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**Transnational Roma Mobilities: The Enactment  
of Invisible Resistance**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *The Spatial and Social Mobility Nexus*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *Migration as a Form of Resistance*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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