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The Meaning of Occupation: The Ambiguous Productivity of the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism in Berlin

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Abstract[1]

The paper analyzes the mnemonic and political context of the occupation of the Roma Holocaust memorial in Berlin in May 2016, carried out by groups demanding the right to remain in the country for non-citizen Roma. Observing the actor strategies apparent in this event, as well as the governmental logics organizing memorialization, it argues that the pervasive contemporary phenomenon of 'politics of recognition' needs to be interpreted as a providing merely a frame for struggles for political agency. Normative symbolic clashes taking place in this frame require a more fine-grained analysis to establish whether certain mnemonic practices inhibit or empower the social groups they reference. The concepts the paper advances as better explaining the outcome of memory struggles are referentiality and productivity. These signify attempts to (re)organize the semantic spaces of memory, and, if successful, allow for political agency to operate in the reconstituted mnemonic landscape. Governmentalities, however, will frequently attempt to deny such reconstitutions of 'settled' memory, in which case any politics of recognition remains a hollow shell without the potential to re-orient societal and political practices in the present. In the case of the occupation, the memory conflict highlighted how the past may be use to challenge accepted boundaries and the practice of boundary-making in society, while also highlighting the importance of social and political coalitions to advance change.

Keywords: *housing policy, double movement, recognition, redistribution.*

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1. Introduction: Memory work and meaning-creation

The occupation of the space around the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism on May 22, 2016 represented multiple conflicts over interpreting the past-present nexus, specifically the relationship between current governmental practices and ethical imperatives derived from historical knowledge. It was carried out by protesters seeking the suspension of forced returns to countries of origin (notably Kosovo and Macedonia) that had been reclassified as 'safe' by German authorities. The event highlighted the multidirectionality of the memory of genocide, inscribing disparate histories and present practices of violence into the representation of its most tragic instance (Rothberg, 2010). Specifically, the Roma Holocaust was repositioned in the act of occupation as a normative origo for just, inclusive reactions to events from the recent past (ranging from anti-Roma attitudes, structural and occasional physical violence in former socialist countries to post-war atrocities in Kosovo), and as generating a moral imperative for German and European solidarity with Roma everywhere on the continent. The move also sought to de-legitimize the tacit bureaucratic refusal, inherent in the reclassification of countries of origin, to acknowledge that legacies of exclusion still render life precarious for Roma communities in many places. In so doing, it attempted to radically broaden the representational productivity or 'meaning-making potential' of the monument (Meyer and Whitmore, 2020).

The logic underlying the occupation subverted the sovereign boundary-drawing between society at large on the one hand and those denied full membership in it. The latter group, composed of those to be sent back to their countries of origin and those who can stay (for now) without being admitted to the political community, represents an excess of society that is managed through government agencies largely out of the public eye. The occupation pursued the political and present-oriented aim of rendering visible these routinized and undiscussed processes of bureaucratic control that constitute the political economy of 'the right to stay,' or *Bleiberecht*. The action rested on the assumption that if it is accepted that the perpetrator legacies of the genocide against Roma impose a duty on majority society to welcome and protect present-day Roma facing discrimination at home, agency and political visibility can no longer be denied to the groups of asylum-seekers. Refusing these would mean violating the normative framework prescribing the abjuration of singling out and persecuting or denying opportunities to vulnerable ethnic and racial minorities. Rooted in the collective decision to 'face history,' first and foremost of the genocidal practices of National Socialism, this framework has been widely accepted as foundational to both German and a pan-European identity (Herf, 1997; Art, 2006; Olick, 2016; Wittlinger and Boothroyd, 2010: 489–502). The refusal to offer shelter constitutes, if the case of asylum-seekers is allowed to be interpreted under the aegis of Holocaust memory, a re-enactment of the trope of the 'camp' through the sustained relegation of asylum-seeking Roma to the limbo between residence permit and expulsion (Edkins, 2000).

The event-like and agent-driven character of the occupation of the memorial grounds underlines the fit between the case and the theoretical toolbox offered by contemporary streams of memory studies. In interpreting the occupation and the conundrum of opinions around it, this paper adopts a dynamic position which treats mnemonic practices as representing ongoing (re)negotiations of meaning, with multiple referent objects in the past and in the present alike. In doing so, it aligns itself with criticism levelled against more traditional frameworks of interpreting collective memory. According to this criticism, earlier studies, modelled on the sociological approach introduced by Maurice Halbwachs, had a structural bias, focusing on the 'contents' of memory and avoiding the issue of how memory performs its role in society (Halbwachs, 1997: 96–160). As a result of this, the once revolutionary Halbwachsian understanding does not provide sufficient tools to investigate agencies that shape and contest memorialization.

The shift away from memory towards remembrance represents moving the focus from the exploration of the 'contents' of memory towards its 'makers' and 'uses'; that is, the *process* of memory. Through this shift, memory has come to be seen as performative, constituted as the sum of mnemonic practices (Olick and Robbins, 1998). These practices represent instances of communicative/symbolic action embodied in re-enactment and commemoration (Fentress and Wickham, 1992; Winter et al., 2010; Gutman et al., 2010). While Halbwachsian memory has been 'understood as denoting an object,' remembrance designates 'a process' that may be investigated in an interaction-focused framework, where participants create narratives to shape 'social realities' (Bottici, 2010: 342). As Jeffrey Olick summarized the essence of this change of perspective, memory has come to be seen as a 'construct' that references itself and practices in the present, rather than the past (Olick, 2007).

Beyond the emphasis on memory as a process referencing conditions in the present, the occupation also highlighted the entangled character of remembering the European past. In fact, much of Roma memory work in Europe fits into what are described as emergent post-national communities of remembrance, conditioned by '[g]lobalized communication and time-space compression, post-coloniality, transnational capitalism, large-scale migration, and regional integration.' In the case of the Roma, the main focus falls on the intersection of intra-community remembering and the transnational memory culture of the Holocaust. The latter corresponds to the structuring of Roma memory, since these communities share the characteristic that 'the national […] cease[s] to be the inevitable or preeminent scale for […] collective remembrance' (de Cesari and Rigney, 2014: 2). In the case at hand, it was a transnational group – with family and kin spread across several countries – that sought to establish the local relevance of its mnemonic practices by re-interpreting a key place of *transnational* memory (a reminder of genocidal persecution targeting Sinti and Roma) constructed within the framework of a *national* politics of history (German attempts at facing history). As such, the case provides also an opportunity for the 'investigation of transnational memory linkages on the European level, comprising the analysis of cross-border social relationships of non-state and other actors' (Sierp and Wüstenberg, 2015: 323).

The action channels of the event analyzed here highlight the work undertaken by agents of remembering who are also creating meaning in the undertaking. The notion of post-memory emphasizes the work-like, dynamic aspect of remembering by subsequent generations and is rooted in the acknowledgement that through transmitted (familiar, cultural) memory we remember that which we have not lived through. Memory work involves, therefore, rounding out, interpreting, ordering that which was passed on in fragments as a result of trauma or forced silencing. As Marianne Hirsch argued: '[p]ost-memory's connection to the past is thus actually mediated not by recall, but by imaginative investment, projection and creation' (Hirsch, 2012: 4–5).

In the specific instance of occupying the memorial, a pre-existing memory construct – connecting the universality of the Holocaust with the diachronic continuum of structural aggression against marginalized Roma – was mobilized and also added to in the process being 'performed' in the act of occupation. The central component of Roma post-memory, definitively formulated during the post-1989 wave of deterritorialized identity building, is the emphasis on the Roma Holocaust representing the symbolic culmination of persecution and discrimination faced by members of the minority both before and after World War II, which operates as a metonymy of persistent oppression (Hancock, 1997; Gheorghe, 1991). The 'imaginative investment' of the original referent object was carried out during eruptions of a kind of insurrectionary knowledge, created by Roma activists during the preceding decades and sufficiently disseminated to operate as a unifying cognitive frame for participants. As Michel Foucault argued, disciplinary power-knowledges can be challenged by agents of

> an insurrection of subjugated knowledges […] referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemization. […] Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematizing theory and which criticism […] has been able to reveal. (Foucault, 1980: 81–82)

The definition offers a very precise fit for the event of the occupation of the memorial grounds. The actors set themselves the goal of recasting ongoing expulsions and bureaucratic uncertainty over them as inacceptable for the broader political community because these bear resemblance to past violence which has become canonized in public memory as the 'Other' of the European self. Yet the canonical variant remains mute with regard to the present. In the process of occupation, the participants restored the productivity of canonical memory by linking it with contemporary, personal experience and subjective knowledges about supposedly 'safe countries' and the persistent precariousness of Roma life.

As the above paragraph suggests, productivity can imply challenging prevailing norms and institutions that legitimize and promote certain relationships of referentiality, while muting and marginalizing others. It therefore also means restoring a greater degree of polyvalence to the memorial object. The success of

the attempt hinges on the ability of agents of change and reinterpretation, of 'norm entrepreneurs' of memory, to create (or imbue new meaning into) objects and discourses that become disseminators of these meanings (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Finstad, 1998; Bratberg, 2011: 19). The new meaning – i.e. having the memory of Sinti and Roma Holocaust victims brought to bear on the ongoing expulsions affecting Roma mainly from the Western Balkans – clashed with the tacit practice of (p)reserving the memory of genocide for referencing in the present the responsibility of non-Roma majorities and governments to ensure compensation for victims and offer a place in their respective national societies for Roma. The latter frame has characterized mainstream German Sinti and Roma memory work and the resulting government-sanctioned institutionalization of Roma Holocaust remembrance for decades. With the occupation, a long controversy about the insufficient character of such recognition, which had come under increased scrutiny from dissenting organizations promoting deterritorialized Roma nationhood and rights, once more burst into the open.

The following sections investigate and contextualize the occupation, focusing on the challenge it represented to the prevailing governmentality – understood as the milieu of actors deploying relevant knowledges to administer aspects of social organization, or 'in the broad sense of techniques and procedures for directing human behavior' (Foucault, 1997: 82). This includes both the know-hows and capabilities of government agencies and civil society actors who, in this case, had successfully constructed a niche for themselves during earlier decades of gradual progress towards recognition of German minority Sinti and Roma as victims of the Holocaust and citizens of the new Germany. Beyond the tension between a politics of recognition conducted in the name of a minority and one referencing a deterritorialized, nascent Roma nation (an opposition discussed below), the event and its contexts demonstrate the problematic linkage between recognition and political agency in general. Governmentality works towards denying such agency to non-coopted actors that threaten the discursive stability of memory, along with its relevance for organizing and managing society. The action carried out by asylum-seekers, activists, and allies targeted this intersection of canonical memory and present-day political contestations. While its effects remained limited, it generated an exchange that highlighted the struggles to determine the referentiality of memory. Viewed as a complex event where the various aspects may be disentangled through tracing the multiple streams of social debate converging around the occupation, the case ultimately permits an analysis of how governmentality limits the productivity of mnemonic practices in a politics of the present, meaning the extent to which such practices are allowed to (re-)configure norms of governmental action and social life. Such analysis investigates the settings in which multidirectional memory operates, highlighting how this multidirectionality, far from being fixed, represents successive rounds of negotiating and contesting meanings. Remembering as a social process is neither neutral, nor does it ever escape politics – the question that arises is rather how political and social actors struggle over configuring the memory-present nexus.

In the context of the above nexus, the shift towards the recognition of victims as a main goal of memory entrepreneurs and a frequent outcome of memory work has been highlighted across diverse disciplines as a prominent trend of the past decades (Chaumont, 1997; De Guissmé and Licata, 2017; Zombory, 2019: 12–17). The history of Roma Holocaust remembrance demonstrates that the demand for the recognition of victim status did in fact configure activism from the very beginning, predating the formal emergence of politics of recognition (*Anerkennungspolitik*) in the Federal Republic and the world at large. However, recognition can also figure as a depoliticizing move by governmentalities promising what Maria Mälksoo defined as 'ontological security' to the memory community while stripping it of direct interpretive power over political challenges impacting members of the community in the present. Registering the acknowledgment of historical suffering is therefore insufficient for assessing the social meaning of recognition in the present – in other words, the productivity and referentiality of memory.

Moving beyond the generalizations that impede disentangling the operations of power-knowledge, this paper focuses on modalities of recognition rather than the binary dilemma of what acknowledgment or the lack of such signifies in the context of memory politics. This is all the more necessary, as recognition of victimhood has become a prevailing mode of 'settling' and 'synthesizing' contested and conflictual interpretations of the past, especially of past violence. (Nadler and Shnabel, 2008; Kelman, 2008) The analysis that follows argues that 'recognition' is best seen as an empty signifier that only acquires social meaning as agents of memory clash over and circumscribe its symbolic productivity. It is depoliticized if governmentality preserves what has been recognized (past suffering caused by wrongdoing) decoupled from a political vision for the present and the future. At the same time, if norm entrepreneurs achieve the institutionalization of the linkage between a politics of the present and what is remembered, recognition can function as the source of disruptive knowledges that empower agents of change. This bifurcated analytic constitutes a warning about how in the era of a putatively universal right to remember, governmentalities can nevertheless advance preferred modes of memorializing to the detriment of other modes and the groups promoting these alternatives. While a rich repository of disruptive, even insurrectionary and often group-specific knowledges, memory needs to be questioned as mnemonic practice and social event to highlight the struggle over meaning-making in the socio-political setting of the present.

2. Elusive synergies of a Europeanized Roma memory and Holocaust remembrance

The event of the occupation fits into the ongoing pan-European undertaking to construct a non-homogenized, transnational Roma identity on the basis of shared historical experience. Such identity establishes a common historical dimension amongst groups, but also preserves regional and local differences between diverse communities. Roma remembering represents an excess of national memory, as

Roma themselves are an excess of national society, and unifying their mnemonic practices into cross-border 'national and ethnic memories […] in the age of globalization' would synergize with the emergent cosmopolitan memory culture theorized by Levy and Sznaider. The post-Westphalian character of the latter would be able to accommodate the Roma excess of national memories, while connecting the geographically bounded frameworks in the process (Levy and Sznaider, 2006: 3; Hirsch, 2012: 20–22; Feindt et al., 2014). This conception of nation-building with mnemonic practices constituting a core dimension of identity reaches back to the early 1990s, when leading activists of Roma nation-building, such as Andrzej Mirga and Nicolae Gheorghe, embarked on marking out the place and status of the Roma Holocaust within a global remembrance culture and the symbolic universe of a de-territorialized Roma nation (Gheorghe, 1991; Gheorge and Mirga, 1997; Kapralski, 1997; Gheorghe and Rostas, 2015; van Baar, 2010; 2015; Reading, 2012).

The Roma post-memory of the Holocaust, as originally conceptualized by Gheorghe and Mirga, would synergize with an emergent European politics of memory by virtue of its non-territorial character, simultaneously post-national and emancipatory. It points to a common symbolic core in the experiences of geographically and politically distant, yet culturally connected groups, multidirectionally interpreting many local pasts and presents through the universal signifier that Holocaust memory has become (Conrad, 2003: 86; Rothberg, 2009). In its fully developed form, it would have the potential to function as a 'rhizomatic network of temporality and cultural reference' that exists in a mutually constitutive relationship with Holocaust memory at large (Rothberg, 2010: 7).

In the struggle for emancipating Roma memory, this mutually constitutive relationship is of paramount significance. The historical representation of the exclusionary aspect of Europe is centered on the Holocaust, which is the anchor of the future continental 'memory community': it constitutes 'the first circle' of European remembering (Assmann, 2013: 32–35, Leggewie and Land, 2011: 23–24). Work on this foundational trope of historical identity is ongoing, in part because its remaining 'hot' memory – memory in a living, dialogical relationship with the present and representations of the self – is seen as an important symbolic exercise (Rigney, 2014: 343; Bottici, 2010: 345; Turai, 2009: 99; Tyszka, 2010). Keeping the memory of the Holocaust 'at work' sustains 'the potential to challenge basic assumptions – about the sovereign law of nation-states […] and to create a cosmopolitanized public and political space that reinforces moral interdependencies' (Sznaider, 2012: 61). Such mnemonic practice synergizes with preventing a retreat of 'Europe' into its White/Western historical identity, and counteracts (if not always successfully) exclusionary practices rooted in essentialized images of the self. The resulting liberation of memory from being constructed as a national, or otherwise homogeneous narrative holds out the possibility of Roma co-appearing in histories alongside the respective majorities, as well as claiming separate visibility in other instances. A history that may be read as existing within *and* across state borders should be one in which European and

Roma memory can be accommodated, representing parallel challenges to the national scale of remembering.

The nation- or transnational community-building discourse about Roma pasts points towards three naturally interconnected referent objects. One denotes the historical experience and the unifying potential of memory that shared experience and subsequent memory work generates – this makes up its intra-community dimension. It also refers to the Roma struggle to be included and represented in European cultures of remembrance. This constitutes the universal dimension of the Roma Holocaust. Finally, the Roma Holocaust as a trope of public remembering has also been deployed to challenge practices of marginalization and repression in the past and in the present. This may be termed the diachronic and emancipatory dimension, through which the Holocaust operates as the metaphorical condensation or synecdoche of a common aspect of centuries of otherwise divergent regional Roma histories (Kapralski, 1997: 277; Reading, 2012: 121–140). It imbues Holocaust memory with a universal message about exclusion suffered by the Roma and re-interprets that history as prefiguring or echoing the Holocaust in instances of persecution and marginalization.

Community of experience is crucial in conceptualizing nationhood, no matter how atypical, in the absence of a shared territory, language, religion, and a century-spanning shared historical situation (Kapralski, 1997: 277–278). As Gheorghe and Mirga argued, for the first time in history, a transcontinental Roma elite existed in the 1990s, but it originated from and sought legitimacy to represent divergent and geographically disparate groups (Gheorghe and Mirga, 1997). In the case of these Roma elites, translating across region-specific traditions of the past and identity, as well as navigating the intersections of Roma and cosmopolitan European traditions have had to be undertaken to sustain a project of identity construction (Fosztó, 2003: 119). The centrality of the Roma Holocaust in this project was reinforced from both directions: the need to construct common platforms for a fragmented identity conglomerate ('the Roma') and the opportunity of finding an interface for the emergent identity politics with mainstream European structures of memory and collective identity (Hancock, 1991; Mirga and Gheorghe, 1992).

The second universal, and symbolic, aspect of the memory of the Holocaust is rooted in the understanding of persecution by the Nazis as racially motivated and genocidal in character. This layer repositions the Roma, excluded and discriminated against in European societies, as universal signifiers of human suffering. In doing so, it defines a place for Roma in mainstream memory and challenges contemporary racist discourses that sustain the conceptualization of Roma as alien and as an excess (of Europe or the nation), a characteristic of structural racism, and of governmentalities that consign Roma to marginal niches in society.

The universal character of Roma suffering in the Holocaust ties in with the final, emancipatory dimension of Holocaust remembrance. The latter raises, even more directly, the question to what extent majority and governmental practices today are still sustaining logics of exclusion driven to their extreme in the

genocidal actions of the Holocaust. In practice, what is at stake is whether the traditional discourse about the 'asocial' Gypsy is accorded legitimacy within majority society. This discourse is organized around the image of the vagrant that represents 'a "social problem" requiring "rehabilitation" and "reintegration", who can – and must – be brought back into the fold of "society"' (Liégeois and Gheorghe, 1995: 12–13; Crowe, 1995: 236–238). By virtue of its emancipatory dimension, Holocaust memory may be deployed to delegitimize current policing discourse directed against Roma, revealing its racism and Nazi genealogy through highlighting the shared logic of othering underpinning both. In reverse, governmentalities that sustain exclusion seek to divest Holocaust memory from its emancipatory aspect, refusing to acknowledge continuities in marginalizing and repressive practices. For this reason, this dimension emerges as the most contested and most productive one at the intersections of majority and minority politics. This productivity explains at least in part why Holocaust memory has been central in the 'transition toward becoming an ethnically mobilized group, having a common stance and interests,' while also functioning as a rhetorical resource in the civil rights struggle (Mirga and Gheorghe, 1992).

Despite the paramount importance of Holocaust memory for Roma identity politics, the difference between the ways in which both Jewish and Roma suffering possesses universal significance is noted by most Roma activists and experts. The early contribution of Kenrick and Puxon to this question, a discursive origo for interpreting the Roma Holocaust, accomplished canonizing the difference and interpreting the specificity of persecution (Kenrick and Puxon, 1972: 183–184). Further elaborations of their thesis represent the majority opinion today. This interpretation argues that in the case of the Roma, decentered violence emerged out of the confluence of Nazi political will and ideology, often divergent decisions of Reich-level and regional functionaries, governmental decisions taken in allied or occupied countries, and the local, often 'grassroots level' willingness (both of occupiers and collaborators) to perpetrate the crimes (Margalit, 2002: 47–48; Barany, 2002: 103; Szász, 2015: 9–11; Armillei et al., 2016: 111).

Since the beginnings of this transnational politics of identity/memory in the years following the fall of communism, examples of homologous mnemonic practices have emerged across Europe. The memory of the dispersed, decentered character of the genocide is re-enacted, inter alia, by an annual caravan revisiting memorial sites in Poland (Vermeersch, 2008; Tarnów Regional Museum, 2015). A synthesizing framing of the chains of events has become permanently inscribed into the master text of the Auschwitz site through the opening of a Roma exhibition there, juxtaposed as a simultaneously national and transnational place of memory to the state-sponsored exhibitions (van Baar, 2010a). Mnemonic practices, both governmental and civil society-driven, have taken shape across EU Member States around the anniversary of the liquidation of the *Zigeunerlager* in Auschwitz on 2 August, 1944. More recently, commemorations emphasizing Roma resistance to genocide and thus reaffirming the collective political agency of the subaltern have become institutionalized as well (Brooks, 2015: 53). The idea of the Roma Holocaust as a signifier that can and should be translated into local contexts

has also increasingly found its way into education, primarily through school projects on local history. Education that includes history of the genocide of the Roma is most advanced in Germany, but multiple reports of parallel efforts are available from other European states as well (Diercks, 2012).

The above suggest a natural 'fit' between emergent Roma and European mnemonic practices and frameworks. But the more this initially largely self-constituting memory becomes embedded in European and self-reflexive national frameworks, the more it becomes co-configured and potentially even colonized by various nationally or supranationally constituted networks of governmentality. Friction abounds, inter alia in cases where discursive and regulatory efforts to organize representations institutionalizes Roma as victims, while claiming authority to also mark out what victim status means for majority and minority relations. This threatens and challenges grassroots agency, which becomes locked in a struggle with the dominant logic of remembering over the right to use memory according to its experiences and synergies between knowledges about the past and about the present. Manifestations of insurrectionary knowledges therefore take place in a semiotically thicker and thicker environment in which control over historical discourse is slipping away from those who carry the legacy of historical experience.

This problematic has been discussed repeatedly in a European context, where increased awareness of past wrongs has seamlessly co-existed with a lack of an emancipatory-integrative mechanism for Roma citizens or residents of the EU (Anghel, 2015; Agarin, 2014). A further pointed example of the clash of grassroots actors and dominant mnemonic frameworks is provided by the memory struggles around the Roma Holocaust Memorial, including the two-decade long, conflict-ridden process leading to its construction and unveiling. The occupation itself may be interpreted as an eruption of knowledges that have been largely marginalized in this singularly drawn-out process, mounting a desperate attempt to reclaim control over the symbolic representation of the collective self and its history, as well as the meaning of the representation. Those represented find themselves in a situation of dis-identity by a politics of recognition that ensures commemoration and confers on Roma a victim status characterized by a non sequitur of political rights and agency. Such recognition severs linkages between the focal point of memory – the Holocaust – and those who carry its post-memory. Viewed in this light, the 'mnemonic rebels' of May 22 mounted an attempt to restore the contiguity of past and present by assuming control over meaning and re-establishing the validity of the warning embodied in the memorial for contemporary practices rendering Roma lives precarious once more.

3. Recognition in and by the nation: Roma minority politics in Germany

Demonstrating the friction between Roma remembering and governmentality conferring victim status and compensation, the status of the Memorial has remained ambiguous. In theory, it could operate in a manner similar to the

Auschwitz exhibition, disseminating a transnational frame of the Roma Holocaust in Berlin, with the city understood as a symbolic locus of a dual, European, and German effort at mastering the past (van Baar, 2010; 2010a). While in theory this function is accepted by all stakeholders, the occupation and the responses it produced highlight the unsettled question concerning the productivity of the site. By extension, this peculiarity also throws novel light on German memory work about the Roma Holocaust and Sinti/Roma rights in general, often considered paradigmatic in relevant literature (Fosztó, 2003: 115).

The explanation for this paradigmatic position is the product of several, mutually reinforcing observations about mnemonic practices and the way these are embedded into politics and society in Germany. German national politics of identity and memory explore with greater commitment practices of facing the past than is the case in most, if not all other societies with perpetrator legacies (Art, 2006). After a long history of administrative discrimination spanning the better part of the first century of modern Germany, the Federal Republic also saw the emergence of the first well-organized, efficient Sinti and Roma civil rights movement in the 1970s (Matras, 1998; Gress, 2015). All of the above do not render the situation of Sinti and Roma unproblematic in Germany, yet efforts there undeniably represent a case where the environment was relatively advantageous for constructing both an intercommunity narrative about the past and a specifically Sinti and Roma memory in tandem. Enmeshed in processes of constructing such narratives, governmentality operates not against all forms of civil society and norm entrepreneurship, as in countries where minority mnemonic cultures are framed more as competitors, but in a far more nimble and adaptable manner, seeking to reinforce and co-opt some agents of change and fence off others.

The history of anti-Roma discrimination in Germany represents an instance of bourgeois biopolitics, where the adjective *bourgeois* signifies that the disciplinary aspect of this biopolitics was directed at those who were construed as threatening the decent morals and lifestyles of the 'average German.' This has included the policing of individuals defined as asocial in the early twentieth century and, through that practice, of the nomadic *différend* in general (Kenrick, 2010: 97; Hubert, 1999: 60–62). These early twentieth-century practices prepared the ground for radical persecution by creating vulnerable bodies assumed to be always already outside the law and later revealed themselves highly resilient, surviving into post-1945 democracies (Hancock, 2009: 87–88; Milton, 1995: 29–52).

After 1945, in the Western, democratic half that became the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, Sinti and Roma not only faced continued discrimination, but remained unrecognized as a victim group. Numerous former perpetrators (usually from the Security Service [SD] or the criminal police [*KriPo*] which had handled Roma affairs) served on (Mallmann and Paul, 2004; Knesebeck, 2011: 33–34; Margalit, 2003: 56 and 91). The period was one of political invisibility for Roma, whose communities remained largely abandoned to the operations of administrative authorities (Zimmermann, 1996: 381; Margalit, 2002: 56; Knesebeck, 2011: 96–97, 233–234). Formal discourse showed continuities as well: substituting

vagrants for *Zigeuner*, the argument of 'asocial' behavior both predated Nazism and escaped being linked to Nazi ideology, remaining in received usage until the 1960s (Gress, 2015: 49; Hedemann, 2007: 12–13; Margalit, 2002: 59–70).

An opening to bringing Roma rights into the public eye was created after the student movements of the late 1960s created the discourse of not closing the book on, but instead radically questioning the past. When in 1973 Anton Lehmann was shot by the police in Heidelberg, the newly (re)formed Association of German Sinti organized demonstrations, engaged in dialogue with other NGOs, and eventually with national political parties. The precursor association had been founded by brothers Oskar and Vinzenz Rose as the Association of Persecuted People of non-Jewish Confession (*Verband der Verfolgten nichtjüdischen Glaubens*) in 1956 (Liégeois, 1994: 252). Their association was originally aimed at securing restitution, mainly for Sinti who were not recognized at the time as a victim group. The West German state had turned down numerous reparation claims on the grounds that internment, sterilization, and other violent interventions by the Third Reich state machinery were based on public security or health considerations, sharply distinguished from genocidal intent (Fings, 2016: 92–97). In contrast to this focus, the core message of the younger generation who turned 'activists' during the 1970s became the precariousness of Roma/Sinti lives in democratic Germany. As lawyer Romani Rose became more and more involved in the work of the association, it underwent a process of professionalization and emerged as a full-fledged NGO with special expertise and familiarity regarding the administrative and legal environment relevant to its work (Fings, 2016: 102–103; Leggewie and Lang, 2010: 197). What did not change was the embeddedness of the activist discourse in the concept of German citizenship. Sinti active in the Association defined themselves as German, but different from ethnic Germans – a minority. While in the 1970s, the first international movement behind the international congresses of Roma in 1971 and 1978 (renamed the International Romani Union) promoted the emergent concept of a separate, de-territorialized nationhood, many Sinti in Germany resented the idea of excluding themselves from a successful society (Margalit, 2002: 199–200; Gress, 2015: 51; Fosztó, 2003: 110–117).

The emergence of a standardized German Sinti and Roma discourse about the Holocaust occurred between 1979 and 1982. In the years immediately preceding this, the Association built close contacts with a New Left and strongly anti-fascist organization, the Society for Threatened Peoples. Its leader, Tilman Zülch, became an important ally, who accepted the Roma claim of being forgotten victims of the Holocaust at a time when the realization that Jehovah's witnesses, gays, and other communities had also been targeted by Nazi persecution was gaining currency in society. Zülch was able to present Rose to Social Democratic and Green politicians, who subscribed to the need to revise German thinking about how victims of the Holocaust were conceptualized (Margalit, 2002: 160–179; Gress, 2015: 49).

Simultaneously to the opening up of channels of communication towards political actors with clout, the movement launched a large-scale campaign on a wave of renewed German interest in coming to terms with the legacy of the

Holocaust (Matras, 1998: 54; Knesebeck, 2011: 231–232). The Association's chosen strategy was to link human rights violations today with the genocide committed by the Nazis. In the increasingly sensitized German media environment, the very respectable liberal weekly *Die Zeit* (December 7, 1979) afforded coverage to the movement and presented its slogan 'gassed in Auschwitz, still persecuted today' in print, as did *Der Spiegel* in October 1979 (Gress, 2015: 57). The Association's memorial demonstration at the Bergen Belsen concentration camp in 1979, as well as the hunger strike of twelve Sinti in Dachau in 1980, broke the media barrier for good. These efforts mediatized the struggle for recognition the Sinti and Roma communities of Germany engaged in (Seybold and Staats, 2012: 158–163; Lewy, 2001: 227; Hedemann, 2007: 70–74).

In 1982, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma was formed; an instance of institutional resource pooling that was dominated by the leadership of the Association with input from the Society for Threatened Peoples, which also had a key Sinto activist/official (Fritz Greussing). Romani Rose became the president of the Central Council. When the Council was granted a visit to Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, he recognized the crimes committed against Sinti and Roma as genocide, an acknowledgement later repeated by his successor, Helmut Kohl. These statements and a meeting with President of the Federal Republic Karl Carstens gradually elevated the standing of the Central Council to that of an NGO with a recognized voice in national politics. The years 1979–1982 brought the nationalization and politicization of the movement and saw the application of a combined memory policy and civil rights campaign model (Knesebeck, 2011: 232).

Recognition and a sense of agency were the two most important dividends of the campaign. Recent research by Sebastian Lotto-Kusche has reconstructed the discursive aspect of the 'storming' of the *Kanzleramt* by activists: archival evidence shows that the terminology 'Sinti and Roma' was unknown to federal civil servants, to the point of requiring the superscript *Zigeuner* on some documents as late as 1980. The movement accomplished an instance of successful norm entrepreneurship. It introduced a marginalized problem, legitimized its presentation as an issue requiring political intervention and proposed a discourse for framing it, which was largely accepted (Lotto-Kusche, 2016). This finding is further reinforced through the partially quantitative evaluation of Roma issues appearing in the *Bundestag*, analyzed by Gabi Meyer. Her data bear out both the success of the mobilization and the amount of work that needed to be done after the breakthrough in visibility and participation: from 1949 to 1970, there is minimal attention to any Roma issue, while from 1970 to 1985 there is a slow trend, especially towards the second half of the period, of Roma breaking the barrier of political discussion, at least in terms of figuring on the agenda (Meyer, 2012: 233–290).

A key element in the continuing efforts of the *Zentralrat* remained the mutual co-opting of and by political partners. German Sinti and Roma calls for reparations had been endorsed by the Greens and some Social Democrats. While in opposition, in 1985 the Greens presented a comprehensive handling of the 'forgotten victims,' a draft bill on 'the regulation of the appropriate care for all

victims of national socialist persecution in the timeframe 1933–1945.' The Social Democrats, less ambitiously, called for an amendment to existing regulation. The parties managed to prod the conservative government into a review of compensation policies, and a broader debate, in which the Sinti and the Roma were both on the agenda and given opportunity for participation, could commence. The first tangible outcome of presence on the national political agenda was funding received for a cultural and historical center, which has been operating under the Central Council's supervision since 1987 (Knesebeck, 2011: 222–223).

Despite pre-unification progress, the integration of Roma memory into canonical German remembrance occurred in 1993–1997. Recognition as a national minority, President Roman Herzog's landmark anniversary address on the day of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1997 (juxtaposing Jewish and Sinti and Roma victims), and the beginning of the state-sponsored memorialization in public spaces all took place in this period (the first was the Buchenwald memorial, inaugurated in 1995) (Meyer, 2012: 276–291). The two decades since the canonization of a 'Roma aspect' in official German remembering have witnessed the dissemination of knowledge transferred by Sinti, Roma and allies to local and federal governmental agencies as well as majority NGOs through community initiatives, cultural production, and education. Roma mnemonic practices about the Holocaust could also draw on existing models of engaging with perpetrator legacies. These include a culture of local history research and a self-reflexive mode of cultural production. Imprints of this engagement are easy to locate, ranging from study projects (a regional survey is offered f.i. in the individual pieces found in Diercks, 2012) to theatrical productions (among them *Das Verschlingen*, the German equivalent of Porrajmos, at *Galerie Kai Dikhas* in Berlin) and exhibitions in symbolic locations, including the German Police Academy (*Deutsche Hochschule der Polizei*), the school of the organization once responsible for many of the decentred killings and the post-war refuge of several war criminals who had ordered the mass executions (Bak, 2014; Dierecks, 2012; Krahl and Meichsner, 2016).

The peculiarity of this evolution has been the sustained dominance of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma as a partner of the government (a provider of key resources, both material and ideational). The achievements accordingly reflect the position and priorities of the organization, with the emphasis on an intra-German understanding between minority and majority, the main transnational aspect of which is to provide blueprints for the successful emancipation and protection of Roma minorities especially in former socialist countries. This implies solidarity, but also a markedly 'Westphalian' commitment that assigns Roma issues to national politics first and foremost. When the original plans for a Memorial to be built in a Berlin suburb – in Marzahn, where Sinti and Roma living in and around Berlin had been concentrated by Nazis prior to deportation – were first proposed, by virtue of the emphasis on local and regional histories, these concepts reflected a similar focus on the intra-, rather than the transnational challenges of mastering history. It was at first the desire for a more central location commensurate with the recognition of the community's suffering

that set off a process of negotiations to relocate the Memorial to downtown Berlin, integrated into the symbolic geography of contrition constructed by other monuments there (Berg, 2010). By virtue of its importance, however, the Memorial also became a locus of contestation against the hegemonial logic of remembrance by other Sinti and Roma groups seeking more explicit expression of the transnational dimension of the genocide and the resulting ethico-political constellation in the present.

The success of a specific grass-roots movement created, therefore, an ambiguous situation. The early and sustained instance of politics of recognition conducted with the aim of ensuring compensation and according collective political agency (in the form of institutionalizing national minority status) did make the German case 'paradigmatic.' At the same time, the reformed governmentality, moving from policing to acknowledgement, extended recognition exclusively within the multitude of citizens, decoupling German Sinti and Roma from the broader, transnational patchwork of communities. (Importantly, this occurred not despite resistance from, but through the integration and relative empowerment of the activist group driving the shift.) The boundary between Roma and non-Roma was not eliminated, but relocated and mapped onto the citizen/migrant divide. A peculiar aspect of this shift has been the inclusion of all Roma as victims, an outcome of the universal responsibility for facing the past assumed by the German state. As a result, recognition itself has not been contested in the German setting. It is the meaning of victimhood in the present and the right to define this meaning that has repeatedly triggered resistance against the translation of a memory that is simultaneously transnational and local/dispersed into a national *grand récit* that acknowledges victimhood in the same movement as denying citizenship and political agency.

4. Competing politics of recognition

Despite their seeming linearity, 'unpacking' the policy processes of the decades leading up to the unveiling of the Memorial reveals subsequent rounds of contestations about meaning-making through commemoration. A simple narrative would describe a straightforward dynamic of Roma activism and an increasingly receptive political class progressing through stages of recognition and towards the integration of minority perspectives into national mnemonic culture. None of these terms, however, is unambiguous, nor does the linear story enable a discussion of all Roma stakeholders in the movements towards recognition. To begin with, the demarcation of the political subject: the status of national minority, was granted to 'German Sinti and Roma.' Belonging to the community was defined in an extremely narrow manner, excluding Roma guest workers as well as the increasing number of asylum seekers residing in Germany, sometimes for decades. This is the narrowest possible framing of Sinti and Roma identity (Sinti being identified as having lived in Germany since the late Middle Ages). Restitution and formal inclusion in German memory politics (through the engagement of the *Zentralrat* in

federal as well as regional projects and funding to its cultural center) has been extended to this group.

In the face of this trend, alternative Roma identities have constituted and organized themselves in Germany, such as the Rom and Cinti Union (RCU), a Hamburg-based organization which is not a member of the Central Council, as well as the Sinti Alliance. These tend to represent a broader identity platform rooted in transnational solidarity and form a minority in Sinti and Roma communities of citizens. In public action, they are found allied to and speaking also for Roma residing in the country without citizenship or residence permits and in overt or latent resistance to granting minority status based on citizenship. Their positions converge around the concept of a deterritorialized nation existing in stateless solidarity with members, and as minorities in the individual home countries with which the German state needs to build a special ethical relationship as a consequence of historical crimes (Kawczynski, 1997: 25–26). This approach converges with broader European trends, especially those fostered by a transnational Roma elite embedded in intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The convergence can be traced through individual careers, as well: the Union's founding president, Rudko Kawczynski, went on to become President of the Council of Europe partner organization the European Roma and Traveller Forum.

These organizations consider the suffering of all Sinti and Roma during the Holocaust as indivisible (Knesebeck, 2011: 223). From this, it follows that the German state – having assumed responsibility for the perpetratorship – carries a certain moral burden towards all Roma (as it does towards Jews). While the *Zentralrat*'s political agenda focuses on Sinti and Roma citizens and their integration, as well as upward social mobility, in the latter case the plight of Roma in Europe at large serves as the framework for the present-day political agenda. During his tenure as president of RCU, Kawczynski argued that Germany 'had a 'historical responsibility' to welcome the Roma' (Barany, 2002: 251).

Accordingly, the RCU has advocated strongly for migrant Roma from the East and criticized the Central Council on numerous occasions. Kawczynski articulated this position as early as the fall of Soviet-style dictatorships around 1989, when westward Roma migration, as a potential threat to society, first appeared in German mainstream media (Sternsdorff, 1989). In this perspective, the historical responsibility of the German state extended to all Roma, a practical consequence of which should have been prohibiting the expulsion of asylum-seeking Roma from the East. Divergent interpretations of German responsibility underpinned the debate over expulsion between the Central Council and Kawczynski's organization in the early 1990s. The RCU effectively accused the Central Council of enabling racist and anti-Roma policies, contributing to the re-emergence of practices and mind-sets from the era of the Holocaust (Spiegel, 1992).

The difference between the two campaign slogans precisely captures this cleavage. During its first major human rights campaign at the end of the 1970s – as a norm-entrepreneurial, anti-status quo movement – the Association of German Sinti and Roma provocatively chose the slogan 'gassed in Auschwitz, persecuted

today.' In 1992, the RCU sponsored the exhibition '1939–1989: gassed – persecuted – expelled,' extending the normative framework to asylum seekers. At the same time, Hugo Franz, a Central Council spokesperson, publicly announced their acceptance of various repatriation measures, most importantly the German-Romanian agreement on the repatriation of up to 50,000 Roma holding Romanian citizenship (Spiegel, 1992). In terms of the emphasis on action by Roma for Roma and the positioning of Holocaust memory as a source of a shared transnational identity, as well as the positing of a moral imperative for majority society *vis-à-vis* all Roma, Kawczynski's platform appears as representative of transnational Roma nation-building and self-empowerment (van Baar, 2010; Kapralski, 2013).

The same logic can be seen periodically reappearing when the nexus of Roma and German memory is activated by administrative or political choices on the part of the government. Following the decision in 1992 to repatriate Roma to Romania and re-classify the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia as a safe country, the occupation of another symbolic location occurred. Jasar Demirov of the Roma Union of Southern Germany (*Roma-Union Süddeutschland*) co-organized protests in spring 1993 in Dachau, telling the leading German daily *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that the Republic's expulsion policy re-enacted the practices of the concentration camp ('Once gassed, expulsed today'), and argued that the victims of the former camp could offer protection to the threatened lives today. In a clear move to enlist the universally acknowledged warnings of the past, he re-iterated the logic of the 1992 exhibition and challenged the Central Council's position, which proposed tackling threats to Roma in the countries of origin (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 1993).

It is similarly important to unpack the other side of the equation – national politics. German memory culture, with some fits and starts, has moved towards increasing recognition of victims and acceptance of responsibility, both material and moral, over the course of the past half-century (Herf, 1997; Olick, 2016). At the same time, national political leaders have control over the legal and administrative aspects of memory politics in the country, which, in a way, is reflected in the empowerment of the Central Council. By preferentializing and accepting as the only partner a distinctly national organization, they provided resources and legitimacy to the actor within the broader Roma NGO universe that refused to position anywhere near the top of its agenda the twin questions of German responsibility for non-citizen Roma victims and the rights of migrant Roma in Germany (and elsewhere) today. German mainstream political culture and the Central Council could cooperate on the basis of conferring mutual legitimacy on each other, with the effect of downgrading the voices propagating for an alternative approach.

The final determination of the Central Council's position, emphasizing the bond of citizenship as the source of responsibility for states, did not become unequivocal until the crisis brought on by an influx of Roma asylum-seekers around 1989. With regard to Roma citizens of other states, the Central Council sees itself as a disseminator of best practices and as an advocate promoting inclusive and compensatory policies in other states. It has developed a culture of

transnational commemoration and national activism, which harmonizes with the German governmentality structuring identity politics in the country. The message of empowering Roma in their native countries can appear in a symbiotic relationship with discourses of population management that frame repatriation as a desirable instrument and outcome for the German state (Rose, 2005; Heuss, 2013; End, 2015: 2 and 13).

In contrast to the success of early Sinti and Roma norm entrepreneurs, advocates of recognizing the standing of European Roma in Germany as a former perpetrator country have managed to build a mutually reinforcing relationship only with *Die Linke* (The Left), a hard left-wing party uniting reformed East German communists and New Marxists. The position of the party is peripheral despite its popularity in some federated states. Importantly, it does not have the influence on legislation and official politics of memory that the Social Democrats possessed around 1980 and after. Despite decade-long cooperation against repatriation measures, Roma and *Die Linke* have had little success in 'mainstreaming' their interpretation on the memory-civil rights nexus (Pau, 2012; Groth, 2017).

In sum, Holocaust memory in Germany revealed itself in the past three decades of increasing institutionalization as a common platform where Roma organizations with divergent identity politics could meet, but also come into conflict. The domestic/minority politics focus of the Central Council has been paradigmatic, providing blueprints for the first generation of civil rights activists in former socialist countries, while succeeding in a process of institutional consolidation that has not been matched in other societies. The dynamics of the German case, however, were co-determined by the political choices of the national political elite. Successes resulted when normative pressures could be brought to bear on the political class and a winning coalition of Sinti/Roma and majority representatives could be assembled. Domestic norm shifts (the discovery of the 'forgotten victims' in the 1970s) had an important facilitating impact (Margalit, 2002: 160–179). When these scope conditions for normative chance and institutionalization were missing, a second wave of norm entrepreneurship, seeking to similarly mainstream mnemonic practices referencing European Roma at large, met with little success, and has left the question of solidarity with asylum-seeking Roma in Germany unresolved.

The dynamics of Roma memory politics were condensed into the difficult process of creating a memorial to Roma victims of the Holocaust in Berlin. Resistance to the original Marzahn site united all NGOs, until the government acquiesced to having the memorial in symbolic proximity to that of Jewish victims. The inauguration of the work was stalled for years, however, to the point that Israeli architect Dani Karavan, who was 62 years old when he received the commission, doubted if he would see his design realized in his lifetime. He was 82 by the time the inauguration happened. Part of the delay, after an acceptable location and funding were secured by the government, resulted from the unresolved dichotomy of thinking about Sinti and Roma both within the NGO ecosystem and in majority society. Seeking to avoid controversy, majority

politicians wanted to see an a priori consensus regarding the memorial, the planned inscription of which (*Zigeuner*) was found to be reflective of past racist practices especially by the Central Council and Romani Rose. The proposed term 'Sinti and Roma' proved unacceptable from the transnational perspective espoused by the Rom and Cinti Union and the Sinti Alliance (Berg, 2010; Dowling, 2011; Bunjes, 2011; Kuhla, 2017). The debate lasted throughout the second half of the aughts.

In the end, a poem by Santino Spinella, entitled *Auschwitz* was deemed acceptable as the main inscription by all organizations making their voices heard. *Zigeuner* is referenced on the memorial grounds only as the term used by the Nazis, in a strictly historical statement to which examples of Romani groups from all over Europe are added in the commentary. The text, however, lists Sinti and Roma specifically as well, which is standard reference to the minority holding German citizenship. It thereby creates ambiguity, reflecting the unresolved identity politics with which Roma remembrance remains imbued in Germany (Bunjes, 2011; Kuhla, 2017). As in previous decades, the country-specific identity of the main activist organization, the *Zentralrat,* did not imply lack of *international* solidarity: in a statement given at the inauguration, Rose defined the memorial as representing the success of the struggle in Germany, specifying its meaning in the present as a warning that abroad – in Hungary, the Czech Republic, France, Montenegro, etc. – violence and exclusion against Roma are still widespread. At the same time, the Rom and Cinti Union's long-time president, Rudko Kawczynski, has continued to focus on German politics, referencing a *transnational* ethics and Roma solidarity, in directing attention to the exploitation of migrant Roma workers by a governmentality that retains, but does not legalize them.

The radically 'open text' – in terms of the spatial composition – of the Memorial was conceived by Dani Karavan as fostering reflection rather than prescribing meaning. It does not resist the divergent considerations of its relevance for the present, while representing both politics of recognition: an intra-German one acknowledging the political agency of victims, and a transnational-cosmopolitan one that, however, denies agency to those co-commemorated by it. Potentially, however, it could just as well reference a transnational subject acknowledged as possessing a voice in negotiating the future lives of non-citizen Roma.

5. The occupation of the Memorial

The divergent interpretations about the functions of the Roma Holocaust memorial symbolically placed across the memorial for Jewish victims in Berlin have continued to animate mnemonic practices. The previous sections of this paper sought to highlight how these divergent readings emerged and what sustains them in stark opposition to each other. As in 1992-1993, it was the recategorization of countries of origin in late 2015 and the expected rise in forced repatriations in 2016 that triggered a chain of protests (Die Welt, 2016). The administrative move was especially contested since violence suffered by Roma during and in the aftermath

of the war in Kosovo had been the worst since 1989, and finding Kosovo on the list of safe countries of origin represented a direct challenge to the experience and communal memory of many asylum seekers. Coordinated actions against the planned repatriations were ongoing since April 2016. While undoubtedly the apogee of these protests, the occupation was not pre-planned, but rather occurred as the quasi-spontaneous choice of potentially affected Roma and their allies (Bundes Roma Verband, 2016).

The occupation demonstrated the symbolic potential of such a location for present-oriented, transnational political action (EPD, 2016). In moving to the memorial, the majority's responsibility was evoked by the protesters for a past crime. At the same time, they also conjured up the memory of Roma agency and the ability to resist – increasingly commemorated on 16 May across Europe, a few days prior to the occupation. The demonstration of the ability to resist was both retroactive (seeing ourselves as more than victims) and oriented towards the present, seeking to engage/restore the productivity of the site for the transnational Roma minority in a political arena of paramount significance for them.

The occupation ended after negotiations with the police and continued as a series of events at Marzahn and elsewhere, with a permanent demonstration running for ten days next to the Memorial. Mainstream German media, however, did not report on the other events. The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma condemned the instrumentalization of the memorial site, which the organization's press release interpreted as purely commemorative in character (Zentralrat, 2016). The *Zentralrat* did express opposition to the increasing stringency of both asylum regulations and the way they are observed in practice, but essentially held on to the identity politics compromise that had emerged by the late 1990s. It emphasized the tribulations of Roma in especially the Western Balkans, but in terms of political actions it suggested targeting their living conditions in their native countries. In doing so, it acknowledged the reality and ethical validity of the problem that Roma are being forcibly repatriated to unsafe countries of origin, challenging the bureaucratic reclassification. At the same time, in keeping with its position stated authoritatively on the occasion of the opening of the Memorial, it did not recognize a de-territorialized Roma nation as the referent object of the site and continued to define the communities as separate minorities of titular nations (Dokumentations- und Kulturzentrum Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2012: 8). This discourse reinforces the limited platform of 'solidarity in Westphalia'; i.e. where states (territorially bounded governmentalities) still control and administer populations. Such governmentalities may (and should) integrate a moral commitment to observe universal human rights into their logics of managing populations, but cannot be made responsible for the fates of individuals exposed to harm in territories administered by other sovereignties (Heuss, 2016).

The policing which removed demonstrators from the memorial grounds was re-enacted with a few days' delay in the discourses about Roma political agency and its right to interpret and even instrumentalize its past. The foundation managing the Holocaust memorials in Berlin stated unequivocally that 'the Memorial for the Sinti and Roma of Europe murdered under National Socialism is a

place for remembering the up to 500,000 victims of genocide and no place for political protest' (Stiftung Denkmal, 2016). With this move, a key operator organization, possessing specialist competence and embedded in the network of the prevailing governmentality, reiterated the separation of remembrance and recognition as victims from the political struggle of these victims and their descendants. The move denied the inherent politicalness of managing a memorial, contrasting recognition through remembering with the pursuit of specific policy goals. At the same time, the call to de-politicize the symbolic universe is itself a political move, since it is aimed, ultimately, at denying a symbolic resource to proponents of a norm shift. It is through such situations and procedures of supervision and control, according and denying legitimacy to political claims or promoting depoliticization as ethically superior that the adaptive and fluid operations of governmentality reveal themselves as appropriating and governing the memory of others. Ultimately, these operations invert recognition itself, since they limit its validity to discussions of the past exclusively rendering the recognized subject an extension of history into the present.

6. Conclusions: Agency and reconfiguring politics of recognition

The German case is usually considered 'paradigmatic' in histories of Roma civil rights movements because of the perceived linear progress achieved through successive campaigns and through persuasion and co-optation directed at the political classes of the country. Yet co-optation also operates the other way: through governmentality that seeks to accommodate, but also discipline and control populations – in this case, German and non-German Roma. In practice and in the specific German situation, this has included the drawing and sustaining of a delineation between two groups defined on the one hand as a German minority and as 'alien' Roma on the other. Since interpreting what the memory of the Roma Holocaust means in German society today has a direct bearing on configurations of citizenship, residence, and solidarity, mnemonic practices can challenge these imposed boundaries, as it happened in the act of occupying the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma Victims of National Socialism.

In this respect as well, the Roma Holocaust represents entangled memory where a transnational horizon of historical experience and its corollary, universalist ethics, meet national horizons configured around emancipation in the pre-existing political community. The two both reinforce each other – with regard to the largely uncontested recommendation that countries with large Roma populations should be encouraged to pursue policies of emancipation and recognition – but also clash over whether transnational solidarity rooted in Holocaust memory or nationally focused minority agendas should function as the primary frame-orienting political decisions. In articulations of these positions, victim status and political agency also vie for relative prominence. Governmentality navigates this entangled memory, seeking to control it through concessions and boundary-drawing. It is not the Sinti and the Roma minority, symbolically accommodated in German society, but the de-territorialized Roma

nation that appears here as the uncontrollable 'excess' of memory that resists normalization and exile from the *lieu de mémoire* through which governmentality would confer 'universal' victim status while limiting the group's political agency to define the present from the vantage point of the commemorated past. Transnational Roma solidarity and solidarity with the Roma embodies criticism from the outside (of the political community and of the Westphalian order), resisting the reduction of mnemonic practices to frameworks defined by geographically bounded histories. Altogether, the multi-layered conflict transforms Holocaust remembrance, and the Memorial in particular, into a 'knot' where opportunities for action reside tangled up with the imprints of boundaries that determine access to and use of civic rights, including the right to stay, in the present. Occupation of the grounds is, inter alia, a struggle for preserving the normative productivity of this transnational excess.

Evaluating the undertaking itself, the scope of the symbolic act of occupation appears as a rare instrument of mainstream visibility. Without ready access to mainstream media and in political alliance with a single, institutionally marginal, if politically not insignificant party, the interest representation of Roma in Germany has not been nearly as successful in engineering a second paradigm shift in thinking about the nexus of Roma rights and German memory as the first generation activists of the 1970s had been. Compared to the virtual mainstream invisibility before and after the event, challenging prevailing categorizations of symbolic sites and bringing Holocaust memory to bear on current practices of exclusion in the act of occupation has worked as a strategy. Yet the larger question concerning the success of restoring a broader and permanent productivity to the site, of extending its referentiality to redefine the moral imperative of Holocaust memory, has to be answered in the negative. This also signifies the failure, at least up to the present day, of attempts to position it as a guarantee of political agency and public voice for the broader group (*all Roma* murdered in Nazi-controlled Europe) recognized as one of its referent objects and as victims. Momentary visibility in memory struggles does not compare to the longer processes of institutionalization, the outcome of acknowledgement as partners, by the federal government. Against the insurrectionary knowledges of transnational Roma and allies, governmentality musters far greater resources and ultimately controls those symbolic locations which would be instrumental in creating new meanings through novel mnemonic practices. A permanent disruption is likely to be possible only through broader social and political coalitions, which, in a setting where new fears of migration and old prejudices against 'asocial elements' reinforce each other proves difficult to outline. This negates neither the pioneering and very real achievements of Sinti and Roma rights movements in Germany, nor the groundbreaking integration of Roma memory into national frameworks. It serves, however, as a reminder about the operations of governmental power-knowledges that use, inter alia, memory and mnemonic practices to blot out disruptive knowledges and precarious lives from the cognitive maps and self-images of democratic societies.

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