2000s, the term 'Rom' began to permeate political, media and associative discourses in France (Cousin, 2009; Olivera, 2009). Beyond the French case, the 'Roma issue' became increasingly important at the European level following the fall of communist regimes, the development of emigration from the former socialist republics, the neoliberal (re)ordering that followed and the ensuing ethnicization of socio-economic questions (Nacu, 2006; Sigona and Trehan, 2009; Olivera, 2012). The word 'Rom' progressively became used to refer to the 'largest European minority', the alterity of which seemed to be both ethnocultural (far-off extra-European origins) and socio-economic (trans-historical marginality). It also took place at a time marked by the dismantling of welfare states, by the all-pervading concept of 'economic crisis', as well as by an emphasis on 'immigration problems' and 'insecurity' (Weil, 1995). In this context, social cohesion in Eastern European new democracies – but also in the cosmopolitan metropolises of Western Europe – seemed particularly threatened by the 'Roma issue' (Stewart, 2012; Van Baar, 2014; Fassin et al., 2014; Picker, 2017). The Roma became a symbol in Europe of the 'fear of small numbers' that would threaten nation-states in a globalized age (Appadurai, 2007).

Whether coordinated or spontaneous, local or national, the set of exclusionary policies directed towards 'Roma migrants' can be regarded as the emerging element of a discrete but sustained re-ordering of urban and socio-economic margins. Focused on 'illegitimate populations', this dynamic reactivates ethnic categorization that has been deeply rooted in both national imaginaries and administrative practices for more than a century in Europe (Asséo, 2003). 'Gypsies' thus slowly became 'Roma', but the

stereotyped and unequivocal definition of the ‘imaginary community’ thus created was never really questioned. Perceived as culturally, socially and economically too far from Modernity, this ‘population’ was considered as being hardly ‘integrable’ by liberal democracies. Interestingly, it is at this very point that we can see how discourses justifying exclusion converge with those which promote inclusion. Indeed, both tend to agree on the need to implement *specific policies* adapted to the particular nature of this unusual ‘population.’

As exclusion policies directed at Roma migrants were put in place during the 1990s, the first ‘integration projects’ were launched in a more scattered and less visible way. After the holiday village experience that took place in Nanterre, some localities started to create temporary accommodation structures for Roma people living in ‘illegal settlements’, with more or less selective conditions. Over fifteen years, a few districts or municipalities launched integration projects that combined temporary family housing and social support. At that time, the question of public hospitality for ‘Roma migrants’ was mainly left to the initiative of local authorities. These projects happened to be very diverse in terms of size and housing modes. In many ways the products of local *bricolages*, they were supported by representatives of public authorities and set up by local NGOs as well as by informal volunteers or professional networks (Legros, 2010; Benarrosh-Orsoni, 2011; Clavé-Mercier, 2014; Lurbe i Puerto, 2014; Olivera, 2016).

It was only in the years 2007-2008 that the state began to promote national standards for these kind of projects, relying on Préfectures and ‘Préfets’ (local representatives of the state) which would at that time take on important financial and operational roles. Implemented initially in the administrative district of Seine-Saint-Denis, a popular suburb close to Paris hosting numerous slums and squats, these standardized projects were gradually designated with the label ‘*villages d’insertion*’ (‘integration villages’). Standard dimensions were predefined by authorities for these ‘*villages*’ supposed to accommodate fifteen families or a maximum of about 80 people each, regardless of how many people were actually living in the slums. Beneficiaries were selected on the basis of a ‘social diagnosis’ aimed at distinguishing between good candidates for integration, ‘the integrable ones’ (a minority), and ‘others’ (the vast majority). These ‘*villages*’ were guarded day and night, with visits being rigorously supervised. During the four or five years they would usually spend at the site, ‘beneficiaries’ were subjected to ongoing assessments of their ‘progress’ on the path to ‘integration’, some of them being excluded over time because they did not fit evaluation criteria. These operations offer a good illustration of the ‘chosen immigration’ policies that have now been dominating public debates in France (and beyond) for more than fifteen years (Spire, 2005; Noiriel, 2006). They also epitomize the ‘fight against poverty’ and its underlying assumptions that the poor are responsible for their situation (Wacquant, 2009) and that they have to demonstrate that they ‘want to integrate.’ In other words, those projects represent a form of social intervention dominated by a security discourse and are thus perfectly embedded within forms of neoliberal governance. In this light, public policies operate with twofold goals: exclusion of the majority, combined with the strictly controlled inclusion of a minority.

One of the two projects studied in this paper was launched by a green left-wing municipality close to Paris and originally presented itself as a ‘courageous alternative’

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to the '*villages d'insertion*' model. There was no selection of beneficiaries during the launch of the project which in the end involved about a hundred families (more than 350 people). Far from the dominant 'republican integration' ideals, the initiative partly originated from local representatives' desires to build on 'community work' and promote the 'Roma culture.' Originally based in a more or less implicit way on multicultural logic, the project was inspired by ideas of 'minority empowerment' and the 'inclusion of minorities' mobilized by European institutions and NGOs involved in the 'Roma issue' (Craig and Mayo, 1995). However, these ambitions gradually faded away and ended up disappearing completely from local political discourse (Olivera, 2016), whilst the project quickly reintegrated the frameworks of national/state thinking and their normative definition of social integration. Located about 600 kilometers away, the other project we investigated also distinguished itself from typical '*villages d'insertion*' by the absence of pre-established lists of 'beneficiaries' and a lack of quotas for defining the maximum places available. Officially, any 'household' meeting the selection criteria could enter the program. However, evidence shows the fluctuating and opaque nature of these criteria which were constantly manipulated to achieve 'good results' and make sure that the number of project 'beneficiaries' could be kept under check (Clavé-Mercier, 2014).

Therefore, however implicit or euphemized they were, we uncovered during our fieldwork many commonalities between these two 'alternative projects' and the more conventional logic characteristic of '*villages d'insertion*', especially in the way 'social integration' ended up being defined in both cases as a unilinear and normative process. The two projects differentiated in terms of ideological 'moods', vocabularies, political justifications or material forms. But they both treated their 'beneficiaries' first and foremost as *objects* to be taken care of and 'repaired', as opposed to *subjects* endowed with a capacity for action and with the ability to pursue their own projects. Just as distance-keeping policies would spur territorial self-expulsions, 'inclusion' projects would also, more or less explicitly depending on the location, result in 'beneficiaries' self-excluding from their peer groups, local ties, and the social life these factors had nurtured.

### *Roma identity as a problem*

Indeed, the idea that 'beneficiaries' should be re-educated and transformed is based on the assumption that 'Roma identity' is the reason why those families have become 'marginal.' This conception not only turns out to be very widespread among politicians, social workers and NGOs but it also permeates European society at all levels. Deeply rooted in phantasmagorical perceptions of 'Roma people' as a homogenous and problematic 'minority', it motivates, as we have seen, both exclusion *and* inclusion policies. The main difference is that - on the one hand - Roma have to be excluded because they are seen as responsible for their marginality, whereas on the other hand they are looked at as victims and therefore have to be included (Agarin, 2014). In any case, as we will see, the very idea of a 'Roma identity' happens to be very 'problematic' (Clavé-Mercier, 2017).

We will thus briefly focus on a set of cultural and social stereotypes affecting Roma which were both conveyed *and* reasserted by these projects, including the

following three which happen to be particularly recurring: Roma are nomads; they have always lived in a precarious or marginal state; they belong to closed communities, tribes or clans.

Indeed, Roma migrants are often perceived as members of a 'European minority marginalized for several centuries,' deprived of any means of action, or even in this specific case, of any 'migratory project.' In this perspective, their mobility is above all seen as the product of historical hazards, hence the frequent recourse to the notion of 'nomadism' (cf. the recurring use of words such as 'flight', 'exile' or 'wandering' to characterize their mobility). Deeply rooted in national imaginaries since the nineteenth century (Asséo, 2007; 2010), this ethnic reading of Roma/Gypsy mobilities seems to be unwavering. Numerous administrative documents that have tried to provide some kind of framework for 'integration projects' mention, for instance, 'help with sedentarization' as a significant necessity, although the intended beneficiaries may have never lived anywhere than in a house or apartment before ending up in the slums.

Spontaneously linked to nomadic (or diasporic) cultures, Roma are not considered 'natives' of the country they come from, and their forms of international mobility are generally disconnected from global migratory dynamics in Europe. Therefore, the fact that beneficiary families within the 'integration projects' usually maintain ties with their country of origin and return there either occasionally or regularly (for summer holidays, Easter, Christmas or family events) is not taken into account by authorities. These links with the native country seem more difficult to accept than with other (non-Roma) precarious immigrants who are already suspected of not having a real 'will to integrate.' Since Roma are neither 'from here' nor 'from out there', their movements are seen as tricks designed to conceal if not suspicious activities then at least unstable and problematic 'ways of life.'

At the same time, 'Roma migrants' are very often perceived of as not 'using well' the projects dedicated to them: they are frequently thought to defeat the measures that are put in place 'to help them.' This seems all the more difficult to understand as they are perceived as the most precarious among the precarious. However, these interpretations are based on a vast ignorance of these families' personal stories, although most of them have already been the object of one or more 'social diagnoses' before *and* during each project. Of course, migrants have had to sustain difficult living conditions in squats or slums, sometimes for many years. However, prior to this, their biographies reveal that they experienced residential stability and local integration over several generations in one village or neighborhood. They also went through many other experiences: wage labor for many (especially those over 40 who lived under Communist regimes), and previous international mobility experiences for some. Therefore, the way they experience and see the world is far from being limited to slum borders or to 'integration projects.' Above all, these places are seen as inevitable but *temporary* stages. When social workers ask migrants to develop a brand new 'life project' as a condition for being granted public hospitality, migrants can only 'accept' this without being able to really comply with it. Indeed, this injunction does not take into account their past, and even denies it, as well as their already existing projects, their status as a person, their capabilities (Sen,

1985) and their place in various social networks, between here and there, and even their material precariousness.

While institutional actors may mistakenly believe in slum dwellers' long-term marginality and anomie, another source of misunderstanding revolves around the notion of 'Roma community.' As migrants happen to be living collectively in squats or shantytowns, they are considered a close 'community' supposedly sharing a common language, history, and 'culture.' According to this view, such community life relies on specific ways of managing internal conflicts and even on alternative or secret political organizations, all of which jeopardizes the ambitions of integration projects to be ultimately 'empowering individuals' (Clavé-Mercier, 2018). Very often, even while denouncing these 'tribal practices' institutional actors paradoxically try to identify 'leaders' or 'spokespeople' to simplify communication with beneficiaries when they realize that the 'community' is not as tightly knit as they thought.

Indeed, while there are of course relationships of mutual help between some individuals or families, it is very hard to detect any form of collective solidarity on a large scale. It often appears that 'beneficiaries' spend much time denigrating their neighbors (or even competitors in the project), denouncing their 'bad life' and calling them dirty, twisted or dishonest 'Gypsies'- *tigani*. In the end, social workers and institutional actors have the most difficulty grasping the contours of the 'community' from which individuals and households would have to be extracted in order to make them 'autonomous.' In many regards, when confronted with the discourse of migrant families, the fabric of this imagined community tends to unravel at the seams (Clavé-Mercier, 2014: 387-400; Olivera, 2016).

In this context, we aim to evaluate the discrepancy between the ways Roma migrants are considered and how they tend to view themselves. Indeed, it is possible to better understand the reasons why migrants can only acknowledge this gap once we know the misunderstanding stands as the very *raison d'être* of integration projects and of the ways they are implemented. In fact, migrants do not try to directly oppose or contest the misconceptions most institutional actors or social workers may have about their past, present (and future) lives. The following part of this article highlights how migrants operating under many constraints turn this misunderstanding into a tool for emancipation. In other words, we will see how these families strive to 'domesticate inclusion' after having 'thwarted exclusion' for several years.

### *3. Developing leeway in the face of institutional inclusion*

As we have seen, inclusion and exclusion projects alike treat Roma migrants as a problem. As soon as the latter's 'identity' is perceived as being the cause of the issues they experience or cause, re-education becomes the public action number-one priority. In a nutshell, following this rationale 'integrating Roma' implies *de-gypsyfying* them. Migrants are thus approached and treated as objects, more or less reluctant to be transformed. They are thus never seen as subjects endowed with their own stories, logics, strategies or resources. However, even if institutions and NGOs are obsessed with 'Roma', those who happen to be designated such may not really care, nor do they challenge this categorization. They do not directly attempt to develop any counter-narrative nor to dispel the misunderstanding. Nevertheless, they do not remain

passive. On the basis of our analyses, given both the social integration logic implemented in these projects and the gap between the ways Roma are seen and the way in which they live, space remains for migrants to develop flexible ways to operate in a highly constrained and normative context.

Which practices do these migrants use to occasionally escape or completely avoid the numerous pitfalls created by power asymmetries with project actors? After first reviewing various *hidden forms of resistance*, we then examine how migrants tend to *negotiate* with social workers and finally investigate the different ways they assert their opposition by living a *double life*. Questioning these practices makes it possible to better understand the ‘hidden transcript’ that ‘beneficiaries’ deliver behind the scenes; that is, following James Scott’s analyzes, all the ‘discourse, gesture, speech and practices that are ordinarily excluded from the public transcript of subordinates by the exercise of power’ (Scott, 1990: 27).

### *Playing the game of institutions while keeping a low profile*

Speech and discursive practices appear to be an implicit but important lever that migrants can harness to gain flexibility. As shown by James Scott in his work about the ‘weapons of the weak’ (1985) and their ‘arts of resistance’ (1990), speech like rumor and gossip, can be considered in a domination context as a practice of daily resistance, even if this is never explicitly presented nor considered as means of reacting to external injunctions. Indeed, those types of discourses are much present in the daily lives of ‘beneficiaries’, but are also found amongst social workers who perceive part of them.

One of the projects illustrates this process well. After a few months, the municipality decided to set up a position of ‘manager’ whose remit it was to ‘accompany families’ and help them with the maintenance tasks on the site, be these clearing sanitary and paths, managing waste, etcetera. Veronica and Radu are a Romanian Roma couple. They are not beneficiaries of the project but are known to the elected official in charge of it. As the notion of ‘community work’ played at the time a major role in the project’s overall rationale, they were chosen to be the managers. Their being Roma lay at the heart of the decision. Indeed, institutional actors believed that sharing a supposed common language and identity with ‘beneficiaries’ would ‘facilitate the task’. Veronica and Radu were also implicitly given the position of role models. As for Veronica, beyond being perfectly fluent in French, she played an active role in civil society as both a school assistant in an NGO and as a participant at events on ‘Roma culture’. As a result, she also had a good command of the vocabulary used in NGOs, and discourses about ‘Roma identity’ held no secrets to her either. For both the elected representatives and for Gérard (the newly appointed project manager), Veronica and Radu represented the perfect couple and corresponded in every way to the integration model migrants are expected to follow. However, daily relations between the couple and beneficiary families quickly became difficult. The latter did not understand why ‘other Romanians’ should be telling them what to do, and on top of that, get paid for it.

As it is often the case with professionals involved in integration projects, the relationships between beneficiaries ‘that Veronica and Radu appreciated’ and ‘those

they disliked' also shifted. This situation was exacerbated by the internal political games that occurred amongst families but whose internal logic could not be grasped, either by municipal officials or by Veronica and Radu. In this context, rumors rapidly spread concerning a supposed adulterous relationship between Veronica and the project manager, Gérard. These continued to circulate as Veronica twice gave birth to 'blonde' children over the lifetime of the project. This widely used discursive register was aimed at mocking the 'deceived' husband, Radu. The latter appeared to be easy prey. First, his command of the French language was much poorer than his wife's. He also seemed to take his role of caretaker-manager of the site very seriously, while Veronica seemed to be the one 'wearing the pants' in the partnership. Families therefore mocked his appetite for 'power', pointing to the fact that 'he wants to be the chief' while not even being a leader 'at home'. This way rumors were used also made it possible to totally desacralize Gérard's status as project manager and complain about him. They criticized his tendency to organize endless meetings, speak in complicated ways, serve families with speeches 'that have no purpose' and denounced him for having 'lust' as his main driver in life. Moreover, beneficiaries mocked Veronica's managerial status which initially was presented as a reward for perfect integration, but was finally looked upon as a perk in a trivial sex story. Therefore, as we can see, the acts and discourses of these three individuals, supposedly legitimized by their dominant status, were reduced to nothing, systematically framed as being driven by purely personal (and intimate) interests and ultimately made objects of ridicule.

By criticizing them or constantly making comments about their action or personal motivation, migrants placed social workers and institutions at a distance. However, gossip also serves another important function for migrants. Inside the group the process creates connivance and consolidates social relations. It is also useful for the group's relations with the outside, making it possible for them to shield themselves from domination, without compromising their 'loyalty.' Indeed, rumors belong to nobody and anyone can participate in them without ever being incriminated since it is always a question of what has 'already been heard.' Therefore, feeding gossip and rumors by repeating them in an innocent way allows beneficiaries to take part in an invisible form of protest.

Other more personal, situational and concealed ways of gaining flexibility within project constraints are also used by migrants. Ranging from silence to small lies or omissions about issues such as their housing in the country of origin, these tactics allow beneficiaries to be obedient and even actively submissive to institutional actors and their rules. Such positions very much involve keeping a 'low profile' by clearly playing the institutional game, without explicitly opposing its numerous injunctions.

### *Negotiating*

Another method used by migrants to gain more leeway is to engage in direct negotiations with project actors to combine some of their personal priorities with those of the institutions. However, this cannot be done with all subjects, nor can it take place between any social worker and any migrant as this partly depends on personal affinities and compatibilities. Finally, these negotiations also rely on how migrants perceive the logics and functioning of each 'integration project'.

Let us take the case of Vasilka. A 40-year-old woman, she split up five years ago from the father of her children who at the time of the research were themselves married and parents. Mitko, her new 'boyfriend', was working as a minibus driver between his home country and Portugal. He sent her money every month and the couple met from time to time, sometimes just for a few hours 'to drink a coffee' or 'for the night.' Vasilka had been living in the shantytown for four years and no longer had a home in her country of origin. All her hopes are now based in France, it seems. When asked why she did not plan to marry or live with her 'boyfriend', she replied 'for shame', and that in the eyes of her children she 'could not do that.' In 2012, Vasilka was relocated to emergency accommodation. At the time, she used to beg every day in front of a neighborhood shop she had chosen because there was a flower shop nearby: 'I love you flowers very much', she said, while her face lit up. The rest of her life at that time did not make her so happy. She was clearly suffering from the close proximity of a migrant woman from her village. Vasilka thought the other woman considered her a 'servant', probably because of her status as a divorced woman. She also complained about her children, grandchildren and 'boyfriend' being so far away. However, her loneliness was partly compensated for by the relations she entertained with 'French friends' she had made while she was begging, as well as with other migrants from her village, some of whom lived in her building.

When she was selected to be part of the integration project, Vasilka was at first delighted by this possibility to get rid of the fear with which she was living, as she thought she could be expelled from France at any time. When the time came to evacuate the building and the question of rehousing was raised, social workers looked at her 'family profile' and, seeing she was alone and childless, allocated her a certain type of dwelling managed by another NGO. When the social worker working on the project, Milena, told her about the accommodation she had been allocated, Vasilka immediately rejected the proposal. Indeed, these 'insertion housings' were intended for single adults and came with the interdiction that they could be used to host anyone overnight, to avoid any risk of 'overoccupation.' Vasilka voiced her aversion to being relocated on these grounds, especially to Milena, who amongst all the social workers was the one she had the most affinity with. Negotiations began, which ended up favorably as Vasilka was finally relocated in a 'standard-type' studio flat.

At the same time, she found a job as a housekeeper in a hotel chain and her employment contract quickly became a long-term contract. While she was happy indeed to have got this job, Vasilka was nevertheless disappointed not to be working full time. She worked overtime every chance she could, while keeping detailed records of this. However, she quickly realized that she was not being paid as much as she should have been, and that most of her overtime was not taken into account. In contrast to the impact she was able to achieve at the time of her housing problem, Vasilka did not attempt to complain to project actors about this injustice at her workplace. She seemed to deal with it, and accept the logic of the project which enjoined 'beneficiaries' to be satisfied with their jobs without 'rocking the boat.' Vasilka adopted the same behavior when her boyfriend Mitko was imprisoned: she refused to tell project professionals about the situation. On the one hand, she wanted to get in touch with him, and help and support him in his detention, but she did not know how to proceed. On the other hand, she did not wish to seek advice from social

workers lest it was turned against her and jeopardized her own support within the project, as if somehow she could be contaminated by the stigma that affected Mitko.

Therefore, she decided to cope with the situation. She wanted to be able to be there for her man during the time he was imprisoned without 'asking too much.' This did not mean she was satisfied with what was 'generously granted' her by public authorities. This rather meant she did not want to risk losing the fragile benefits, in many ways unsatisfactory, which this 'help' had yielded her by soliciting the help of social workers about potentially sensitive issues. Vasilka's experience of social support thus demonstrated that she had strongly incorporated the injunctions and expectations at the core of integration projects. She tried to respond in the best way possible, strategically considering and adjusting the level of autonomy she could grant herself according to each person and timeframe.

As it may appear, negotiating possibilities and their effectiveness thus very much rely on how migrants perceive the projects. They also vary depending on the level of collusion with professionals working on a project and how heterogeneous the latter appear to be. Sometimes, negotiations are carried out as a team. This is particularly the case when migrants try to convince social workers to accommodate three generations in premises designed for nuclear families, or to allow them to temporarily go back to their country of origin for family or economic reasons, although this is officially prohibited or frowned upon. Very often, these negotiations are calculated and pragmatic. Depending on each situation and who sits around the table, migrants know perfectly well what they can or cannot negotiate. Our observations showed that the scope of negotiations frequently increase, especially as social workers often operate under pressure and find themselves obliged to obtain 'results' in adverse institutional and financial circumstances. Arrangements between social workers and 'beneficiaries' thus become a way for both of them to remain autonomous and flexible, while sometimes drastically reducing the asymmetry of their relationship.

### *Leading a double life*

'Beneficiaries' can thus try to maintain their personal and existential priorities, either *thanks to* their participation in projects, or *in spite of* it. Sometimes, they even do so without taking into account the project constraints in any way. Some people organize their daily lives in very compartmentalised ways, clearly distinguishing the project rationale from their own logic. They end up living a 'double life' while complying with institutional and personal requirements.

This is the case of Elena, for instance, who had been rehoused in emergency circumstances for security reasons (the insalubrity of the former squat) with her family and former village neighbors in a building requisitioned by the city. However, the dozen migrants who had been relocated did not receive at the same time any kind of residency permit, nor did they benefit from any kind of real social support. These 'beneficiaries' were clearly neglected by institutions and NGOs, whereas everyone had initially agreed on the necessity of this relocation. As a result, they lived for more than a year in an administrative no-man's land. Aware of the rehousing operation, the prefecture made sure the length of their stay on French territory would not be controlled, but they did not issue authorizations for work either. However, sometime

after Elena had been resettled, mediators and elected representatives realized that she was subletting parts of the building where she was living to other families. Elena's 'double life' – being relocated while making extra financial returns from available resources – involved accessing a combination of opportunities which arose from the fuzzy institutional circumstances of her relocation. This may also be understood as a way for her to react to a double bind. Indeed, on the one hand Elena was obliged to pay fixed charges on the building she had been relocated to (monthly rent, electricity, insurance, etc.) On the other hand, she was being denied a work permit or social rights. Navigating this situation required her to develop informal economic strategies, without, of course, informing the social workers involved in the project.

The 'double lives' led by migrants are motivated by several necessities. On the one hand, migrants try to combine the 'good life' (understood subjectively; cf. Butler, 2012) and 'what really matters' (Kleinman, 2008) with the requirements of public hospitality projects. On the other hand, they strive to respond to the paradoxical injunctions characteristic of the projects themselves. Therefore, without being overtly opposed to any type of institutional requirements or constraints, project 'beneficiaries' do not remain passive recipients. Although they do not reveal in "public transcripts" (Scott, 1990) the various ways they have to actually show some resistance, analysing the means by which they still manage to gain some leeway makes it very clear that either constrained or voluntary, their "adhesion to the project" can never total.

#### *4. Conclusion*

The visions of 'inclusion' and 'autonomy' promoted within these public hospitality projects are driven above all by the ambition to re-educate precarious migrants, keep close control of them and fight uncontrolled urban development. Whether they occasionally manipulate the rhetoric of 'empowerment' (Calvès, 2009) and 'cultural recognition' or, on a more frequent basis, explicitly resort to a security and (re)educational discourse, the situation is left unchanged. Just as much as exclusionary policies, the inclusion projects that we studied are motivated by an *a priori* (albeit often contradictory and vague) definition of the problematic population that is to be 'integrated': the Roma. In this context, as we have seen, what is at stake for migrants is *preserving* their autonomy and freedom while navigating uncertain and difficult environments. Faced with many contradictory injunctions, and refusing to see them as subjects in their own right, the level of flexibility available to migrants can only be maintained and developed by playing on misunderstandings, in several ways. Conversely, in all aspects of their logic and operational modalities, these projects directed at 'Roma migrants' are intended to 'remove misunderstandings.'

'The will to suppress misunderstanding, to solve it by referring to a rule, is always the moment when domination emerges. It will continue as long as the dominated ones cannot be heard in the idiom of the dominants and as long as they cannot speak from a place that is not recognized to them, up to the point when the interaction will turn into a strictly political conflict' – claim C. and V. Servais (Servais, 2009).

However, this desire for clarification and unilateral re-ordering is hampered by individual strategies and collective identities that prove to be so fluid and shifting that

'Roma people' can hardly be identified or objectified. Moreover, most 'beneficiaries' accept these misunderstandings and never try to dissipate them. In doing so, they evade univocal domination and avoid political conflict.

Using this perspective, our fieldwork allowed us to underline the role and value of informality and 'productive misunderstandings' in the case of *effective integration* processes taking place in strongly binding contexts. Indeed, migrants do manage to consolidate their administrative situations, as well as achieve local integration in terms of housing, economic activities, etc. They do it in their own ways, which correspond to more flexible and pragmatic integration modalities based on daily sociability in-and-out social grouping. Therefore, these modalities turn out to be very different from the integration models promoted by the projects. Pointing to an ideal society that does not exist outside the closed spheres of the upper-middle classes, the general rhetoric of 'inclusion' is probably not conducive to a better understanding of migrants' *actual* integration dynamics. However, this article argues that these dynamics can be made much more intelligible by a proper ethnography of misunderstandings. By documenting the complex and ambiguous interactions at play in a comprehensive approach, and without seeking to dispel the equivocality once and for all, the latter proves instrumental in highlighting a range of personal and collective strategies that normative and functionalist approaches often tend to reduce to 'informality.' It also cast a fresh look at migrants' logic and behaviors, turning what is usually disregarded as disenchantment or signals of deviance into authentic forms of emancipation and autonomy.

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JOANNA KOSTKA\*

## No Country for Poor People: The Case Study of the Romanian Roma Migrants in Poland

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\* [joanna.kostka@gmail.com] (Sociology Department, Lancaster University)

### Abstract

Since the creation of the European Union, anti-immigration rhetoric has traditionally been directed at non-European citizens. However, in recent decades hostility towards migrants has been extended to the rejection of EU citizens, to whom the European treaties ostensibly guarantee freedom of movement. In particular, the migration of the largest European ethnic minority, the Roma, within the EU has been accompanied by inflamed media reports and populist discourse laden with explicitly racist sentiments. Whereas the dynamics of Romani migration in the original Member States has received substantial political and academic attention, the movement of Roma people across newer Member States continues to be overlooked. An intrinsic assumption that Romani migration is a solely westward phenomenon has led to a failure to examine the role of Central and Eastern European states in generating exclusionary policies. Despite urgent calls from human rights activists about the intensifying violation of the legal rights of Romani migrants the situation has yet to be acknowledged or scrutinized by international organizations and academics. To shed analytical light on this under-researched area, the article presents an analysis of the impact of Polish immigration regime on Romani migrants and long-time residents from Romania. Drawing on data from official documents, activist reports, and semi-structured interviews the article traces the neoliberalization of Polish migration regime: one that mobilizes aggressive attitudes and behaviors towards the poorest and most marginalized European citizens. In turn, it argues that the deterrent tactics employed against migrants by the Polish State has its roots in the increasingly restrictive EU immigration policies and economic determinism of the Freedom of Movement and Residency Directive.

*Keywords:* Poland, Roma, migration, Freedom of Movement, neoliberalism, criminalization.

## 1. Introduction

The anti-immigration rhetoric in the EU, traditionally directed at non-EU citizens has now shifted towards the rejection of citizens, to whom the European treaties ostensibly guarantee freedom of movement. Particularly, migration of the largest European ethnic minority, the Roma, has been accompanied by inflamed media reports and populist discourse laden with explicitly racist sentiments. While Roma people represent a fraction of the many millions of European Citizens who move across state borders in their search for work, safety and a better life, national and local decision-makers perceive Roma migration as a threat to sovereign stability. While not all Roma people who exercise their rights to free movement are poor, state-sponsored violence, subjugation and racialization disproportionately affect the most impoverished individuals and families.<sup>1</sup> A study commissioned by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) describes in detail the illegal surveillance of Roma migrants, forced evictions and ethnic profiling by state police forces (Cahn and Guild, 2010). According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) the criminalization of Roma migration has repeatedly served as an excuse to destroy Romani settlements as ‘cauldrons of criminality’ and to deport Roma people on the grounds of ethnicity (FRA, 2009). Legally dubious practices of collective deportations of Roma living in ‘informal’ encampments have taken place across the European Community (Severance, 2010; Parker, 2012; O’Nions, 2011; Fekete, 2011; Kóczé, 2017). These measures are fueled by public and media discourses that explicitly invoke ‘cultural difference’ as a basis for exclusion and banishment. The repressive treatment of Roma migrants by EU Member States derives its legitimacy from a historical and deeply entrenched *Romanophobia* (McGarry, 2017; Kóczé, 2017; Yildiz and De Genova, 2017; van Baar, 2017). Nevertheless, the zealous targeting of the most impoverished migrants must be placed at the center of the broader trend of welfare state retrenchment, punitive revamping of public policies and rebranding of poverty as personal failure (Wacquant, 2012).

In recent years, scholarship on Roma migration shifted its analytical focus from examining the patterns and reasons for Roma migration (Vašečka and Vašečka, 2003; Guy, 2003) to addressing racialization, securitization and the criminalization of the abject socio-political conditions of Roma migrants (Kóché, 2017; Yildiz and De Genova, 2017; van Baar, 2017). The deportations of EU-national Roma migrants across the internal borders of the EU raise fundamental questions regarding the allegedly egalitarian and universalistic character of the freedom of movement regime (Humphris, 2017; Kóczé, 2017; Yildiz and De Genova, 2017; Aradau et al., 2013). Scholars argue that the European Union’s principle of ‘free movement’ has been perverted by national policies, mobilized to restrict the inflow of problematic and racialized EU nationals (Aradau et al., 2013; Yildiz and De Genova, 2017). While this novel line of research succeeds in placing the question of Roma migration at the

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to acknowledge that the Roma minority is an extremely diverse ethnic group and their experiences in the course of inner-European migration differ widely (Kropp and Striethorst, 2012). However, the cultural and economic diversity should not overshadow the unequivocal fact that the vast majority of Roma people ‘still belong to the poorest, most segregated, most discriminated against and least integrated populations in Europe, and their chances for socio-economic mobility continue to be extremely low’ (Sigona and Vermeersch, 2012: 1189).

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center of normative debates about European citizenship, its analysis of the subjugation of Roma migrants often neglects the encroaching European trend towards repressive and coercive approaches to *all* people living in visible poverty. Although scholars do address the neoliberalization of ‘free movement’ in the EU (see: Kóczé, 2017; Yildiz and De Genova, 2017) they often do so only in relation to Roma migrants, thus failing to emphasize the vilification of impoverished mobility in general, which thrives under the EU regulations.

Furthermore, scholarship on Roma mobility continues to focus primarily on developments unravelling in the original Member States under the intrinsic assumption that Roma migration is solely a westward phenomenon. The comparatively low mobility of Roma people within the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region has diminished interest to undertake critical analysis of immigration policies in countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary, or Poland. While the recent ‘migration crisis’ brought international attention to xenophobic and hostile attitudes flourishing in the region, urgent calls of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and activists about appalling violations of human rights of Roma EU nationals continue to be ignored (Móricz, 2013; Nomada, 2013; 2014). Moreover, the focus on the deportations and evictions of Roma EU nationals rarely acknowledges that similar tactics are used to expel and penalize other impoverished groups and individuals. For example, in May 2016 the UK Home Office introduced new guidance stating that rough sleeping was an ‘abuse’ (later qualified as ‘misuse’) of EU citizens’ right of freedom of movement. The guidance means rough sleepers can now be ‘administratively removed’ (effectively, deported) from the UK just for sleeping rough. This applies even if they are otherwise exercising treaty rights. Rough sleepers from Central and Eastern Europe have been particularly affected, but Italian and Portuguese nationals have also been detained and removed (Webber, 2017).

Finally, the exclusion of the CEE region from a growing body of largely Western European research on migration hides the oppressive tactics mobilized by the CEE governments against impoverished migrants, including Roma people. It also fails to highlight the impact EU pressure has had on the deployment of restrictive immigration policies by the new Member States. Perhaps more importantly, scholarship on mobility rarely takes account of how neoliberal policies are now deeply entrenched and unchallenged in CEE region. In short, through the mobilization of racially charged disciplining measures to ‘protect’ social order and national unity, what escapes scrutiny, is the pernicious othering of *all* people living in poverty and justification of morally charged disciplining measures to ‘preserve’ social order and national unity.

This article analyses the Polish immigration regime and its impact on Romanian Roma migrants residing in Poland. Building on data generated from official documents, activist reports and 15 semi-structured interviews with frontline workers, activists and Roma migrants, the article exposes a neoliberal approach to Polish migration policy: one which mobilizes aggressive attitudes and behaviors towards the poorest European citizens. It argues that the deterrent tactics employed against migrants by the Polish State has its roots in the increasingly restrictive EU immigration policies and economic determinism of the Freedom of Movement and Residency Directive. At the same time, the exogenous policies have met with little resistance since their deterring character fits with on-going neoliberalization of Polish society: a

process that replaces compassion and social justice with repression and individualization of poverty.

## *2. Post-1989 developments in Polish immigration policy*

For more than a century, Poland has been one of the largest migrant-sending states in the CEE region and a vast reservoir of labor for many countries in Western Europe and North America. However, researchers began to predict that in the next decades Poland would gradually shift from being a major sending country to a country of transit migration and net immigration (Górny et al., 2009; Geddes and Scholten, 2016). Poland as a fully-fledged EU member with a relatively stable economy (OECD, 2016) provides vital opportunities for people from economically less developed countries in the region. Ukrainian migrants, in particular, choose Poland as a destination country, a pattern dictated as much by economic need and political instability as by strong historical ties between these two countries (Okólski, 2004). Nevertheless, despite the increase in overall immigration rates, in 2016, the foreign-born population living in Poland reached only 1.6 per cent, the lowest percentage in the EU (Eurostat, 2016). According to the Office for Foreigners of the Polish Ministry of Interior, in 2014 there were 121,219 foreigners living in Poland legally (including registered EU nationals). There are no official data on the number of incoming or settled Roma migrants, as the government has made no attempt to analyze the legal and socio-economic circumstances of this group. According to activist research conducted by the Western Center for Social and Economic Research (ZOBSE) (Marcinkowski, 2015) there are around 1500 people who identify as Romanian Roma and live in informal encampments located on the outskirts of major Polish cities (including Warsaw, Wrocław, Poznań, Cracow and Gdańsk). Given these small numbers, immigration scholars continue to argue that Poland is mainly a transit country or a gateway to the West (Iglićka and Ziółek-Skrzypczak, 2010). Throughout the 1990s this widely held belief that most immigrants arriving in Poland are on their way somewhere else triggered little political or public concerns. Since WWII, the notion of ethnic homogeneity within Polish society – an idea crafted by the communist government – has such a grip on public understandings of ‘Polishness’ that it has resulted in an inability to see and discuss the changing dynamics of Polish demography.

In the 1990s, the Polish State began to develop what would soon become one of the most restrictive immigration regimes in the region. Vermeersch (2005) reasons that this phenomenon was driven by the EU accession requirements and coercive pressure to install new ‘hard’ borders on the Eastern and Southern frontier of the candidate States. Certainly, available research confirms that accession negotiations expedited a new tendency of Polish immigration policy towards the greater control and restriction of inflow (Stola, 2001; Vermeersch, 2005; Weinar, 2005; Łodziński and Szonert, 2016). In 1991, under the auspices of financial assistance from the EU (e.g. PHARE program), Poland concluded a readmission agreement with Germany, which bound Poland to re-admit third-country nationals who had illegally entered the Schengen area. The EU compensated Poland for each re-admitted ‘illegal’ immigrant and the acquired funds were quickly invested in border infrastructure and processing procedures (aimed at speeding up screenings and deportations). The Aliens Act of

1997 (amended in 2003) attached even stronger importance to deportations, militarization of border controls and the development of measures for combating illegal migration. Finally, as a prerequisite of accession, Poland introduced a new Schengen visa regime for a number of Eastern European countries, a decision that fully sealed off its Eastern border. In the context of a legislative framework focused on deterrence, little emphasis was placed on protection, integration or assistance to foreigners. Indeed, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Poland neither defined integration in its legal documents nor devised any safeguarding mechanisms to succor migrants (Iglicka and Ziolek-Skrzypczak, 2010). As a senior Polish social worker commented, ‘in the 1990s, it was all about forcing people out, not about helping them adjust to the new surroundings’ (Interview, Poznan 2014).

In 2004, as a fully-fledged member of the EU, Poland transposed the Freedom of Movement Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 into its domestic legislation. The directive confers on every citizen of the Union a primary and individual right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. However, as argued by Kóćzé (2017) and van Baar (2017) free movement has been configured as a distinctly neoliberal project. While it opened the national economies to flows of capital and labor, it drastically curtailed the rights of ‘less desirable populations’ to move around and settle in a place of their choice. For example, Article 12 introduced strict eligibility criteria for those who wished to register in the host country; these include proof of employment, self-employment, or financial self-sufficiency, and possession of valid health insurance. While the directive talks about non-discrimination (Art. 20), social cohesion and integration (Art. 18, 19) it reserves free movement for active workers and wealthy elites who do not rely on social support. Article 16 articulates this bluntly by stating that it is possible to expel people who ‘become an unreasonable burden on the social assistance’. Prompted by EU pressure, the Polish authorities took Article 12 to the extreme, applying a *sufficient resources* test to all registering citizens of the Union, and demanding proof of permanent address (§2, Law Journal, No. 217, item 1616). A senior public servant explained that under center-right government led by Civic Platform (PO) the Office of Interior was determined to ‘play up to the EU demands by adopting the strictest stance possible on unregistered migration’ (Interview Warsaw 2014). Those unable to meet these criteria were pushed into ‘informal’ residency. In this way, as argued by Aradau et al., (2013) free movement becomes less about provision of opportunities and more about enabling exploitation (e.g. in the labor market) and precarious living conditions (e.g. no access to adequate housing or healthcare).

### *3. Creating the ‘other’*

While the creation of restrictive and economically deterministic immigration regime has been influenced by exogenous (EU) pressures (Vermeersch, 2005), its consolidation corresponded with the triumph of neoliberal forces, a broad rubric that includes a host of offensives against human dignity: poverty, exclusion and social inequalities ranging from racism to gender inequalities. The transition to a free market economy in 1989 had resulted in staggering polarization of Polish society. According to research, within a decade Polish disparity of income became one of the highest in CEE. When measured by Gini coefficient, between 1987 and 1997, inequality

increased from 0.26 to 0.334. Between 1988 and 2000, the percentage of people living in extreme poverty (defined as those who go to bed hungry) increased from 1.5 to 6.7 (Domański, 2002). By 2015, 7.4 per cent of the population lived in extreme poverty with an income of less than 545PLN (€131) per month. Another 16.2 per cent lived in relative poverty, with the income of a family of four less than 2056PLN (€496) per month (GUS, 2016). The on-going political and spatial separation of the poor brought about the relatively new phenomena of homelessness and a burgeoning post-communist underclass. Amid the striking changes in the nature and shape of poverty, radical exclusion became the new order of the day with Beskid (1998: 42) commenting that ‘set against all the other countries of CEE Poland is pursuing the most elitist model of income distribution.’

The painful effects of the market-economy transition on large sections of the population were made acceptable by presenting them as a matter of national pride and national security. This not only delegitimized the demands of *the losers of the transformation* but also pushed poverty into the realm of the private. The idea that social advancement is possibly through individual action – productivity and entrepreneurship – gain the status of a gospel effectively labelling the poor and unemployed people as lazy and feckless, not deserving to benefit from civic and human rights (Bobako, 2010). The engineer of shock therapy, Leszek Balcerowicz, went as far as equating non-productivity with plunder and war, a phenomenon he presented as a threat to national security (Gazeta Wyborcza, 2008). In a relatively short period of time, the Polish ruling elites, supported by mass media, constructed *profit* as the essence of democracy and *consumption* as the most valuable act of citizenship (Sowa, 2010). This not only justified aggressive privatization of public assets (including housing stock and healthcare services) but also individualized social inequalities.

According to Zygmunt Bauman, subordination of equity values to commercial interests creates the conditions for ‘the suspicion against others, the intolerance of difference, the resentment of strangers and the demands to separate and banish them’ (1998: 47). Development of restrictive immigration regime in Poland and deployment of punitive policies targeted at the poor (evictions of *problematic tenants*, benefit cuts for *delinquent* individuals, removal of children from *shiftless* parents, imposition of fines for panhandling and rough sleeping)<sup>2</sup> reflects this dynamic. The aim is to ostracize and push out of the public view those ‘unwilling’ to contribute to economic growth and those rejecting the sanctity of entrepreneurial logic. Specific if not unique to the Polish realization of the neoliberal project, was eradication of the discourse of ‘class exploitation’ and the discreditation of socialist postulates (Żuk, 2010). As none of the leading parties were able to eliminate growing dissatisfaction arising from economic developments, politicians began to direct these negative emotions against ‘the enemies’ of the Polish State – including the ‘foreigners’ (anybody who did not fit the model of a Polish-Catholic) (Ost, 2007). These tactics proved beneficial to the ruling elites as the victims of transition ceased to attack the economic system and turned their frustration towards culturally defined ‘others’. The rampant ‘othering’ of poor people not only legitimized on-going cuts to social services and policing those

<sup>2</sup> Under the Penal Code, bathing in forbidden areas, begging and the fouling and littering of public places are all subject to fines. In addition, trespass is a criminal offence subject to a fine or imprisonment of up to one year (Dz.U. 2010, No. 46, item 275).

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deemed ‘unproductive’ but also gave rise to rampant xenophobic and explicitly racist attitudes, which reached the pinnacle during the latest ‘migration crisis’. As argued by Charkiewicz (2009) the inflamed public opinion no longer limits itself to vilifying the poor but calls for their ‘extermination’. The new central question of Polish politics is thus concerned with who has a right to live and who does not.

It is in this hostile context that the article will now discuss the situation and treatment of Romanian Roma migrants residing in Poland.

#### ***4. Romanian Roma in Poland – invisible tyranny***

It is still common to consider the presence of Romanian Roma in Poland as a new phenomenon related to the accession of Romania into the EU in 2007. However, Roma migration to Poland (and across Europe) had already commenced in the 1990s, when Roma people from the Eastern European block began to flee abject poverty and increasing levels of ethnic violence in their home countries (Bhabha et al., 2017). Although Poland often served as a stop off point towards the West (for Roma people from Romania, Bulgaria, and ex-Yugoslavia), many families stayed behind and settled in various parts of Poland. This effectively means that Romanian Roma migrants have been living in Poland for over 20 years, often in absolute poverty, exclusion and under constant threat of violence (Nomada, 2014). There is no data on the number of Roma migrants arriving in Poland in the 1990s and little systematic knowledge on why some people decided to stay. Interviews conducted by the author point to many reasons, including not enough funds to travel further, personal and health issues preventing further migration, or ‘being sent back by German authorities’, (Interviews, Wroclaw and Poznan, 2013).

In the beginning the arrival of Romanian Roma people did not meet with severe hostility although it would be an overstatement to claim that migrants were well received. As remembered by a social worker from Poznan, ‘people felt pity for them, we were not accustomed to such poverty, entire families sleeping on the pavement that was new, some people helped a bit but most just pretended not to see’ (Interview, Poznan, 2014). In interviews, Roma themselves insist that in the beginning ‘people were nice, not so angry’ (Interview, Poznan, 2013). However, there are no studies documenting attitudes of Poles towards incoming Roma migrants in the early 1990s, hence these statements need to be treated with caution. Nonetheless, absence of inflammatory reports in the press during those times does show that the moral panic around Roma arrivals developed later on. The new arrivals could not however, count on any support from the State undergoing ‘shock therapy’ and the drastic curtailment of public provisions. In multiple ways, for more than a decade Romanian Roma lived ‘stateless lives’ fully excluded from basic citizenship rights and access to the most essential public services (including education, healthcare and housing). For example, activist research shows that Romani children born in the Polish territory are often not recognized as rightful citizens or residents, and do not have access to basic education. Between 2011 and 2013 in Wroclaw, none of the children age 6 to 16 were enrolled in school or any other form of education (Nomada, 2014). Without valid documents Roma are forced to squat in makeshift houses without basic amenities, living off panhandling and informal scrap-collection (Marcinkowski, 2015).

The development of a restrictive immigration regime, under the auspices of the EU, predictably brought new attention to the presence of Romanian Roma people. Under a growing international pressure to fight 'illegal immigration', the Polish State was determined to show that the money invested by the EU was well spent and that order was being maintained. Hence, the first official policy towards Roma migrants who overstayed their visa permits was that of eviction and 'on-the-spot' deportation. Yet, the legality of these actions was neither monitored nor documented and currently there are no reliable or accessible public records accounting for the exact number of deportations.<sup>3</sup> According to the Ministry of Interior all deportations were executed in line with the Polish law of that time, however, activist reports stress that they were rarely supported by court decisions and often entire communities were purposely misled about their rights (Nomada, 2013; Marcinkowski and Rusakiewicz, 2015). Perhaps the most violent and legally dubious deportation took place in Wrocław in 1998. According to the news report (Gazeta Wyborcza, 1998), on 15<sup>th</sup> October at 6 am the riot police and border guards converged on the Romanian Roma informal encampment in Tarnogaj (district of Wrocław). Around one hundred people, including small children, were rounded up and forced onto the buses, with no prior notice. In what was called 'Operation Alien' (Operacja Obcy), the county police, in full riot gear and rubber gloves, began to demolish the settlement using iron bars and sledgehammers. The residents were transported to the border guard unit in Kłodzko, where they were placed in the gymnasium and deported the same day. In an interview, colonel Lech Surówka, a spokesman for the Commander of the Sudeten Border Guard, stated that the demolition of the settlement took place according to 'protocol'. When asked why such drastic measures were employed, he explained: '[there is] no point of leaving them here, the winter is coming, begging will stop, and theft will begin' (Gazeta Wyborcza, 1998). Similar operations took place in Poznań (1993, 1999) Warsaw (1996 and 1998) and Cracow (1996) (Marcinkowski and Rusakiewicz, 2015). According to a witness, a well-known Polish anthropologist J. Fickowski, many of these operations resembled roundups common during WWII, 'it was disinfection, not a normal way to treat people' (Gazeta Wyborcza, 1996). And yet, the violent and discriminatory treatment of Roma migrants by the Polish State has never been exposed or reprimanded. Indeed, these mass deportations have entered a canon of 'forgotten history', fervently denied by the authorities.

Not surprisingly a coping strategy adopted by many Romanian Roma families has been that of invisibility - avoidance of all contact with the authorities and any form of institutionalized assistance. Roma families have found shelter in the most secluded places (often close to landfills or on post-industrial sites); ready to relocate at any moment, with interfamily networks serving as the immediate safety net and information channels. Papadopoulos et al., (2008) argued that *becoming imperceptible* is often the most effective tool that a marginal population can employ to oppose prevailing forms of state violence. Certainly, in the case of Romanian Roma invisibility proved an effective strategy of evasion, as the topic of Romani migrants

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<sup>3</sup> There are many media reports of evictions and deportations that took place in large Polish cities; however, the government has never released any official report or statement to the public. This also applies to deportations of immigrants from ex-Soviet republics who tried to settle in Poland throughout the 1990s. The Ministry of Interior refused to grant access to the archival documents to the author of this article.

disappeared from the State's agenda for more than a decade. As the resources were concentrated on securing Eastern borders, the authorities turned a blind eye to the growing destitution of 'transit migrants' in hopes that sooner or later the unwelcome guests would leave on their own.

### *5. New status, same treatment*

The accession of Romania to the EU in 2007 granted the Romanian Roma people EU citizenship, which under the Freedom of Movement Directive protects them from deportations and discrimination based on ethnicity and nationality. However, this newfound status has proved of little benefit and paradoxically only further excluded Roma migrants from socio-economic life and access to public services. Under a restrictive and economically driven legal framework, the impoverished Romanian Roma communities found it almost impossible to register as EU citizens often finding themselves in a limbo of bureaucratic protocol. According to the Commissioner for Human Rights (2014), the local authorities tend to ignore problematic cases (i.e. expired documents, lack of permanent address) hiding behind eligibility criteria and ignoring the dramatic socio-economic exclusion of long-term residents. Roma migrants cannot count on well-informed assistance and their cases are often reviewed in an ad-hoc manner – often dependent on the good will of individual agencies and/or bureaucrats. Moreover, while Poland has transposed all the articles of the Directive 2004/38/EC, it did not systematize procedural protocol and harmonize the EU requirements with the existing legal provisions and institutional modus operandi. The effect is one of confusion, procedural inconsistencies and limited knowledge about the proper course of action. This is particularly acute at the lower tiers of government (Duszczuk and Lesińska, 2009). These factors generate an evasive attitude among public administrators and front-line workers who are not always certain about their own decision-making discretion and are excessively constrained by byzantine protocol. In fact, it is still common for bureaucrats to label Romanian Roma as illegal immigrants excluding them from available programs (i.e. registration as unemployed).

In instances where Roma migrants do manage to register they cannot access quality social assistance. Rigid interpretation of the Freedom of Movement Directive is based on the premise that EU citizens are economically self-sufficient and in no need of state support. Hence, the Polish government does not prioritize integration of foreigners and has yet to pass proper legislation. The first timid step towards strategic thinking about integration took place in 2011, when the Working Group operating within the inter-ministry Team for Migration presented a document titled *The Polish Migration Policy: Its Current State and Further Actions*. The strategy outlined the main lines of action around integration, however its scope was extremely limited, as it did not discuss issues such as access to public healthcare, education and social housing. Paradoxically, the strategy was directed exclusively at foreigners who 'integrate easily into local communities' such as international students or recruited professionals (Duszczuk and Góra, 2012). The explicit disregard for the presence and needs of impoverished and irregular migrants is a striking example of the neoliberal drive to revoke the rights to residency (and citizenship) for migrants believed 'undeserving' or 'culturally incompatible'. In fact, the strategy bluntly states that

foreigners should not perceive integration programs through the prism of the provision of social benefits. Statistics on the use of social security instruments confirm that the share of foreigners is marginal (Duszczuk and Góra, 2012). Thus, it is ironic that the current discourse presents poor migrants as welfare tourists, who live of social support and exploit the charity of 'good Samaritans'.

The explicit rejection of integration policy as a means to provide foreigners with adequate public assistance is further manifested in the way the Polish integration regime is institutionalized. Discretion and responsibilities for integration are scattered across different ministries and departments that tend to work in silos and often neither have a clear mandate for action nor prioritize integration in their portfolios. While the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy handles assistance programs, it is the Ministry of the Interior and Administration that is accountable for issues pertaining to visa policy, granting of the right to remain and for actions targeted at refugees. The analyses show that no direct relationship between these two parts is stipulated by Polish legislation; hence immigration policy is purposefully disconnected (Duszczuk and Góra, 2012). This means that opening of the Polish labor market to foreign workers is not accompanied by decisions concerning their inclusion into Polish society. The migration policy doctrine assumes the primacy of labor market needs (i.e. replenishment of emerging labor force shortages) with disregard of issues related to equality, social justice and individual well-being. Moreover, the cultural turn in public discourse legitimates inaction on integration by fueling 'smear campaigns' against impoverished migrants. The analysis conducted by the Center for Social Opinion Survey (CBOS) in October 2015, shows that only six per cent of Polish internet users commenting on migration spoke out in favor of helping immigrants integrate into Polish society.

Consolidation of anti-poverty rhetoric and normalization of xenophobic attitudes brought Romanian Roma migrants into the spotlight. Their visible poverty added a new impetus to long-standing prejudices towards indigenous Roma communities and the so-called 'losers of the transition'. The prevailing attitudes portray Roma communities as a locus of uneducated, culturally backward and lazy people, predisposed to criminality and exploitation of social benefits and charity hand-outs. Under neoliberal governance a powerful consensus emerged that Roma people are socialized within a 'culture of worklessness' and actively disregard Polish norms and customs (thus threatening social order). This portrayal is evident in media headlines, such as those published by the largest daily paper of Lower Silesia 'Gypsies attack people in the old square', 'The Gypsies grope passing women. How to protect yourself', 'Roma are not poor they know how to lie and steal' (Kozioł, 2014). The image of an aggressive panhandler (amassing great fortunes by 'swindling the hard-working people') effectively hid structural dimensions of poverty and normalized institutionalized racism. A blunt statement from a manager of a social work team in Wrocław shows the dramatic lack of understanding of the real barriers to integration and functioning in the society: '*they come and go, they don't want to work, or send their children to school, it is not possible to work with them, they lie; but worst of all they force children to beg*' (Interview, Wrocław, 2013).

The pervasive trend of seeking the cause of poverty and justification for policy failures in the community itself and its specific culture further legitimized deployment of conservative, morally charged and penalizing interventions. While some localities

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rely on less coercive schemes than others, the effect is always the same – a gruesome violation of human rights, inconsistent application of the law and systemic abjection of entire communities.

## 6. *Public policy of stigma*

The treatment of Romanian Roma fully exposes the penalizing nature of the Polish neoliberal regime and its insidious drive to stigmatize destitution. Inside institutionalized hostilities, social workers as well as community development practitioners and integration experts appear complicit in implementing social policies that are degrading and inhumane. Interventions are dispatched in an ad-hoc manner, usually as a reaction to a publicized ‘crisis’ i.e. inflammatory media reports, epidemic scares and complaints. They also have a *schizophrenic* character, on one hand espousing basic humanitarian principles and on the other authoritarian moralities (e.g. surveillance, eviction, removal of children). This is best illustrated in the city of Wrocław, where after agreeing to provide the informal Roma encampment on Kamieńskiego Street with portable toilets, garbage disposal units and water tanks the authorities unleashed an array of intimidation tactics, including unscheduled controls by the City Guard and police, random public health inspections and early-morning visits by social workers. According to the Roma residents, visitors to the camp always demanded detailed information about the families, conducted illegal searches of the houses, and insisted that a failure to comply with their instructions, could result in children being removed (Nomada, 2014). These kinds of actions and threats are extremely common and are used to exert pressure of the most painful kind as a social lever to secure acquiescence.

Direct harassment has been complemented with morally charged antipoverty campaigns aimed at changing the problematic behavior of unproductive individuals rather than promoting wider structural adjustments and reforms. One such oppressive strategy, mobilized under the auspices of eradicating anti-social behavior, is stigmatization and penalization of street begging. Anti-begging campaigns appeared in the late 2000s, as a means of tackling the allegedly increasing problem of ‘aggressive’ begging and to discourage members of the public from giving money to beggars (Fertsch and Roik, 2011). Publicly funded posters, brochures and fliers circulated in Polish cities with slogans such as, *Don't Give Money on the Street, Help for Real, Begging is a choice not a necessity*. While local councils maintained that this deliberately ‘hard-hitting’ campaign was not anti-Roma, they admitted that a lack of street donations will force the Roma people (as well as other homeless people) to relocate. As stated by the MP representing the city Bydgoszcz, ‘if we cut them off, they will have to leave’ (Phone Interview, Bydgoszcz, 2017). In a strict sense, mendicancy is not illegal in Poland (the regulation prohibits the aggressive and fraudulent extortion of money, and begging performed by minors),<sup>4</sup> however, it lends itself to public outcries driven by an omnipresent stereotype of a *begging Gypsy, too lazy to do anything else*, and flamboyant tabloid stories of tremendous wealth accumulated by scrounging Roma. In 2013, the popular internet portal *trojmiasto.pl* published a story about Romanian Roma beggars in the city of Gdansk under the title *Gdansk attracts*

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<sup>4</sup> Code of Administrative Offences, Article 58.

*beggars, they 'earn' thousands of zloty per day.* In an interview, a manager of the social work unit Monika Ostrowska insisted: 'They [Roma] are very clever and have developed methods of begging to perfection. Recently, children begged with a small dog. It arouses pity. Please do not be fooled by their poverty.'

The campaigns are often reinforced with control checks, issuing of fines and the confiscation of money. While under the Polish Petty Offenses Act (Penal Code), a person can only be fined if she or he is able to work or has enough resources to live independently, the law does not provide a definition of the level of resources deemed to be 'enough to live independently' nor of an 'importunate or fraudulent manner'. The police are therefore able to decide at their discretion whether to charge someone with an offense or ask the person to leave the area. Far from being effective the campaigns reinforce social stigma by implying that beggars are engaged in criminal activities and that they have other choices for generating income. It is not coincidental that instances of verbal abuse and harassment of Romanian Roma increased shortly after the campaigns took to the streets. As a mother of three children confessed, 'it was always bad, but now it is very very bad, people spit on you, and call you names, but I need to sit, I need to buy food for my children' (Interview, Poznan, 2014).

Stigmatization of begging has been complimented by measures that interdicted all forms of public 'loitering' and took a hard stance on squatting and rough sleeping (Browarczyk, 2013). Growing income inequalities and rampant privatization of social housing has left a growing number of people without a secured abode. In line with the neoliberal drive to secure the interests of corporate elites (in this case housing developers), the state's response to squatting was forceful evictions, issuing of fines for 'trespassing' and legal prosecutions. Since the majority of Romanian Roma live in informal encampments often located on vacant public land, they too became victims of these measures. To legitimize on-going expulsions, often undertaken without clear legal mandate and with no alternative housing provided, the local authorities labelled Roma communities as illegal ghettos, places of crime that breed a parasitical dysfunctional underclass. The policy of clearing the city of undesirable elements, forced many Romanian Roma to subsist in what Tyler (2013) calls 'degraded border zones within the state'. The evicted families not only lost all their belongings but also filial networks of friendship, care and protection. Their faith and trust in the State and state actors, already very fragile, was tarnished completely, and the new generation of EU nationals was pushed further into extreme exclusion.

The most well-known legal intervention took place in the city Wroclaw in 2012, when the Mayor's Office pronounced the encampment on Kamieńskiego Street as illegal, dangerous and a risk to public health (opinion issued by the Sanitary Inspectorate prior to any investigation). On March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2012, the City tried to demolish the camp and remove its residents with the help from municipal police. The authorities eventually abandoned the action due to an unclear legal mandate and conflict about who should bear responsibility for the eviction. Although the incident showed that municipalities are not in possession of legal policy tools to address 'informal housing', it did not prevent the City Hall from conceiving alternative ways of eradicating the encampment (Nomada, 2014). On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2013, the residents received an official notice to vacate the premises within two weeks. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April 2013, the city filed a lawsuit for eviction of 47 adults and children in the District Court in Wroclaw.

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The Kamińskiego case, widely covered in the media, set in motion a series of evictions and dubious legal prosecutions across Poland. In 2013, a Roma family living in Poznan was evicted from an abandoned building, under the decision of the County Inspectorate of Construction, which deemed the dwelling unsafe.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the family (with children under five) was not provided with alternative housing (required by the Polish law) or any form of social assistance. The authorities insisted that the family was given an option to move into a homeless shelter but refused. Given that shelters in Poland are segregated by gender it should not be surprising that the family refused to live there, instead relocating to another informal camp located on an abandoned allotment. In 2014, local authorities in Gdansk allowed for the demolition of a three-year-old encampment in Jelitkowo, without providing legal notice (required by the Polish law) and without the knowledge of the Municipal Family Support Center. Under pressure from human rights activists, the Vice Mayor of Gdansk admitted that the demolition took place ‘a bit too early’, due to a breakdown in communication channels among the City Hall, City Guard and Social Services. Even though 30 people (including children) lost all their possessions and became homeless, the decision was not condemned by the Prosecutor’s Office and no alternative housing was provided. In 2015, a small camp on Paprotna Street in Wroclaw, the home of an extended Roma family, was ‘cleaned’ and ‘cleared’ by the workers of the City Guard and Urban Greenery Unit. When questioned by activists about the decision, the Mayor’s Office insisted that the warrant for clearing was issued by the District Inspectorate, an autonomous public agency, hence avoiding legal responsibility. In a meeting with an activist, the legal advisor of the Mayor’s Office insisted that the area was ‘unoccupied’. This is a blunt fabrication as the camp had been under continued police surveillance and its residents were regularly visited by the municipal social work unit. Less publicized evictions took place in Warsaw and Cracow, where entire families were evicted from vacant abodes once again without any assistance provided.

According to the Polish law local authorities are required to provide shelter and support to homeless people and people who are evicted (Journal of Laws of 15 April 2004, No. 64, Item 593). However, this assistance is often based on ‘behavioral control’, which gives officials and care workers complete power over the clients. For example, in 2014 Municipal Social Work Unit moved a Romanian Roma family from the encampment on Kamińskiego Street to a social center under its authority. The center subjected the family to daily controls (including room searches), 24-hour monitoring, evening curfew and limited visitation rights. The social workers also endorsed a no tolerance begging policy, which meant that any instance of noncompliance would result in immediate expulsion. Although the family was provided with food and basic personal items (i.e. sanitary products), it did not receive any financial assistance, as it was deemed that the Roma would spend the money on ‘cigarettes’ and ‘junk food’. In meetings with local NGOs, social workers insisted that such control measures were necessary to ‘prepare and teach Roma how to lead a proper life’. In effect, the ‘assistance’ stripped the family of the ability to act, prevented them from influencing their own life, and assuming responsibility for their behavior. Human rights advocates compared the center to a corrective institution that not only

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<sup>5</sup> The request for public disclosure of the assessment report, delivered to the authorities by the County Inspectorate of Construction, was denied (last request was made by the author on July 5, 2017).

hides poverty from the public view, but also humiliates and further disenfranchises people.

## *7. Concluding Remarks*

The discrimination against Roma migrants living in Poland is still a severely underreported reality. This article conveys that for two decades the Polish State has endorsed an array of oppressive and violent approaches, which has pushed Roma migrants into abject poverty and destitution. Throughout the 1990s the dismal circumstances of this ethnic minority and their persecution have gone fully unnoticed by international organizations, domestic human rights institutions and NGOs. Paradoxically, the transposition of the Freedom of Movement Directive contributed to further exclusion and stigmatization of Roma migrants who have been living in Poland for more than a decade. The continuing disenfranchisement of this group shows that European citizenship does not by any means make the EU a fully inclusive society of equal citizens. In fact, the very design of the Directive unjustifiably disadvantages the poorest migrants, as it allows Member States to discriminate against economically inactive European Union citizens labelled as an 'unreasonable burden on the social assistance'. In its current form, free movement within the EU provides unprecedented opportunities for 500 million citizens to live in each other's countries, but it is tied to a violent and oppressive system of exclusion. The 'differential treatment' has allowed the right-wing government of Poland to make the cynical, opportunistic argument for reconsideration of the benefits of the principle of free movement and rolled out punitive interventions aimed at deterring impoverished migrants from settling down and gaining access to civic and social rights.

The dismal response of the Polish State to integration challenges must be considered within a wider neoliberal attack on the social contract: one, which destroys existing systems of wealth redistribution and dismantles all forms of social provision. Central to this neoliberal ideology is the claim that the management and development of all aspects of society should be left to the wisdom of the market (Harvey, 2005). As the exchange of capital takes precedence over social justice, public policies aimed at elevating societal inequalities (particularly those based on race, gender and class) are dissolved in favor of what Giroux (2004) calls 'chronic punishment'. He argues that the facets of public space are becoming militarized in order to secure the privileges and benefits of the corporate elites. In turn, Bauman reminds us that the elimination of common goods provides fertile grounds for politics of intolerance and the 'hysterical, paranoiac concern with law and order' (1998: 47). Laws, regulations and administrative measures thus concurrently discipline the poorest strata of society and racialize the 'other', to reduce the visibility of poverty and hide it as social issue. In this political landscape, violent expulsions and criminalization of migrants, particularly those living in 'visible poverty' (e.g. squatters, rough sleepers and panhandlers) serve to appease growing public insecurities while relieving the state of responsibilities for upholding the human rights of all its residents.

In this context, political decisions have a central role in determining what Polish society will look like over the next few decades, how inclusive it will be, and whose economic, social and political rights will be taken into account. The fact that Poland is still not receiving a high volume of immigrants should prompt the authorities to use

this time to devise integration policies and experiment with progressive approaches based on the principles of social justice. However, at the moment the picture looks grim, especially considering the on-going militarization of European borders and full endorsement of deterrent tactics by the EU. The criminalization of begging and squatting are the tip of an ugly iceberg of a wide base of antisocial behavior measures that are used to punish or fine people in the name of disrupting public order and measures that police the use of public space by people considered ‘undesirable’ by policymakers and business owners. As the European Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks (2015) has said, ‘the criminalization of poverty hides problems from the public view and undermines efforts to improve the living conditions of Roma [and others] who are stigmatized and discriminated against.’ While the resistance to migrants in some Polish cities is beginning to thaw, mostly because of grassroots advocacy, there is still no conception of how to alter and/or adjust existing procedures to promote a long-term, legitimate and accountable integration process. This will continue to prove a great challenge for many years to come unless we ensure that public spaces, public infrastructure and social assistance, is accessible to everyone – including impoverished migrants.

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## Book Review

**Gutekunst, M., Hackl, A., Leoncini, S., Schwarz J.S., Gotz, I. (eds.) 2016. *Bounded Mobilities. Ethnographic Perspectives on Social Hierarchies and Global Inequalities*. Bielefeld: Transcript.**

*The barrier for me is something that delimits a mental territory, not necessarily a physical one. Something that makes you feel safe. But is it worth spending time controlling the border day and night? And to have a weapon on you at all times in order to protect it? It's the same with money: if you have a lot then you have to keep it safe from others... but what is the point in having loads of money then?*

Itai (Leoncini, 2016, p. 78)

In the contemporary world, where migration is on the rise and people are increasingly covering greater distances in an effort to find safety, a job, or just to avoid war, the thoughts of a young kibbutz inhabitant deal with the nature and purpose of borders. These issues are brought together under the concept of mobilities, which represents a fundamental component of human activity that is encompassed by the notions of plurality and the intrinsic properties of mobility and the anthropological characteristics of moving (Hackl et al., p. 23). There are two anthropological assumptions about mobility: 1) that it is a movement imbued with self-ascribed or attributed meaning (Salazar, p. 285); and 2) that it is constantly surrounded by borders – planes of struggle and negotiation (Hackl et al., p. 25). The papers in this volume give insights into these dimensions of mobility through fieldwork and the extensive use of interviews as a primary tool for elucidating the mobilities of asylum seekers, labour migrants, spouses and university professors.

Identity is a component of mobility, and its importance is elucidated in a section entitled 'Identities and Boundaries' through studies that deal with employing identity through individual cultural capital for the purpose of negotiating and crossing boundaries. Osvaldo Constantini and Aurora Massa show how the use of identity produces mobility as well as immobility. Their fieldwork, carried out in Rome and Tigray, touches on the social and historical processes that construct mobilities, as well as on the development of the social and cultural capital necessary for movement across boundaries. Through the cases and stories of two women from the Ethiopian-Eritrean border, Ruta and Misan, the authors show how different 'strategies' of using social ties and cultural capital are employed to overcome Western boundaries. A revealing example of the strategic use of identity may be found in Andreas Hackl's 'Stigmatised Mobility and the Everyday Politics of (In)visibility.' While simple activities such as commuting or movement through the city may be taken for granted, the experience of Palestinians in Tel Aviv shows how stressful and debilitating they can be. From avoiding Arabic ringtones and the *keffiyeh* (scarf) to anticipating delays due to checks and deserving 'bad looks,' moving requires constant decision-making

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and adaptation. Without careful planning through identity strategies, the ability (or right) to move becomes ever stranded in the constant production of barriers that produce stigmatised mobility. Hackl's study provides a very intricate view of how actors, identities and boundaries interact in the production of mobility. Sabina Leoncini gives a further description of West Bank residents' coping strategies in 'From One Side of the Wall to the Other.' The historical dimension of borders caught up in before-after narratives shows the parallelism of physical and symbolical borders. As Leoncini shows in her field interviews from Bethlehem, border dualism has dual consequences, from the concrete administrative and communal issues evident in water shortages to the symbolism of structural violence, lack of national identity, and everyday psychological stress.

(Im)mobility also assumes experiences of temporality, imagination and space; the topics of the section on 'Imagination and Time.' Eleni Sideri explores the influence of imagination on physical mobility and belonging of new migrants in Volos, Greece. Different constraints can be seen in the cases of Ahmed, a young asylum seeker from Pakistan, and San, a well-educated South Korean married to a Greek, whose patterns of mobility and immobility are contrasting. While San finds mobility in previous patterns of international educational mobility, Ahmed is constrained by his legal status. On the other hand, social mobility and integration seems much less of a problem for Ahmed. The presence of other Pakistanis creates a comfort zone, and internet technologies offer virtual mobility. As Sideri argues, integration is produced along the specificities of each case - gender, class, education, family connections, personality. A similar situation of immobility can be found in 'On Being stuck in the Wrong Life,' where authors Annika Lems and Christine Moderbacher follow Gerti, a model who formerly worked in Los Angeles. Currently living in her hometown of Vienna, Gerti dreams of mobility and lives by revoking her past experiences, creating a state of extreme existential immobility. As the authors conclude, unfulfillable dreams of the future have potential to intensify a sense of being stuck (Lems, Moderbacher, p. 126). This feeling of being stuck can have various permutations, as Julia Sophia Schwarz shows through cases of asylum seekers in Munich. The author stresses the connection between mobility and integration, where mobility is constrained by financial assistance and knowledge at the local level, and administrative obstacles at the regional level. The two are, however, interchangeable; legal limitations define asylum seekers' status and determine whether they receive free language lessons which determines their overall mobility and integration chances. Interesting views about border regimes from historical anthropology are contained in Karin Lehnert's 'Small-Scale Mobility and National Border Politics: Western European Border Formation in the Nineteenth Century.' This study of a Bohemian enclave in Saxony shows the impact that the creation of customs borders had on small-scale mobility. Smuggling emerged as a response of the people living alongside the border to newly imposed costs that influenced the mobility of goods. As this practice grew, it became more of a political problem in the process of the development of the modern state. Lehnert argues that these examples challenge the idea of a migrant-nation dichotomy, as such cross-boundary movement challenges the idea of the nation itself (Lehnert, p. 159).

In the fourth section, 'Gendered Im/mobilities,' Avital Binah-Pollak presents the topic of social mobility and boundaries in marital mobility between Hong Kongese

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men and mainland Chinese women. The author identifies three different spaces or stages of the mobility process: their hometown, the region where they worked as labour migrants, and Hong Kong. The motivation to escape the rural environment is stronger for women than men since it is much more restrictive for them. After labour migration, marriage represents the second step to improving status (hukou) and acquiring a Hong Kong Identity Card, a symbol of a better life. However, in the process of climbing the social scale, marriage migrants continue to reproduce social inequalities while invoking the differences between them and others – mainland tourists, citizens, and labour migrants (Binah-Pollak, p. 176). The relevance of gender is also apparent in Sara Bonfanti's study of Indian migrants in Italy. Using a family ethnographic approach in cities of Lombardy, Bonfanti analyses the dominant role the family has in mobility and in the production of the culture of migration. Mobilities vary: the first generation of women had difficulties integrating due to the lack of integration factors such as good language skills, a driver's licence, and opportunities for employment outside home (Bonfanti, p. 198). While for the former individuals Italy was the final destination, younger generations consider Italian naturalization the key to extending mobility. The latter perspective is centred around mobility and status planning, whereby the capability of moving (motility) is largely dependent on the ability to negotiate a position within the family and local community.

The section on 'Virtual (Im)mobilities' deals with problems of mobility and virtual space. Miriam Gutekunst investigates mobility planning in the context of increasing digitalization. The pervasiveness of technology is encapsulated in the case of a young couple – Zineb, a young Moroccan, and Najim, a middle-aged Iraqi – living in Germany. The impact of technology ranges from the creation of long-range connections using platforms such as Skout (a social network platform that connects young Muslims) to policy threats that emerge in relation to the newly emerging practices, but also to the relief that these provide in cases of immobility. The new forms of communication promoted by such social network platforms 'endangers' national borders through facilitating information transfer across borders, in doing so becoming the object of migration policies. On the other hand, virtual communication using various forms of software can increase credibility in situations when marriage validity is being assessed by migration officials. Digital media also produces new cultural practices and new borders which transform democratic space, as Daniel Kunzelmann illustrates in 'Virtual Im\_mobilities.' The cases of the private use of public land in Tel Aviv, the Spanish PAH group for victims of eviction, and the Bavarian PIRATES party online convention – based around computer coding – show how the understanding and use of new cultural practices change power relations. While in the Israeli case political space becomes polymedia and hybrid, the Spanish PAH demonstrates its knowledge through technology and its use in battling eviction through the legal system (Kunzelmann, p. 237).

The final section concerns 'Fixations in Mobility and Multilocality.' Efforts to regulate migration and mobility through development programs can reveal hierarchical relations reminiscent of colonialism. Maria Schwertl shows three features of the development hype backlash: the immobilizing political outcome of development programs that treat migrants as development workers, but do not count them as policy actors; migrant bias that assumes the immobility of transnational

networks, treating those affected as passive recipients; and the policy orientation towards their country of origin, aimed at the immobilization of the sending country. For Schwertl, the recent developmental hype that has emerged from the new views about state, labour and civil society is aimed at global governance and treating migration and migrants as only one of the variables in the grand scheme of development. Cédric Duchêne-Lacroix, Monika Götzö and Karin Sontag's 'The Experience of Multilocal Living' focuses on the lives of three people (Aude, a medical nurse, Bernd, a Scandinavian entrepreneur working in Switzerland, and Florence, an academic oriented towards international collaboration). Their private and professional lives shape their experience of mobility and multilocality through spatiality regimes – 'areas for actions which enable people to act in certain way within certain conflicts, in a complex but predetermined way' (Duchêne-Lacroix, et al., p. 275).

The studies in *Bounded Mobilities* present very diverse topics. The shared characteristic of these studies, rich in ethnographic data, is participants' aims of fulfilling social or spatial goals in their mobility. Their efforts at mobility are designed to increase belonging and membership. People try to acquire status through mobility using different strategies and identities and cultural and social capital in everyday encounters with boundaries. (Im)mobilities do not concern the *lack* of movement, but the inability to leave behind a factual or symbolic border. To move is to cross a border. If one cannot do this (either remaining constantly on the border or near it), one remains stuck. Immobility has consequences on personal wellbeing. As Salazar points out, the freedom of movement involves developing the infrastructure to defend free movement and the actions of some, and strictly curtailing the freedom of others (James, 2005, 27. in: Salazar, p. 287). For Salazar, this is also the reason that we should not equate free movement with migration, but rather with mobility (Salazar, p. 287). What the authors show us is how mobilities can be used as an indicator that exposes the forces of inequality and exclusion that are present in borders and boundaries. It is in the examination of these borders where lies the greatest value of this book and its relevance for the various social sciences. While diversity is one of the strengths of this volume, it is also a weakness. Even among the great contributions (Hackl et. al., Leoncini, Bonfanti) there is some lack of theoretical structure, and occasionally it seems that some of the studies could have significantly benefited from more deliberation (Leoncini).

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**Toni Pranic** ([topran199@gmail.com](mailto:topran199@gmail.com))  
PhD Student, Corvinus University of Budapest

## Authors' Biographies

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**Patrick Ciaschi** is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Politics department at the New School for Social Research (NSSR). From 2016-17 he was a Visiting Researcher at the University of Debrecen's Lippai Balázs Roma Szakkollégium, and more recently a 2017-2018 Visiting Scholar at the Balsillie School of International Affairs' (BSIA) International Migration Research Centre (IMRC).

**Alexandra Clavé-Mercier** is a social anthropologist and an associate researcher at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Centre Emile Durkheim, UMR 5116). She teaches at Université de Bordeaux, France. She has carried out researches on minority subjectivities and marginalized migrant or native groups such as Roma and Travelers (Gens du Voyage) in France, Bulgaria and Romania, with a focus on the institutional dynamics in schooling, social policy and housing. She is author of several articles, books chapters and co-editor with Isabelle Rigoni of a special issue "Enquêter sur les migrations", in *Migrations Société* (2017).

**Judit Durst** is a Hon. Research Fellow at the University College London, UK, in the Department of Anthropology, and a senior researcher at the Institute for Minority Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. She has been a Bolyai Postdoctoral Research Fellow and later on a visiting lecturer at the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy of Corvinus University, Budapest. She has been a faculty member on CEU Summer University's Romany studies program for many years. She has got her PhD degree in Sociology, writing about exclusion, poverty and ethnicity in rural Hungarian 'ghetto' villages in the region of Borsod, Hungary. She has been a team member of some international comparative research projects. Her main research interests are ethnicity, poverty, reproductive decision-making, anthropological demography and lately economic sociology; Roma migration and social mobility. She has been a member of the Scientific Committee of the European Academic Network on Romany Studies.

**Jan F. Gamella** is an anthropologist, and professor of Anthropology at the Universidad de Granada. He did his doctoral training at the Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, and at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Has done fieldwork in Sumatra (Indonesia) on cultural and ecological change brought up by the growth of the oil industry, as well as in several regions of Spain and in the US on drug and alcohol use and trade, and on heroin abuse and AIDS. Since 1993 he has been studying different elements of the Gitano or Calé culture of Spain, particularly in long-term project on the ethnographic and demographic ethnohistory of the Cale population of Andalusia. Since 2003 he has also researched the transnational migration of Romanian Roma. He has been visiting researcher at the University of California at Santa Cruz (2010-2011), the University of Cambridge (2001-2002), and the Johns Hopkins University (1997-1998). He is the author of over 70 scientific papers and seven books (see: [www.researchgate.net/profile/Juan\\_Gamella](http://www.researchgate.net/profile/Juan_Gamella))

## Authors' Biographies

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**Ana Ivasiuc** is lecturer at the Center for Conflict Studies at the Philipps University of Marburg, Germany. Her work focuses on the securitization of the European Roma in the context of their migration. She is the co-editor of *Roma Activism: Reimagining Power and Knowledge* (with Sam Beck, forthcoming in August 2018 with Berghahn Books) and of *The Securitization of the Roma in Europe* (with Huub van Baar and Regina Kreide, published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2018). Ana is the winner of the 2017 Herder-Council for European Studies Fellowship. Her e-mail address is [ivasiuc@staff.uni-marburg.de](mailto:ivasiuc@staff.uni-marburg.de)

**Dr. Joanna Kostka** is a lecturer at Lancaster University in Sociology Department. She graduated from the Central European University Doctoral School of Political Science, Public Policy and International Relations in 2015. Her thesis investigated the financing of Roma integration policies in Spain and Slovakia. Her main research interests include EU public policy (European integration, cohesion policy, equality policy, the EU regulatory state) social policies, migration/mobility and minority issues (different aspects of Roma inclusion). She was involved in various research and consultancy projects in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Spain.

**Veronika Nagy, PhD**, is an assistant professor of criminology at the Willem Pompe Institute at the Faculty of Law Governance and Economics, Utrecht University. Her research interests include surveillance, digital inequality with a focus on a broad connection between mobility and technology, securitisation of international migration, criminalisation and digital self-censorship. She conducted research on specific forms of ethnic mobility, human trafficking and digital profiling (exploitation of workers, forced criminal activities and trafficking of children). Her latest editorial volume, with Professor Dina Siegel, *The Migration Crisis? Criminalisation, Security and Survival*, was published by Eleven.

**Martin Olivera** is a lecturer in Social Anthropology at Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis and a researcher at Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (LAVUE, UMR 7218). After extended fieldwork among Gabori Roma in Romania, his current work focuses on migrant Roma living in precarious settlements in France and on local, national and European policies toward those families. He is author of *Roms en (bidon)viles* (2011) and *La tradition de l'intégration : une ethnologie des Roms Gabori dans les années 2000* (2012) and co-editor with Alfredo Alietti and Veronica Riniolo of *Virtual citizenship ? Roma communities, inclusion policies, participation & ICT tools* (2015).

**Stefania Pontrandolfo** is Lecturer of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Verona. She holds a PhD in Anthropologie sociale et ethnologie from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) of Paris. She carried out researches and published books and articles on culture, history and society of Southern Italy Roma and Romanian Roma migrated to Italy.

**Toni Pranić** is a lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Osijek, and a PhD student at the Corvinus University of Budapest. He works on areas of sociology of law, technology and society, inequalities, and social justice.

## Authors' Biographies

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**Andreea Racles** is a doctoral candidate at the Faculty of Social Science and Cultural Studies, Justus Liebig University (JLU Giessen, Germany), writing her PhD dissertation that lays at the intersection of socio-anthropological discussions on belonging and material culture approaches to place/home-making processes. Her research interests gyrate around material culture debates, urban ethnography, sensorial anthropology, as well as critical approaches in Romani Studies. As research assistant at the Institute for Sociology (JLU), Andreea works with Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez on questions of conviviality and local manifestations of global inequalities.

**Dr Raluca Bianca Roman** is an Associate Lecturer at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews. She holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from University of St Andrews (UK), a double MA from University College London (UK) and University of Helsinki (Finland) and a BA from Babes Bolyai University (Romania). Her doctoral work has dealt with the subjective experience of belonging and religious transformation among Finnish Kaale (or the Finnish Roma, as they are more widely known), with a central emphasis placed on the relationship between Pentecostal becoming, social engagement and social outreach. Recently, she has developed an increasing interest in the anthropological study of morality and ethics, with an ethnographic focus on humanitarianism and voluntourism.