

Open Borders, Unlocked Cultures

Romanian Roma Migrants in Western Europe

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Concepts, methods, and procedures*

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Who are the Roma?

Ethnicity vs. ‘nomadic lifestyle’

In March 2014, the e-mail list of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies¹ hosted a discussion on definitions of the population known as ‘Roma’. It began when one of the subscribers to the list – which at the time brought together some 350 academics who specialised in Romani/Gypsy studies – asked for reactions to two generalisations which she came across while preparing a legal review of a document on cultural rights: (1) that all Roma speak a variety of the same language, Romanes; and (2) that Roma generally consider themselves to be a nation. Some two-dozen scholars posted their reactions, which together offer a fairly exhaustive summary of contemporary views on the subject (for a full documentation, see Friedman & Friedman 2015: 186ff.).

Problems surrounding the definition of Roma/Gypsies are often attributed to the mismatch between internal labels and understandings of community boundaries among the populations concerned, and the prevalence of external definitions and popular imagery, which postulate a wholesale and much less differentiated category of ‘Gypsies’ (see Matras 2004, 2015a: 15–31). Some respondents to the e-mail discussion addressed the principle of individual self-ascription: A ‘Romani’ or ‘Gypsy’ person is one who identifies as such. Yet it was acknowledged that ‘Roma’ depicts an ethnic and therefore a collective identity, and so individuals’ self-ascription as ‘Roma’ is only credible if legitimised through descent. That, however, merely shifts the reference point back in time, for if descent is to be added to the definition, the question ‘descent from whom?’ cannot be avoided.

Some social scientists embrace the concept of ‘commercial nomads’ or ‘peripatetics’, first developed in a modern comparative perspective and applied to different societies by Rao (1987, see also Berland & Rao 2004). Here the focus is on endogamous population groups that occupy a particular socioeconomic niche in diverse societies around the world, specialising in a mobile, family-based service economy that often features a flexible portfolio of trades. Such communities are sometimes regarded as having a ‘contrast culture’, one that is

dependent both culturally and economically on sedentary society but which cultivates its own particular identifiers in the form of both external emblems and appearance, and internal practices (cf. Streck 2008).

This approach is broadly aligned with popular notions of ‘nomadism’ that are associated with ‘Gypsies’ in literary and artistic depictions, as well as, punctually, in policy measures adopted at different times by various authorities and administrations. Policies toward ‘Gypsies’ in Europe ranged from late medieval edicts targeting all sorts of groups deemed to be non-sedentary ‘strangers’, through measures of control and surveillance during the eighteenth century that did not distinguish between individual ‘nomadic’ groups (cf. Lucassen 1996), to the Nazi view of ‘Gypsy’ as a genetic pre-disposition to criminality and anti-social behaviour, and, on the positive trajectory, to Council of Europe initiatives to set up camping and housing facilities for ‘populations of nomadic origins’ in the late twentieth century.²

It is interesting to note that in the early 1980s, the Council of Europe included both Romanies and Sami under its definition of ‘nomadic populations’,³ while contemporary definitions of ‘Roma’ in European policy documents tend to view peripatetics as commercial rather than pastoral nomads. As a definition of ‘Gypsy’, the plain attribute ‘nomadic’ is clearly problematic. It cannot explain why the Luli beggars of Uzbekistan are regarded as ‘Gypsies’ but not the Kyrgyz herders of Kazakhstan, and it fails to differentiate between the Dom (Gypsy) tent-dwellers of Jordan and the (non-Gypsy) Bedouin tribes of the Sinai. It also conflicts with the self-perception of groups such as the Sinte of Germany, who speak the Romani language and practise seasonal travelling for the purpose of work as well as social gatherings but who strongly resent being depicted as nomads. A definition of ‘Gypsies’ as ‘historically nomadic’ or ‘nomadic by descent’ might include the sedentary Roma of the Burgenland in Austria, who are regarded as ‘Gypsies’, but not the Karaim of Lithuania, who are not seen as such. The concept of ‘service economy’ that is associated with ‘commercial nomadism’ fails to capture the difference between the Halab blacksmiths of Sudan (Streck 1996) or the Kelderash coppersmiths of Bulgaria, both considered ‘Gypsy’ populations, and the Jewish goldsmiths of Yemen, who are not associated with that label. These comparisons, as well as the ‘branding’ (cf. Matras 2015a) and marketing of certain social and cultural attributes through the term ‘Gypsy’, testify to the way in which the term widely evokes associations with a particular ‘lifestyle’ as well as a very particular social stigma. It is therefore tempting to generalise that ‘Gypsies’ are ‘those who are defined by others as Gypsies’ (cf. Ries 2008), yet that notion contradicts self-ascription as well as, potentially, descent. Explicitly linking lifestyle with self-ascription, on the other hand, risks essentialising ideas of cultural heritage and behaviour and denying that Romani/Gypsy society, like any other, is permeable, potentially porous, and subject to constant change and development.

Matras (2004) identifies two distinct uses of the term ‘Gypsy’, which represent realities that overlap only partly or historically. The first (‘Gypsy 1’) focuses on social status and socioeconomic profile. It captures both external

attitudes and self-depictions, and the objective reality of relations and patterns of interaction with majority society. Each individual population in this category can be regarded as an ethnicity in its own right to the extent that group membership is (barring individuals) principally by descent rather than through the acquisition of a 'lifestyle'. Yet, there is no overarching relationship among these different populations save occasional manifestations of mutual solidarity during casual encounters, or else, when mobility or migration lead to more intense contact and convergence (not unlike those that exist among co-territorial sedentary populations such as ethnic Germans and ethnic Poles in pre-war Silesia). Populations belonging to 'Gypsy 1' constitute a 'nation' only in the very metaphorical sense of the term, as groups that might be seen as having a similar 'destiny' in regard to their individual relationships with their respective majority (sedentary, or 'host') societies.

A separate category ('Gypsy 2') pertains to the very specific population whose language is or was a dialect of Romani. These populations tend to use the term 'Rom' or a word that is derived from it (e.g. Romnes, Romnical) as a meaningful signifier of in-group identity, either with reference to the group as a whole, or specifically to its language, or sometimes just to denote a 'man/woman in-group member' or the family role 'husband/wife'. The majority of the Romani population (so defined) lives in eastern Europe, often in century-old, established and segregated settlements, where they maintain family networks, the Romani language, and to some extent separate traditions, while others have relied until recently on commercial mobility and may in that sense, be regarded broadly as 'nomadic'. In western and northern Europe, by contrast, Romani settlement has been sparse; groups of Romani origin have tended to maintain itinerant traditions, they have tended to mix with indigenous peripatetic populations of non-Romani origin, and they have often lost command of the Romani language (save a limited Romani-derived vocabulary that is embedded into in-group interaction in the majority language). There is therefore some degree of historical overlap between the Roma ('Gypsy 2') and the various 'nomadic' populations ('Gypsy 1'), especially if one subscribes to the view that the historical origin of the European Roma is in the caste-like *dom*-communities of India (cf. Matras 2002, 2015a); yet the contemporary category 'Roma' cannot be taken to be synonymous with commercial nomadism, and so such overlap is only partial.

Policy-related definitions

The distinct realities of Romani presence in western and eastern Europe (broadly speaking) have given rise to distinct points of emphasis when it comes to defining and describing Roma both in academic traditions and in policies. Marushia-kova and Popov (2015) regard eastern European approaches as having been more willing to accept a concept of Romani ethnicity, while western approaches are said to have tended to emphasise Gypsy nomadism. In reality, government initiatives in Finland, Sweden, and Germany, for instance, recognised Roma/Sinti as a cultural minority long before 1990, while by contrast measures in

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and other Eastern Bloc countries were often repressive and directed precisely against the so-called nomadism of Romani populations. Such contradictions also appeared in academic traditions on both sides of the pre-1990 political divide. The emergence in the late 1960s of an international discussion context of Romani activists, pitched around an emphasis on shared language and historical origins (based on the proven connection between the Romani language and the Indo-Aryan languages of the Indian sub-continent) introduced a challenge to the political discourse. It framed ‘Roma’ as a nation without a coherent territory or territorial aspirations but with a claim nonetheless to some form of political representation, and demanded acknowledgement of the term ‘Roma’ as a unifying self-appellation. European political institutions have since tried to respond to this challenge while embedding it into continuing initiatives in support of diverse populations of ‘nomadic origin’. The resulting vagueness has allowed these institutions to construct a politically correct concept of ‘Roma/Gypsies’, while at the same time, linking it to the traditional imagery of nomadic lifestyles, legitimised through an accompanying expert discourse that speaks somewhat poetically of a ‘mosaic of small diverse groups’ (Liégeois 1986: 49–50).

With growing attention to Roma in response to east–west migrations following the collapse of the iron curtain and subsequent EU enlargement, European institutions took to defining ‘Roma’ even more explicitly as an ‘umbrella term’ that included both Romani-speaking populations such as the Sinte of Germany or the Kale of Finland in the West, along with the Roma minorities of eastern Europe, as well as sedentary populations of assumed nomadic and/or Romani background such as the Beša of Hungary or the Ashkali of Kosovo, and non-Romani populations that maintain nomadic traditions such as the Gens du Voyage of France, the Travellers of Ireland, and the Woonwagenbewoners in the Netherlands – all referred to as sharing, supposedly, ‘cultural characteristics’ (see Matras 2013). Such use of ‘Roma’ in the European political discourse has been criticised not just for its lack of accuracy but also for its tendency to be linked to generalisations about poverty and deprivation, thereby running the risk of ‘ethnicising’ economic deprivation among Roma populations or even linking it explicitly to culture (see, e.g. Vermeersch 2012; Magazzini 2016). As Surdu and Kovats (2015) show, such policies not only seek confirmation from, but also reinforce and often directly commission expert discourses that purport to be able to identify Roma as a particular problem population. The aftermath of the launch of the EU’s National Strategies for Roma Inclusion in 2011 has seen a further proliferation of expert initiatives addressing ‘Roma health’, ‘Roma education’, ‘Roma unemployment’, and ‘Roma housing’, all framed as issues that are particular to a (vaguely defined) population of Roma.

Defining Roma communities

In this volume, we use the term ‘Roma’ specifically to refer to those populations that employ that label as their community-based self-ascription, irrespective of

lifestyle, social status or occupational patterns, or who otherwise self-identify explicitly as belonging to communities whose members self-ascribe as Roma. In practice, this definition is strongly aligned with the use of the Romani language either synchronically or historically, that is, either as the active language of the home or the wider kinship group and affiliated families, or else as a language that is the subject of collective memory having been the vehicle of communication of recent generations (parents or grandparents). As described below, the MigRom research targeted families who were Romani speakers as well as families who interacted with Romani speakers and were referred by them, and referred to themselves, as ‘Romanianised Gypsies’ (*țigani românizați*), entertaining a collective memory of having lost the Romani language and having shifted to the majority language, Romanian, yet having retained an awareness of a distinct ethnic identity and a sense of affiliation with Romani speakers.

In connection with this, it is important to emphasise that Romani is a language just like any other: it shows variation in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical inflections on a par with dialect differences in other European languages that show regional variation, such as Dutch, German or Italian, and which therefore does not justify a plural classification as ‘Romani language-s’ any more so than Dutch, German or Italian dialects might be regarded, respectively, as distinct languages. Indeed, the characterisation in the plural, which is often used by non-specialists with reference to Romani, is itself derived from the vagueness of the ‘mosaic’ concept (Liégeois 1986), that is, from the notion of ‘Gypsy’ as a lifestyle and of ‘Roma’ as a cover-term that captures all populations with a supposedly similar lifestyle, irrespective of their language. Those who speak of ‘Romani language-s’ intend to refer, at least implicitly, to any mode of speech, be it a form of English, Dutch or another language, that is used for communication among ‘Gypsies’ in the sense of commercial nomads (‘Gypsy 1’). We follow the convention of specialised academic discourse and the practice of Roma who are speakers of Romani and use the term to refer exclusively to a very specific language, clearly defined in terms of its diachrony and synchronic structures including its internal dialect differentiation (see Matras 2002).

The absence of territorial concentration, varying cultural practices, lack of a political entity or legal categorisation, and indeed different degrees to which the Romani language is actively maintained, create potential ambiguity in identifying the boundaries of Roma ‘communities’. This is partly reflected by the reality of multi-layered internal labels or self-appellations. Alongside the use of *Rom* as a meaningful in-group signifier, self-appellation labels may capture the so-called ‘clan’ or wider kinship network who are descendants of the same ancestor (see Chapter 4), or a wider category that represents historical occupation groups (see below), or a region or country of previous settlement, religious affiliation, or a majority population among whom the particular Roma community lives (for an overview of such labels and concepts, see Matras 2015a: 283ff.).

We follow a practical definition of a Roma ‘community’ that takes into account those dimensions and demarcations that prove to be of relevance to the

actors who self-identify as Roma in the sense described above. These may follow family networks (see Chapter 4), which may or may not overlap with physical boundaries within segregated settlements (cf. Jakoubek & Budilová 2006); patterns of intermarriage and shared institutional practices such as conflict resolution, which are in principle permeable and subject to re-negotiation especially following relocation (a process referred to as ‘segmentation vs. consolidation’ by Marushiakova & Popov 2004); shared faith and religious practices and alignment with contiguous non-Romani populations; shared place of settlement in migration and the development of networks of mutual dependency (see Chapter 6, cf. Solimene 2011); the punctual coming together within shared households and support networks of family groups that speak Romani and others who do not speak the language but descend from Romani speakers; as well as, albeit marginally in our discussion, shared ideological affiliation and activism that bring together Romani individuals.

Migration studies and the east–west migration of Roma

Migrations of Roma populations across Europe are documented from the fourteenth century, when groups of Roma left the Balkans possibly in connection with the advancement of Ottoman armies and the collapsing Byzantine Empire. The eighteenth century saw migrations of Roma from the Romanian principalities into Serbia, and of Romani-speaking Sinte who followed German settlers to colonies in eastern Europe, while political upheavals in the nineteenth century triggered a large-scale emigration of Roma from the Austro-Hungarian territories of present-day Romania (Transylvania and Banat) into central and north-eastern Europe and eventually to the Americas. Some Roma were displaced or migrated from central and eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Yugoslavia’s open border policy allowed Roma to join the movement of labour migrants into western European countries from the 1960s onwards, while restrictions on labour migration later imposed by the receiving countries prompted Roma migrants from eastern Europe to apply for political asylum from the early 1980s. Like these historical migrations, the movement of Roma from eastern Europe to the West, since the fall of the iron curtain in 1990, has been motivated by sociopolitical changes and the search for better livelihood opportunities and for safety and security amidst social marginalisation and hostility in the origin communities. The ‘migration’ of Roma has thus always been distinct from ‘nomadism’ (cf. Matras 1996, 2000). This important distinction, however, was often blurred as administrations at different times and in different places cited ‘nomadism’ as a justification for denying claims for refugee status (cf. Sigona 2003; Joskowicz 2015).

Post-1990 migrations

Interest in post-1990 migrations of Roma emerged initially within the context of policy discussions aiming to understand the reasons behind Roma mobility and

to draft long-term policy approaches that might curtail such mobility and alleviate the hostile reactions that it triggered in Western public opinion. A number of policy reports commissioned by international organisations such as UNHCR (Braham 1993), OECD (Reyniers 1995), the Council of Europe (Matras 1996), and the European Union (ICMPD 2001) identified anti-Roma sentiments in eastern Europe and the eruption of overt and often unconstrained marginalisation following the collapse of the Communist regimes as a major push-factor that motivated Roma to seek settlement opportunities in the West. These reports played an influential part in the shaping of a new policy that sought to address east–west migrations of Roma not just through measures such as border controls and repatriation, but also through long-term improvement of their living conditions, the removal of economic and social deprivation, and social and political empowerment in the origin countries.

Following from policy reports, academic analyses acknowledged marginalisation in the countries of origin as a principal push-factor for Roma migrations but drew attention also to pull-factors such as economic opportunities opened up by the dependency of Western labour markets on migrant workers (Sobotka 2003), and to facilitating factors such as asylum policies and the presence of co-ethnics, particularly when organised in NGOs that could assist migrants (Matras 2000). Matras (2000) points out that Roma migrations seldom involve individuals or nuclear families but tend to comprise instead extended families and even multiple family networks. Amidst victimisation, criminalisation, and marginalisation that are reinforced by deeply entrenched negative images of ‘Gypsies’ in the receiving countries, such support networks allow Roma migrants to take risks, which often result in a vicious circle, making Roma more vulnerable to exploitation on the job market and more inclined to accept sub-standard housing conditions. Views on Roma cultural particularities were also used to justify targeted measures to remove Roma migrants in the early 1990s. Various other studies continued to give attention to the interplay of motivations to leave and the difficulties encountered by Roma in light of public and policy reactions in the receiving countries, including targeted measures of registration, containment, and expulsion (e.g. Guy, Uherek, & Weinerová 2004; Sigona & Zetter 2010).

The social network approach in migration studies

From a theoretical perspective, the emphasis on push-factors as determinants of cross-border migrations in the countries of origin, and on the incorporation of migrants in the destination countries, has been criticised as ‘methodological nationalism’ (cf. Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002) – the framing of migration processes within the isomorphism of people, sovereign and citizenry; between people and nation; and between people and solidarity group. It has been argued that the focus on migrants’ inclusion pays insufficient attention to the historical causes of migrations, while the focus on the determinants of migration overestimates the explanatory value of capital interests in shaping migrations (cf. Castles

& Miller 2015). Grounded in reflections on the changes brought about by globalisation (cf. Augé 1995; Appadurai 1996, 2013; Urry 2000; Vertovec 2007), a new approach calls for an ethnographically grounded analysis of migration that shifts the focus away from the structural factors that shape migration, to the agency of migrants and the socioeconomic and cultural changes that they experience. Since processes of cultural and economic change occur in specific locations that are characterised by particular social dynamics, Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009) chose to study migrant networks at the level of cities-localities rather than nation-states.

This approach has shown how social networks, created by the movement and contact of people across space, help sustain migrations over time (Portes & Böröcz 1989) and offer migrants opportunities to obtain resources from other individuals (Portes & Rumbaut 2006). Successful networking relies on a balance between ties with fellow migrants, who provide stability through solidarity, and ties with people outside the kinship or co-ethnic group, which offer opportunities for social mobility (Portes 2014). This means that migration is invariably characterised by diverse processes and diverse outcomes: policies that target particular migrant groups, and the host society's attitudes toward particular groups of migrants, can either limit or support the opportunities created by social networks, leading to varied degrees of social mobility among different migrant groups or even within a single group (cf. Portes & Rivas 2011). Moreover, by embracing new cultural practices, migrants are able to claim membership in different contexts (e.g. nation-states, transnational religious congregations, cultural organisations), transforming their individual and community identities and opening up opportunities to expand their social networks (Glick Schiller et al. 2004). Portes and Rivas (2011) have noted how such cultural differentiation within a single migrant community can result in intergenerational tensions, as younger migrants reject elements of the parental culture in order to become members of mainstream society. Alongside the transformations within the community of actual migrants, migration studies have taken an interest in the impact of migration on the locations of origin – both through social and financial remittances and the effect of returnees as drivers of social change in the locality as a whole (cf. Binford 2003; Portes 2010; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011), and through the sharing of ideas and stories about migration and movement, or 'cultural imaginaries' (Salazar 2010), which are able to spread through migrant networks thanks to innovations in communication technologies.

Current trends in the study of Roma migration

This paradigm shift in migration studies has since inspired new approaches to the study of east–west migrations of Roma. Attention has been given to the individual capital that facilitates migration, such as the role of sharing experiences with people who have migration experience (both Roma and non-Roma) in shaping decisions to migrate (Grill 2012a), and the degree of socioeconomic integration (prior to the fall of communism) and its effect on the availability of

economic resources that enable migration in the first place (Vlase & Voicu 2014). In this regard, Pantea (2012a) distinguishes between ‘migration-poor’ Roma communities, which are unable to rely on pre-existing migrant networks, and those that are ‘migration-rich’ and are able to draw on ties with other individuals in selecting destinations and obtaining material support.

Interest in social networks has also drawn attention to the strategic focal point of social organisation and identity re-configuration in migrant Roma communities. Both Benarrosh-Orsoni (2016) and Reyniers (2016) note how family networks remain the main point of reference for Roma migrants, yet individuals also negotiate across and beyond family networks and directly with the surrounding community in order to secure access to housing (Cingolani 2016) and to achieve upward social mobility (Benedik, Tiefenbacher, & Zettelbauer 2013). In order to tackle housing needs, Roma migrants sometimes rely on non-Roma NGOs (Maestri 2014; Cingolani 2016), which in turn can play a role in mobilising Roma migrants (Bergeon 2016). Sordé Martí, Munté, Contreras, and Prieto-Flores (2012) observe how NGOs run by long-established Roma minorities in Spain have supported campaigns for the rights of Roma migrants, while Roman (2014) discusses how, by contrast, established Finnish Roma distance themselves from Roma migrants for fear that dedicated state resources might be diverted to them and that negative images against migrants might be turned against indigenous Roma, an observation already made in connection with attitudes of established Sinti organisations toward Roma migrants from southeastern Europe in Germany in the 1980s (Matras 1998).

Identity negotiations and geographical mobility may trigger cultural changes that redefine values such as work ethics (Tesăr 2015; Grill 2016), a sense of belonging to particular Roma sub-groups (Tesăr 2015; Lièvre 2016), and boundaries among Roma communities (Dahhan 2016). Traditional gender roles are especially affected by migration. While Pantea (2012b) describes how Roma women are challenged to strike a balance between achieving personal success and community internal pressures relating to motherhood, Humphris (2017) shows how western governments resort to scrutiny of motherhood as a way of policing Roma’s access to services. Changes in values can also impact on the origin communities, accompanying the economic benefits that migration brings to those who remained behind. The transformative potential that migration has for the locations of origin is embodied by Roma returnees and their relatives, who often engage in conspicuous consumption of goods that are brought back from the destination countries as well as in the construction of new houses, normally outside the traditional mono-ethnic, segregated Roma neighbourhoods (Benarrosh-Orsoni 2015; Tesăr 2016). The availability of capital from remittances also supports local development, including the creation of infrastructure (such as landlines in previously deprived areas), which in turn help maintain tight communication links between Roma migrants and their relatives who have stayed behind (cf. Benarrosh-Orsoni 2016).

Attitudes towards Roma migrants continue to draw attention from researchers. In UK cities, negative images of Roma culture and debates about the impact

of Roma migration on the welfare state have led to conflict between Roma migrants and local residents, particularly in deprived areas that are already struggling with the consequences of austerity and cuts to local authority budgets (Grill 2012b; Clark 2014). In Italy, such debates have led to the institutionalisation of segregated housing practices for Roma migrants (Picker 2011; Picker & Roccheggiani 2014). In France, Roma migrants have experienced difficulties in accessing mainstream services (Nacu 2011; Lurbe i Puerto 2016) and have often been the target of hostile statements from political parties (Nacu 2012), while in Belgium and the UK concerns over integration in the education system have sometimes led to special interventions that target the children of Roma migrants (Hemseloet 2015; Matras, Leggio, & Steel 2015).

Some of the particular interventions that target Roma migrants have been described as a trajectory of an ideology of ‘securitisation’, which is said to have escalated approaches to Roma from the level of social policy to the domain of security (Sigona 2011). It is argued that this trend goes hand in hand with the general strengthening of ‘securitarian’ ideologies across Europe, which amplify public fears as a way of justifying increased control measures, especially those that target ethnic and religious minorities (cf. McGarry & Drake 2013; Vermeersch 2013; van Baar 2016). Unlike the new paradigm in Roma-related migration studies, research into these questions is not generally based on empirical observations among Roma migrants but rather on an analysis of media and policy texts, which aims at assessing the way in which policy and law enforcement practices such as surveillance and expulsion (of EU citizens) tend to reinforce negative images of Roma among the public, practitioners and policy-makers alike.

Co-production and Roma involvement in research

Ethnographies of Roma communities (e.g. Sutherland 1975; Stewart 1997; Gay y Blasco 1999; Engebriksen 2007; Silverman 2012) have tended to acknowledge the role of individual Roma as facilitators of access, as interlocutors in the analysis of data, and as friends. Despite these crucial roles, Roma have rarely, if ever, participated in the actual writing of studies about them. Hancock (2002, 2010) criticises this lack of participation as a wilful attempt by researchers to exclude the Roma and to confine them to the role of subjects of research. Gay y Blasco and de la Cruz Hernández (2012), in a rare example of joint writing by a non-Roma anthropologist and a Romani informant (Spanish *Gitana*, to be precise), address the issue of Roma involvement in research within the broader context of ethnography and note that ‘although ethnographies deal with the lives of informants, informants are kept out of the conversation of ethnography’ (ibid.: 1). It might be argued that, just as in ethnographies about any other group of people, Roma do have a key role in shaping research about them, even if they only participate as informants, yet that role is not properly acknowledged in the conventions of academic writing and dissemination.

The recent demand by funding bodies such as the EU and national research councils to involve the target populations in research and for research outputs to

have direct policy impact is, however, opening up new opportunities for Roma to be directly involved in the design and production of research. The WORKALÓ and INCLUD-ED projects, funded under the EU's 5th and 6th Framework Programmes, respectively, in Spain, saw the direct involvement of Spanish and Catalan *Gitanos*. The two projects investigated the involvement of *Gitanos* in the job market and in education and aimed at producing recommendations to change policies in those fields. They followed a critical communicative methodology (Munté, Serradell, & Sordé 2011) in the design and implementation of research activities. Through this methodology, 'researchers bring the academic knowledge and the "researched" bring interpretations based on their lived experiences' (Flecha 2014: 247). This was achieved through the creation of an advisory committee for each project, comprising researchers and members of the groups to be studied. The research participants were recruited from NGOs that are active in the local Romani movement, with which some of the researchers had links. The advisory committees designed the research tools (interview guides and questionnaires) and discussed the data. The *Gitano* members of the advisory committees also conducted interviews and focus groups and contributed to the dissemination of research findings together with the researchers.

Although the *Gitano* members of the advisory committees did not contribute to the writing of academic articles, their involvement in the two projects changed 'the ways their participation has been tackled in various domains, especially in politics' (Munté et al. 2011: 264). Findings from the WORKALÓ project, in particular, had a decisive impact on the development of the *Comprehensive Plan for the Gitano Population in Catalonia*. As the very first organic policy adopted by a parliamentary assembly to tackle Roma inclusion, the Plan has been regarded as an example for other European governments to follow (for a critical assessment of its implementation, see Bereményi & Mirga 2012).

There are, of course, countless examples of collaboration between researchers and Roma community members as well as between researchers and Romani organisations which have not been thoroughly documented or have not necessarily been flagged explicitly as co-production enterprises. To name but one, Matras' (1996) policy report for the Council of Europe on the east–west migrations of Roma draws on the author's work within a Romani NGO, the Rom & Cinti Union (RCU), better known by its international label, the Roma National Congress (RNC), as media relations officer and editor of its international news bulletin *Romnews*. The RCU/RNC led influential campaigns in support of Roma migrants and asylum seekers from eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in 1989, it was the first organisation to bring the issue of east–west migration of Roma to the attention of the Council of Europe. Matras' report from 1996 later formed the basis of several academic articles (Matras 1998, 2000, 2013, 2015b) that deal with reactions to Roma migrations among policy-makers and the Romani political movement. This experience, along with a short-term co-production partnership that emerged in 2008–2009 between local actors in Manchester, UK and the Romani Project at the University of Manchester, set the background for the MigRom project.

The MigRom project

The presence of Romanian Roma in western European cities was already triggering considerable public debate in the period following 1990, and this increased following Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007. Hostile press reports were accompanied and partly fuelled by an emerging securitisation discourse that accused Romanian Roma migrants of exploiting favourable attitudes in the West through begging and petty crime, and of exploiting the system of welfare benefits for personal gain, or even on behalf of organised criminal networks. In the UK, *Operation Golf* was launched in 2007 by the London Metropolitan Police, in partnership with the Romanian police and with EU funding, to tackle what were alleged to be human trafficking networks led by Romanian Roma operating to exploit vulnerable Roma for profit. Media reports displayed images of extravagant houses that were being built by Roma in Romanian towns, financed allegedly by the proceeds from criminal activity. It is noteworthy that this large-scale police operation made 130 arrests over a period of five years but secured only eight convictions.

Such reports sparked radical reactions on the part of authorities at various levels. In France, mass expulsions of Romanian Roma migrants were ordered by the central government in 2010. They were condemned by the European Commission, which, faced with its failure to impose one of its key treaty principles, that of free movement of people, on a founding member state in respect of a vulnerable minority, reacted by introducing a new policy framework, the National Strategies for Roma Inclusion, in 2011. In Manchester, UK, the local authority was confronted with a petition against Romanian Roma migrants in 2009 and set up a dedicated high-level Roma Strategy Group to respond to public concerns (see Chapter 7).

MigRom ('The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects and future engagement strategies') responded to the 2011 call on 'Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union' (GA319901) under the European Commission's Seventh Framework research programme⁴ with a bid for a four-year research project (2013–2017) involving academic partners based in: the UK (University of Manchester); France (Fondation Maison des Sciences des Hommes); Spain (University of Granada); Italy (University of Verona); and Romania (Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca), and the non-academic partners Manchester City Council and the European Roma and Travellers Forum, which at the time of the bid was the only Romani NGO that held consultative status at a European political institution (the Council of Europe). Aiming to apply the new paradigm in migration studies to the study of Romanian Roma migrants, the project set out to deliver a much needed and, at the time still missing, ethnography of Romani migrations. It aimed to investigate the internal socioeconomic organisation of Roma migrant communities and the development of transnational social networks, as well as the public and political reactions to the settlement of Roma migrants at a local level. The objective was thus to gain insights not just into the

social organisation of Roma migrants, but also into the impact that distinct local policies and interventions had on them and the factors that shaped those interventions. The project would utilise a cross-disciplinary approach to assess the interplay of historical and sociocultural factors and human agency in shaping migrations and employ a multi-sited, transnational comparative perspective in order to understand how migrations are shaped within specific local contexts.

The consortium assembled a unique project team with expertise in history, anthropology, sociology, and linguistics. It included researchers at various levels of seniority (including three academic researchers of Romani background), most of whom were fluent in the Romani language, all of whom specialised in the study of Romani communities and of policies directed at Roma and who had in addition, a track record of public engagement and knowledge exchange in this field. They were supported by Roma research assistants who were members of the communities that were studied. They facilitated contacts, data collection, and interpretation; they helped design and lead the project's public outreach activities; and they contributed to some of the project's academic outputs. With a grant of €2.5 million and a team comprising altogether 35 full- and part-time researchers and research assistants, MigRom was in all likelihood the largest international research project in Romani/Gypsy studies thus far, and the first to adopt a multi-sited cross-disciplinary and co-production agenda on such a scale.

The project's lifetime coincided with the lifting, in January 2014, of restrictions on the employment of Romanian citizens, which had been imposed in several countries, and, towards its end, with the outcome of the UK referendum on EU membership, both of which were to have a major impact on the project's target group (the long-term impact of the latter is yet to be observed and assessed, but it has already had a short-term effect on the community of Romanian Roma migrants in the UK and consequently also on their family relations elsewhere). We present here a brief outline of the project design, which will highlight its key aspects: the coordination of a multi-sited investigation, the longitudinal observation and research methodologies, and the embedding and piloting of research co-production and public engagement.

Multi-sited investigation

The research sites in the UK, Spain, France, and Italy were selected to represent those countries that had become the principal target for Romanian Roma, and which in turn displayed a variety of public discourses and policies toward Roma migrants. These resulted in a disparity of conditions and circumstances surrounding housing, especially, and as a consequence, access to public services, different employment opportunities, and exposure to a variety of different voluntary and public sector interventions. The research also extended to the migrants' origin communities in Romania, where both the motivations to migrate and the effects of migration on the sending communities were investigated.

In Spain, research was conducted with members of seven family networks residing in Granada, Malaga, Seville, and Cordoba, and originating from several

different Romanian counties including Alba, Bistrița-Năsăud, Brașov, Bucharest, Călărași, Cluj-Napoca, Constanța, Dolj, Hunedoara, Ialomița, and Timiș. All migrants identified themselves as Roma or as *țigani românizați* ('Romanianised Gypsies') and all except the members of one network spoke Romani as their family language. Building on previous research (Beluschi Fabeni 2013) a network of Korturari from Transylvania, the *Jonesci*, became the focus of most of the ethnographic work.

The team in the UK focused mainly on families residing in South Manchester, building on earlier research (Matras, Beluschi Fabeni, Leggio, & Vránová 2009). This network comprised Romani speakers mostly from Ialomița county in southeastern Romania (*Kangljari*, 'comb-makers') but also from various localities in central Romania and Transylvania (some of them belonging to the *Jonesci* network) as well as a group of Romanian speakers from Mărășești in northeastern Romania, self-ascribing and referred to by the Romani speakers as *țigani românizați* ('Romanianised Gypsies'). These groups shared similar patterns of residence in rented houses in a multi-ethnic, working class area, and, in the case of the *Kangljari* and *țigani românizați*, they belonged to a Romani Pentecostal church run by a *Kangljari* pastor.

The French team conducted its research among various groups of Romani speakers and *țigani românizați* who shared makeshift residence facilities in the Samaritain camp in La Courneuve suburb of Paris. Formed around a Pentecostal church in 2008, the Samaritain was the oldest encampment in the Île de France region and an example of the communities targeted by government repatriation policies in 2010. The French team supplemented their on-site ethnographic research with archival research in Romania, tracing the history of individual families as well as the history of policy measures that targeted Roma in the respective districts in Romania from which the migrant families had originated.

The Italian team addressed socioeconomic and policy differences in northern, central, and southern Italy and their effects on Romanian Roma migrants. They conducted their research with families of Romani speakers from the province of Oltenia in western Romania, residing in Milan (northern Italy) and Bari (southern Italy), and with a network of *țigani românizați* from the Romanian province of Dobruja living in Florence (central Italy).

The Romanian team conducted its research in some of the origin locations identified by the other consortium partners, balancing rural and urban settings in order to assess differences in both the causes and consequences of migration. They selected urban sites in the counties of Ialomița (southeastern Romania), Cluj (Transylvania), and Bihor (western Romania); and rural sites in Brașov (central Romania) and Sălaj (northwestern Romania), and included in their survey both Romani speakers and *țigani românizați*.

Most of the family networks identified in each country were linked to each other, and this allowed the teams to observe differences across the various locations, with local observations being supplemented by field trips to the other countries arranged with the support of the local colleagues.

Longitudinal study and research methods

The coordination of such a diverse team across five different countries was achieved through a regimented schedule of research cycles. Three consecutive stages of research – a Pilot Survey, an Extended Survey, and a Follow-up Survey – were designed to capture developments and changes of attitudes and activities in the communities. Annual project meetings were used to coordinate methodologies and to share and evaluate data and analyses as they emerged from the fieldwork.

Before launching the pilot stage of the research (September 2013–March 2014), the partners agreed on a detailed but open-ended interview guide that combined their different interests and aimed at eliciting both quantitative data (demographic profiles of households, levels of qualification, employment, access to services, housing, education) and qualitative data (migration history, relations with local institutions and neighbours, motivations, problems, and aspirations). This interview guide was used to complement the ethnographic (and in some cases participant) observations that were carried out by each team. The pilot survey produced an overall picture of Romanian Roma migrations that, for each community, highlighted macro-factors that shaped and sustained migration communities (policies, attitudes of non-Roma, media representations) as well as meso-factors (community structures and demography).⁵

While these data allowed for a synchronic comparison of the different communities, they did not shed enough light on the micro-level (individual, personal) factors or on the history of each community. For the Extended Survey (September 2014–March 2015), it was therefore agreed to complement participant observation through life history interviews with individual migrants (for a review of the method, see Peacock & Holland 1993; Goodson 2001). In addition, the partners in Romania, and in some cases colleagues visiting Romania, conducted archive research in order to complement and verify the historical picture emerging from oral testimonies. The French and Italian partners also made use of digital tools to map online reports on Romanian Roma migrants in connection with election campaigns, while the UK team relied heavily on the analysis of policy documents from the macro-level (local authority reports and minutes of committee meetings, and School Census data) and the meso-level (memos, reports, and funding applications produced by voluntary sector actors; memos, pupil registration data, and classroom observations in local schools, complemented by interviews with relevant actors).

A uniform template was adopted for the Extended Survey reports, which were published online in June 2015, offering a systematic comparison among the locations in regard to the project teams and research methodology, the profile of the community, evidence of the impact of migration on the origin communities (such as returnees, transfer of resources and visits to the origin locations), networks and migration history, changes to family structure since migration (including generation profile and reproduction patterns), local policy targeting Roma migrants, and indicators of social inclusion (employment and access to services, education, and community representation structures).⁶

Alongside the comparison, the reports also present the individual teams' particular research interests and specialisations, as well as the particular characteristics of individual settings. The Paris report contains a focus on some of the historical developments in Romania, especially the consequences of agrarian policy reforms and state-run industrialisation, based on life history interviews and archive research (see Chapter 2) and a discussion of eviction policies, the activities of local NGOs, and local Roma leadership (see Chapter 6). The Manchester report contains an analysis of local authority interventions that targeted Romanian Roma, as well as a discussion of attitudes to and experiences of Romanian Roma pupils in local schools; and an assessment of the impact of a local partnership between a single local authority department, a voluntary sector organisation, and commissioned expertise (see Matras et al. 2015). It also incorporates a pilot study of birth rates in the local community. The Granada report has an emphasis on changing fertility patterns in addition to a detailed analysis of transnational family networks (see Chapter 4). The Verona survey identifies migration trajectories and presents a detailed comparison of residential policies in different Italian cities, as well as a network assessment of the online diffusion of discussions of the 'Roma issue' in the political web arena (compiled in conjunction with the Paris team), while the Cluj report presents the results of a questionnaire-based survey of households relating to the local impact of migration, along with ethnographic observations from one of the sending communities (see Chapter 3). The Extended Survey report thus provides the empirical grounding for much of the content of the present volume.

The Follow-up Survey (May–December 2015) offered an opportunity for each of the teams to fill gaps in the coverage on individual or specialised questions and was thus conducted variably. For example, the Spanish team completed quantitative data collection on birth rates, the French supplemented archive research in Romania, and the UK team carried out a survey with Roma school leavers.

Research co-production and public engagement

The project included a local authority, Manchester City Council, and a Roma NGO, the European Roma and Travellers Forum, as full partners. The participation of Manchester City Council allowed the project to draft, test, implement, and assess measures for advice and support, capacity building, and consultation offered to the Roma migrant community, and to have direct input into City Council reports and committee meetings.⁷ The Manchester team set up a local project Steering Group, which included City Council representatives and which set the project's outreach and capacity building strategies and encouraged and supported the creation of consultation structures in the Roma community. The European Roma and Travellers Forum provided feedback on the survey design and then, regularly, on the content of public policy briefings arising from the research, and took on the responsibility for the dissemination of these policy briefings among an international audience of policy-makers and NGOs.⁸

The project's public engagement was not limited to the dissemination of research results. Academic partners also organised training sessions for local authority officers and public service providers in social services, health care, police, and education including schools, and provided input into media debates via key national outlets such as daily newspapers and television and radio broadcasts on issues such as the lifting of employment restrictions on Romanian citizens, evictions, targeted interventions by authorities, educational segregation measures, public statements by politicians about Roma migrants, and more. While the consortium did not adopt a unified position on any of these issues, it encouraged its members to partake in debates on European, national, and local policy on Roma. Several partners and members of the consortium's advisory board also served on the preparatory and subsequently on the elected Scientific Committee of the European Academic Network on Romani Studies from 2011–2015, which organised international events, awarded grants to early career researchers, and engaged in efforts to forward knowledge exchange with policy bodies at national and European level. Project staff were regular contributors to local policy events and some engaged regularly with social media to disseminate project findings as well as contributions to policy-related debates. The consortium thus adopted a literal reading of the project's sub-title 'Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies', placing an emphasis as much on developing a policy vision for future engagement together with relevant stakeholders at various levels as on analysing historical and contemporary circumstances. For this the project earned the respect of stakeholders and sponsors, but inevitably also the occasional critique from those whose positions and actions came under scrutiny through the consortium's combined approach of evidence-based analysis and public dissemination of policy evaluations and recommendations.

All academic partners engaged Romanian Roma as research assistants. In most cases, these were members of the communities in which the research took place. They participated in project meetings and contributed to the research design, received training in fieldwork methodology and data protection protocols, facilitated and supported interviews and the archiving of interview materials in the Romani language, and provided their insights and interpretation into the data evaluation process, acting as co-authors of some of the reports and in some cases also of academic outputs. They took an active part in the consortium's public engagement activities. In Manchester, the project delivered a three-year community outreach programme providing Roma-led advice and support in partnership with the City Council, and the Roma assistants and outreach workers were entrusted with designing and implementing an outreach programme, as well as initiating a forum that led to the emergence of a local Romani advocacy group.⁹ The project thereby facilitated both a new model for research co-production with Roma and a lasting contribution to capacity building and empowerment.

The present volume

The contributions to this volume focus on selected themes arising from the overall four-year research programme. They are arranged in a historical sequence, starting with an assessment of key aspects of the history of Roma in Romania, on to the background of present-day migration to the West and its effect, continuing with the networks that enable and sustain migration, the effect of local policy on Romanian Roma migrants and the emergence of future aspirations, self-reliance, empowerment, and spokespersonship within the community.

In the first of the following chapters (Chapter 2, 'Romania's Roma: a socio-historical overview'), Asseó, Petcuț, and Piasere draw on archive material and the testimonies of elderly Roma, showing how various Roma groups adopted mobility as an economic strategy in reaction to the workforce needs of the Romanian agrarian economy, which required large sectors of the population to be mobile from the late nineteenth century onwards. They discuss how former slaves from the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia engaged in forms of regional mobility, while Roma who had been freemen in the Habsburg territories of Transylvania and Banat engaged in cross-border mobility as borders changed around them. The authors dispel a commonly cited myth about a supposed link between the abolition of slavery and West-bound (including transatlantic) Roma migrations, while showing how the Roma's integration into the mobile agrarian labour market was made possible by their ability to organise large work brigades around family ties. This strategy, while essentially turning the Roma into a social group that specialised in particular economic activities, also allowed them to maintain their own internal community organisation and a distinct ethnic identity, and to continue to follow similar patterns as they progressively adopted, or were forced into, a sedentary lifestyle. Following the economic transition of 1993 and the collapse of agrarian production modes, the same family ties that underpinned the creation of work brigades were activated by the first Roma groups to leave Romania.

The chapter by Toma, Tesár, and Fosztó (Chapter 3, 'Romanian Roma at home: mobility patterns, migration experiences, networks, and remittances') draws a comparison of the effects of migration in various localities across the country. The authors show how the pioneers of Roma migrations were generally integrated into the socioeconomic fabric of communist Romania but experienced ethnic conflict with the majority population and were affected negatively by the economic restructuring of the 1990s. Those who had established closer work relationships with non-Roma and were able to better cope with the post-socialist restructuring only started migrating in the early 2000s as the economic situation worsened even further. In these cases, family ties appear to be less relevant than ties with the non-Roma in shaping migration trajectories. Roma migrants invest in the construction and improvement of houses, tending to move outside traditional, segregated settlements and towards the town and village centres. Such processes of desegregation and the new skills and know-how brought back by Roma returnees are viewed positively by the surrounding majority population

and provide an indication that transnational mobility is leading to changes in the social dynamics of ethnically mixed communities.

This tension between continuity and change is also the subject of the chapter by Gamella, Beluschi-Fabeni, Gómez Oelher and Muntean, in their description of the family structures of a large transnational network of Roma migrants, the *Jonesči* (Chapter 4, 'Founder effects and transnational mutations: the familial structure of a Romani diaspora'). The authors show how cooperation and assistance from relatives has allowed the *Jonesči* to recreate and maintain their own institutions and community bonds and to adapt to the socioeconomic situations in different migration contexts, but the dependency on family ties has also constrained links with outsiders and limited employment opportunities. These limitations affect women more so than men. As women's chances of educational and professional attainment are curtailed by family obligations, *Jonesči* children might be expected to lack key stimuli to develop their social capital, yet the authors show that migration and diasporisation are helping the community to break barriers of exclusion, both in the destination countries and in the origin locations.

In her comparison of the impact of local policy measures on Roma family networks from Oltenia (Chapter 5, 'Romanian Roma migration to Italy: improving the capacity to aspire'), Pontrandolfo discusses how Milan's securitisation approach denies Roma the status of political subjects, while in Bari a multicultural agenda (albeit not free of stereotypical assumptions about Roma culture, and still imposing segregated residence) recognises Roma as interlocutors. These different policies have had an impact on the Roma's opportunities for employment and access to services as well as their motivation to engage in political debate. In both locations, Roma clearly express a desire to be 'like everybody else', but while in Milan they articulate such desire strictly in material terms, in Bari, where stable access to housing and public recognition has allowed them to access services and secure some form of employment, they demand to be treated as equals and, in more markedly political terms, they challenge culturalist representations of their migration as 'nomadism'.

There are strong parallels between the case described by Pontrandolfo and the book's final two chapters. In a study of the Samaritain makeshift settlement in La Courneuve in Paris (Chapter 6, 'Life and death of a French shantytown: an anthropology of power'), Cousin describes how, faced with the constant threat of eviction, Roma delegated the economic and infrastructural management of their settlement to a self-appointed headman. This arrangement allowed residents to constitute themselves as a community, bound by their common affiliation to the Pentecostal faith. The lack of formal recognition by the authorities, however, denied the community the opportunity to negotiate their presence in the location with local institutions. The absence of a channel for dialogue and the authorities' insistence on the illegality of the settlement, which ultimately led to its demolition and the dispersal of its residents, prevented any form of genuine participation in French society.

Contrasting with this experience, Matras and Leggio (Chapter 7, 'Community identity and mobilisation: Roma migrant experiences in Manchester') describe

how Roma migrants had easy access to housing in deprived, ethnically mixed areas, rented primarily from landlords with a South Asian background. Combined with low-skilled but formally regulated self-employment, this enabled access to services like health care, education, and welfare support, placing Roma migrants in a very similar position to that of their neighbours of other backgrounds. Yet, when a discourse about ‘early marriage’ and ‘safeguarding’ issues in the Roma community emerged within the local authority and voluntary sector organisations, a group of young Roma decided to challenge these representations, which they regarded as interfering with their desire to be ‘like everybody else’. The authors argue that this particular approach, based on a demand for the re-privatisation of discourses on Romani identity and equal opportunities rather than a demand for public recognition of cultural rights, offers a new perspective on dilemmas of identity politics and ethnic mobilisation.

Notes

- * The research leading to the present publication results from MigRom, ‘The immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies’, a project funded by the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme under the call on ‘Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union’ (GA319901).
- 1 A project launched in 2011 jointly by the European Commission and the Council of Europe. See <http://romanistudies.eu/>. Last accessed 23 December 2016.
 - 2 See, e.g. Conference of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe Resolution 125 (1981) on ‘The role and responsibility of local and regional authorities in regard to the cultural and social problems of populations of nomadic origin’. See <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&InstranetImage=331990&SecMode=1&DocId=673530&Usage=2>. Last accessed 23 December 2016.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 European Commission C(2011)5068 of 19 July 2011, page 48. See http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/fp7/89485/h-wp-201201_en.pdf. Last accessed 26 October 2016.
 - 5 See <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/firstyearreports/>.
 - 6 See <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/secondyearreports/>.
 - 7 For example, see <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/MCC-Report-on-MigRom-Engagement-Strategy.pdf>. Last accessed 25 December 2016.
 - 8 See <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/report-policy-briefs/>.
 - 9 For a brief insight, see <http://migrom.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/romaparticipation/>. Last accessed 25 October 2016.

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