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INTRODUCTION



## Un/Free mobility: Roma migrants in the European Union

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### ABSTRACT

This special issue showcases work that theorises and critiques the political, economic, legal, and socio-historical ('ethnic' or 'cultural') subordination of the European Roma (so-called 'Gypsies'), from the specific critical vantage point of Roma migrants living and working within and across the space of the European Union (EU). Enabled primarily through ethnographic research with diverse Roma communities across the heterogeneous geography of 'Europe', the contributions to this collection are likewise concerned with the larger *politics of mobility* as a constitutive feature of the sociopolitical formation of the EU. Foregrounding the experiences and perspectives of Roma living and working outside of their nation-states of 'origin' or ostensible citizenship, we seek to elucidate wider inequalities and hierarchies at stake in the ongoing (re-)racialisation of Roma migrants, in particular, and imposed upon migrants, generally. Thus, this special issue situates Roma mobility as a critical vantage point for migration studies in Europe. Furthermore, this volume shifts the focus conventionally directed at the academic objectification of 'the Roma' as such, and instead seeks to foreground and underscore questions about 'Europe', 'European'-ness, and EU-ropean citizenship that come into sharper focus through the critical lens of Roma racialisation, marginalisation, securitisation, and criminalisation, and the dynamics of Roma mobility within and across the space of 'Europe'. In this way, this collection contributes new research and expands critical interdisciplinary dialogue at the intersections of Romani studies, ethnic and racial studies, migration studies, political and urban geography, social anthropology, development studies, postcolonial studies, and European studies.

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Central to our approach in this special issue is a desire to re-situate questions of Roma mobility, and the consequently fluid and contradictory sociopolitical dynamics of Roma racial subordination, at the heart of any critical enquiry regarding 'Europe'. Roma mobility is particularly central to questions concerning EU-ropean citizenship, the borders of EU-rope, the so-called 'migrant crisis' in Europe, and the rise of far-right, anti-immigrant racist populism across the space of Europe. That is to say, rather than fetishise research about 'the Roma' as such, as an essentialised 'ethnic group' to be studied in isolation, we insist that there can be literally no adequate investigation into the very meanings of 'Europeanness' or the politics of 'European' identity in the presumably wider field of

European studies that does not situate these questions of Roma racialisation and subjugation at its centre. In this regard, we also intend for our collective intervention to unsettle the regrettable scholarly status quo within Romani studies, which has long been so woefully polarised between rigid orthodoxies preoccupied, on the one hand, with verifying or validating the presumed 'objectivity', 'authenticity', and essentialised integrity of Romani 'culture' and 'ethnicity' or, alternately, with more sociological or political-economic approaches that emphasise the socio-economic subordination of the Roma in stubborn disregard for the cultural politics of racism. As a result, there has been an ossified binary opposition between essentialist and positivistic accounts that fetishise Roma identity, 'culture', and 'ethnicity', on the one hand, and those that deny outright the importance of race/ethnicity and the salience of Roma 'ethnic' identity on the other. The contributions to this special issue advance the existing debates in the field of Romani studies by aspiring to supersede this analytical double-bind. Thus, while we are not interested in disputing the empirical reality of Roma 'culture', we focus instead on the historically specific processes implicated in the production, reproduction, and transformation of these enduring coordinates of Roma identity and foreground processes of minoritisation – and more precisely, racialisation, securitisation, and criminalisation – to directly underscore the processes that reify 'the Roma'. Such processes of reification inform both the affirmative recognition as well as the derogatory stereotyping or derisive disregard of the 'group' identity/ies of various Roma communities across Europe. By foregrounding more synthetic, constructivist, critical approaches to Roma racialisation, in ethnographically sensitive relation to the historical specificities of contemporary trans-European dynamics of Roma mobilities across an uneven sociopolitical geography, this volume hopes to make a productive intervention into what has been a rather stalled debate.

### How does it feel to be a (European) problem?

The pioneering African American intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois famously articulated the ever-unasked question posed implicitly to Black Americans: 'How does it feel to be a problem?' (1903/2007, p. 7). Surely, from centuries of enslavement in premodern Romania (Achim, 2004; Beck 1989) through their genocidal extermination in the Nazi Holocaust (Zimmermann, 1996), the diverse groups of people variously denigrated as 'Gypsies' have long been comparably sociopolitically produced as a racial 'problem' of and for Europe. Yet, the post-Cold War integration of Europe and the consolidation of the European Union (EU) have fundamentally reconfigured the juridico-political institutional framework in which 'European' political questions and 'problems' are formulated. Consequently, Huub van Baar (2011a), among other scholars, has incisively discerned a political and juridical process of *Europeanisation* with regard to the social condition of minoritised Roma communities, particularly in the wake of (eastward) EU enlargement and the extension of EU citizenship. Indeed, even the ever more established normativity and ubiquity of the very label 'Roma' – as a generic name for heterogeneous (multi-lingual, pluri-national, multi-cultural) minoritised communities variously calling themselves Rom, Roma, Vlach Roma, Romany, Xomá, Sinti, Ashkali, Bayash, Kalé, Manouches, Gitanos, 'Egyptian', Gypsies, etc. – is an effect of this larger process of EU institutionalisation (cf. Guild & Carrera, 2013; Sigona & Trehan, 2009; Simhandl, 2006; van Baar, 2011a; Vrăbiescu, 2014).

In a memorable turn of phrase, which strikingly recalls to mind the DuBoisian analogy, Nando Sigona and Peter Vermeersch declare, '[The Roma's] problems have become "European problems"' (2012, p. 1190). Sigona and Vermeersch underscore the extent to which 'many Roma still belong to the poorest, most segregated, most discriminated against and least "integrated" populations in Europe, and their chances for socio-economic mobility continue to be extremely low' (2012, p. 1189). Consequently, alluding to what van Baar (this volume; cf. 2011a) has designated to be 'the security-development nexus', Sigona and Vermeersch note that European policy debates regarding the government of the Roma have been endemically polarised between appeals for 'social inclusion', the improvement of 'minority rights', and measures to counteract discrimination, at one end of the spectrum, and calls for 'security' and the control of Roma mobility and migration, on the other. Thus, violent histories of racist discrimination and 'exclusion' have long been interwoven, in fact, with various formations of (subordinate) 'inclusion' (Sigona, 2011; van Baar, 2011b). Little surprise, then, that despite the fact that various European nation-states and EU authorities have devoted significant resources in recent years to eradicating the persistence of anti-Roma discrimination with campaigns to 'integrate' their Roma 'minorities' and 'improve' their material living conditions, Roma people (as minoritised communities) remain among the 'least integrated' and most persecuted (racialised) 'populations' in Europe! (cf. Jocanovic, 2015; also see van Baar, 2017; Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2017). That 'the Roma' should be deemed the object of one or another policy intervention aimed at either the presumed 'improvement' of their sociopolitical status and condition or, alternately, the object of various securitarian measures designed to enhance their subjection to governmental authority and policing, however, merely reveals anew the extent to which 'the Roma' as such have been produced as a premier 'problem' for state power in Europe. To the extent that 'their problems have become "European problems"', therefore, it seems incontrovertible that Roma people themselves – as members of a racialised (and racially subordinate) social category or ostensible 'group' (no matter how heterogeneous and amorphous) – have merely been re-fashioned as *the* 'problem'; indeed, they have acceded to the status of a truly 'European' – which is to say, EU-roman – 'problem'.

We must ask, however, are not the Roma's problems precisely the problems intrinsic to the sociopolitical racial order of Europe itself? Hence, we may go further and also posit that 'Europe' as such similarly emerges as a new kind of problem – first and foremost, for Roma people themselves, but also for critical inquiry and politically engaged theoretical reflection (see also De Genova, 2016).

One predictable strategy among diverse Roma communities for remedying the pernicious and enduring obstacles to their (upward) socio-economic mobility has been recourse to spatial (geographical) mobility, notably facilitated by EU citizenship, particularly the ostensible 'freedom of movement' and the putative 'right to residence' in other EU member states (cf. Aradau, Huysmans, Maciotti, & Squire, 2013; Çağlar & Mehling, 2009; Guild & Carrera, 2013), which have been celebrated as distinguishing features of this citizenship. Of course, these migratory dynamics have never been contained exclusively within the parameters of the EU as such, but rather exceed the space and boundaries of the EU to encompass the uneven 'postsocialist' geography of an extended (eastern) 'Europe', where Roma people (as minoritised communities) quite consistently came out the 'losers' of the various tumultuous neoliberal capitalist and neo-nationalist transitions (Bhabha, 1999; Fekete, 2016; Sardelić, 2015; Stewart, 2012; see also Sardelić, 2017;

Solimene, 2017). Hence, the contemporary re-racialisation of 'the Roma' across Europe is inseparable from their emergence over the last two decades as a premier, if often neglected, exemplar of new formations of trans-European cross-border mobility – which is to say, the contemporary configuration of their racialisation is increasingly inextricable from their status as 'migrants'.

Étienne Balibar suggests importantly that the (re-)racialisation of 'the Roma' at the European scale can only be adequately understood alongside the experiences of non-European migrants within 'the general framework of ... the emerging *European apartheid*, the dark side of the emergence of a "European citizenship"'. Consequently, in Balibar's reflections, Roma have emerged as a crucial 'test case' for the hypothesis regarding a new "European" racism' that has accompanied EU-ropean unification (Balibar, 2009, pp. 2–3; emphasis in original). The stakes of this ongoing process of re-racialisation of the European Roma, of course, concern their prospective disqualification from the very equation of 'European'-ness itself, in a larger process of re-stabilising 'European' identity – as a (postcolonial) formation of racial whiteness (De Genova, 2016; see also Vajda, 2015; Vrăbiescu, 2014). Balibar notes that the scapegoating of minoritised Roma communities reflects the incomplete and 'suspended' Europeanisation of the EU member states themselves, which remain mutually distrustful and resentful; for them, therefore:

The Roma are like a *nation in excess* in Europe, which is singled out for hate not only because it is spread across borders, but because it incarnates the archetype of a *stateless people*, resisting the norms of territorialisation and cultural normalisation (all the more ironic given that, in many respects, this singularity is itself the result of persecutions). (2009, p. 4; emphases in original)

What Balibar seems to imply but does not say explicitly, however, is that – for these very reasons – Roma may arguably be characterised as *more* 'European' than any of the ostensibly 'official' (normative) 'national' identities. In effect, minoritised Roma communities – so consistently repudiated by and disqualified from each nation-state's nationalist project (cf. Agarin, 2014; Bancroft, 2001; Fekete, 2014; Rövid, 2011; Surdu & Kovats, 2015; Vermeersch, 2012), and so systematically deprived of the most elementary entitlements of their putative citizenship (Sigona, 2009; Tóth, 2013; Bhabha, 2017) – inhabit a virtually stateless condition that epitomises one kind of (potentially) supra-national formation that can be understood to approximate the EU-ropean ideal itself (De Genova, n.d.-b). In any case, the very substantial pan-European transnationality of the Roma directly challenges the conceits and destabilises the presuppositions of any nationalism.

In this respect, the notion of Roma as a 'nation in excess' seems counter-productive, as it would appear to merely recapitulate and expose the conceptual poverty of any normative lexicon trapped within methodologically nationalist premises. Such methodological nationalism is operative whether a 'people' is exalted as a 'nation' or, alternately, disqualified from 'nationhood' and reductively relegated to the status of a (sub-national) 'ethnic group'. After all, it is only in a 'Europe' imagined as a community of 'nations' that the ever-repudiated Roma are pressed to approximate the status of a 'nation' which could potentially be recognised as an equal alongside the rest. This of course is not to deny the validity of an insurgent Roma nationalist project as one sort of oppositional politics within the EU-ropean framework, but only to underscore that such a project would be predictably beleaguered, both intellectually and pragmatically, by all of the territorial fetishism and

cultural essentialism that has distinguished every other nationalism. While critically aligned with various Roma projects of self-determination, therefore, we must nevertheless remain sceptical about the plausibility of any nationalism for a genuinely radical emancipatory politics.

We must nonetheless be cautious as well about liberal gestures upholding the 'European' identity or status of Roma people, inasmuch as the official designation of 'the Roma' as Europe's 'largest ethnic minority' (see, e.g. European Commission, 2010, 2011, 2012; cf. Guglielmo & Waters, 2005; McGarry, 2011) already confirms a kind of reluctant Europeanisation. Whereas every European 'national' identity could only ever represent a numerical minority within the larger formation of a unified and singular 'Europe' – such that EU-rope itself might otherwise be best imagined as a kind of league of minorities – 'the Roma', who actually *outnumber* several presumable 'nationalities' (such as 'the Danes' or 'the Portuguese'), are depicted as one of Europe's 'minorities', while those who can uphold and enforce their 'national' status with state power are presumed to be part of the legitimate (genuinely 'European') 'majority'. Indeed, by way of comparison, it would be unthinkable to propose the absurdity of Asia's or Africa's 'largest ethnic minority'. Leaving unstated but implicit the normative racial presumption of who exactly can be counted as Europe's 'ethnic majority', then, this (re-)minoritising gesture (now, on the scale of 'Europe') enfolds Roma communities within 'Europe', but re-inscribes them as a singular (homogenised, monolithic) 'ethnic' alterity that is finally 'European' only inasmuch as it is constructed as effectively *non-European*: they are figured as inextricably *in* Europe, but never truly *of* 'Europe', and thus, always vexingly 'out of place'. Indeed, we are never informed of which groups are supposed to be the second or third largest in this debased category of European 'minorities', and in this sense, it is specifically (and perhaps exclusively) 'the Roma' who are branded with this special status of 'European minority'. Our contention, therefore, is that a critical interrogation of Roma experiences of, and perspectives on, how it feels to be socially and politically *produced* as a 'problem' within the context of the contemporary EU will provide a vital critical resource for problematising 'Europe' itself.

Furthermore, the invocation of the 'European minority' category implicitly raises the concomitant spectre of 'non-European' minorities, and subtly aligns 'the Roma' with their 'non-European' counterparts, thereby implicitly disqualifying Roma people from their proper place within Europe. Such correlations both recapitulate the fundamental ideological equation of racial difference with foreignness, and hence with migration (De Genova, 2010), on the one hand, while also rendering 'the Roma' anew as presumed 'nomads', such that the contemporary migration or refugee movements of Roma are made to appear to be but the latest iteration of a perpetual and intrinsic nomadism (De Genova, n.d.-b; Drakakis-Smith, 2007; Hepworth, 2012, 2014, 2015; van Baar, 2011b). Assertions within Romani studies that 'despite a long history of settlement and co-existence, Roma remain the quintessential migrant group' (Guglielmo & Waters, 2005, p. 763) tend to recapitulate long-entrenched habits of presumptively treating Roma as the ever-unassimilated progeny of 'non-European' ancestors, and thus risk uncritically re-inscribing the perpetual (racialised) 'foreignness' of minoritised Roma communities that they may otherwise seek to critique. Moreover, it is noteworthy that racist anti-immigrant discourse in Europe increasingly affiliates the Roma with various other racialised figures of 'alien' menace. Take, for instance, the contention of prominent French right-wing television and radio commentator and columnist Éric Zemmour that the barbarian pillage of

Europe following the fall of the Roman Empire is being re-enacted today by ‘thieving violent gangs of Chechens, Romas, Kosovars, North Africans, and Africans’ (Lichfield, 2014). There is evidently an ideological nexus of ‘non-European’-ness that increasingly conjoins the figures of ‘Roma’ with ‘migrant’ with ‘Muslim’ with ‘terrorist’ with ‘criminal’ with racialised Blackness (De Genova, 2016, n.d.-a).

Particularly amidst the proliferating discourses of ‘migrant crisis’ and refugee ‘emergencies’ that have wracked European public culture and political debate since 2015 (De Genova, n.d.-a; New Keywords Collective, 2016), we must be attuned to the persistent circulation of multifarious insinuations equating a more generic ‘migration problem’ in Europe with the racialised phantasm of veritable invasions of destitute Roma – transposed as the criminalising spectacle of Roma beggars and thieves – across the wealthier precincts of the EU (Yildiz & Humphris, n.d.). This was indeed a major (albeit euphemised) sub-text in the political discourse that culminated in the campaign for Britain to leave the EU, known as Brexit (see, e.g. Mintchev, 2014; Richardson, 2014). The channelling of hostility toward ‘migration’ (in general) against EU-citizen ‘migrants’, and those originating from (post-socialist) ‘Eastern European’ EU member states in particular, into a politically focused antagonism toward Britain’s membership in the EU was the defining political signature of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), and became the hallmark of the pro-Brexit campaign. Not only did this involve an insidious elision of working-class ‘Eastern European’ migrants with the more specific abjection of (often homeless) Roma migrants, it has actually entailed a very calculated and manifold degradation of the EU citizenship of both British and non-British alike. EU nationals who understood their juridical status not as that of ‘migrants’ but rather as that of EU-ropean citizens enacting their rights to ‘mobility’ are now exposed to the uncertainty and precarity of migranhood: they do not know how long they may be permitted to stay and work or what their entitlements will be. Analogously, British EU citizens who have hitherto been able to travel, work, and reside across the EU will come under new restrictions, as yet unknown. In effect, all have been newly ‘migrant’-ised (Bhambra, 2016). Without flattening the substantial differences and inequalities among these variegated shades of migranhood, Brexit has forced a wide cross-section of British residents to contemplate how it feels to be a (European) problem. These recent developments again remind us that anti-Roma racism, far from a residual artefact of times gone by or merely an involuted ‘local’ peculiarity of the eastern European countries, is a potent and viral fermenting agent in the toxic cocktail of anti-immigrant nativism and racism throughout Europe today.

### The Roma as a racial formation

To adequately theorise anti-Roma racism, however, and in the interests of advancing an adequately anti-racist scholarship, we need recourse to the analytic category of *race*. More precisely, for present purposes, we must be able to account for the specific historical and sociopolitical circumstances by which ‘the Roma’ come to be produced (and reproduced) as a distinctly racialised ‘group’. Confronted with the pervasive post-Holocaust/postcolonial evasion of any frank engagement with race that David Theo Goldberg (2006, 2009, pp. 151–198) has aptly characterised as ‘racial Europeanism’, we are consequently left to contend with the peculiarly European paradox of an ostensible anti-racism without race, whereby the very category of ‘race’ is repudiated and presumptively

disallowed as *race-ist*. In other words, by failing to uphold a critical analytical category of race, and thus, a theory of racism as the historically specific sociopolitical production of historically mutable racial distinctions and meanings, any purported anti-racist politics will tend to amount to a merely liberal politics of anti-discrimination. In its very refusal to interrogate these processes and struggles of racialisation, such an anaemic anti-racism re-stabilizes the notion that racism is little more than prejudice and a discriminatory hostility toward phenotypic and anatomical differences, and thus re-naturalizes the anachronistic notion of race as 'biology'. This peril is not averted, however, through the simple disavowal of biological racism in favour of an explanation of sociopolitical inequalities and hierarchies on the basis of 'cultural' difference.

Seemingly endemic tendencies toward essentialising and homogenising 'Roma' identities have been debated in the field of Romani studies during much of the last 20 years or more (Tremlett, 2009), and have been effectively inseparable from the ambivalent politics of labelling that inevitably entangle the designation of 'the Roma' as a culturally distinct 'ethnic group' with the dominant and pervasive sociopolitical identification of that 'group' with a 'problem' (Tremlett & McGarry, 2013). In this special issue, we are concerned to contribute toward the vital task of accounting for the historical specificity of contemporary sociopolitical dynamics of Roma subjugation, marginalisation, securitisation, and criminalisation within the EU, while nonetheless resisting the common temptation to reinscribe these processes of producing and reproducing the subordination of 'the Roma' within a culturalist narrative of Roma particularity. In short, we seek to conceptualise Roma conditions, experiences, and perspectives in a manner that refuses to reproduce what Wim Willems has memorably depicted as 'splendid isolation' (1997, pp. 305–306). Dominant representations have produced 'the Roma' as an isolated and reified 'object of study', whereby Roma people (as reified minoritised 'communities') appear to be self-contained, hermetically sealed, and so radically different from everyone else that it becomes virtually impossible to recognise them as participants within wider social formations of migration or migrant networks, racialised 'minority' social formations, class formations of labour or precarity, urban neighbourhoods or trans-local socio-spatial formations, or any other modes of meaningful social belonging (Durst, 2010; Kaneva & Popescu, 2014; Ladányi & Szelényi, 2001; Simhandl, 2006). Roma seem to be always exquisitely alone, irreducibly separate and distinct, and by implication, their sociopolitical marginalisation comes to appear as the inevitable effect of their own intrinsic ('ethnic') singularity, if not their putative ('cultural') 'in corrigibility' (Fekete, 2014; van Baar, 2012; see also Kóczé, 2017; Solimene, 2017). Hence, the fetishisation of Roma 'difference' seems as intractable as ever (Pusca, 2010, 2016, pp. 113–115).

From the critical standpoint of interrogating the historical and ongoing sociopolitical *production* and reproduction of the Roma as a fetishised figure of European alterity, however, we must recognise that such *culturalist* discourses of Roma 'difference' – whether such difference is construed to be 'cultural' or 'ethnic' – have always been inextricable from the larger forces of their *racial* subordination. The persistent and pervasive construction of a monolithic and homogenised 'Roma' identity has conventionally been predicated upon a muddled notion of 'cultural' particularity, apparently transmitted through the ages, within a presumed context of shared ancestry and common kinship. In this manner, the notion of 'ethnicity' – grounded always in the putative existence of an 'ethnic group', such as 'the Roma' – appears to conjoin cultural particularity with



genealogy, thereby re-stabilising the pseudo-biological foundations for the very 'group'-ness of the ostensible group. As a result, we are left with the essentialist notion of a discrete, enduringly well-defined, bounded group that perpetually reproduces itself, rather than a historically specific account of the sociopolitical conditions and forces contributing to the production of that group as such. Thus, the sociopolitical subjugation of the Roma that has systematically reinforced the segregation and exclusion of various minoritised Roma communities routinely serves to reinscribe their ostensible distinctness, and thus appears to verify the persistence of some sort of 'cultural' essence. Consequently, one fundamentally misguided strategy for combatting anti-Roma racism has been a repeated commitment to the detection of precisely such an identifiable Roma 'essence', the recognition of such a unique Roma identity, and the affirmation of such a bounded and distinct Roma 'culture'. Yet, while particular Roma communities of course inevitably and indisputably have their own customs and cultural practices, and may indeed feel a genuine affinity for one another despite their differences, these sorts of culturalist obsessions about Roma specificity and distinction tend to divert our intellectual focus and critical scrutiny away from the sociopolitical and legal orders in which that 'difference' has been enduringly inscribed as a figure of pathologised otherness, and historically castigated as an object of alternating strategies of more or less brutal marginalisation or coercive assimilation.

Here, we seek to emphasise the fundamental conceptual incoherence and political disutility of the very concept of 'ethnicity', in favour of a forthright and critical focus on race and racialisation. By pretending to somehow bridge the conventional divide between 'culture' – what people *do* – and 'race' (understood uncritically as 'biology' or 'natural' inheritance) – what people *are* – the concept of 'ethnicity' effectively reinstates precisely that defining binary and thereby re-stabilizes the naturalisation of 'race'. Given minoritised Roma communities' tremendous diversity, itself produced historically in a variety of specific and discrepant relations to divergent imperial and national formations, 'the Roma' notoriously cannot satisfy any rigid schematic definition of what is presumed to 'objectively' constitute an 'ethnic group'. Of course, the Roma are not alone in this predicament, as this would likewise be true for virtually every other ostensible 'ethnicity'. There is inevitably substantial heterogeneity within any and all sociopolitical formations of 'race', 'ethnicity', 'culture', or 'nation'. We do not propose to undermine the integrity of Roma identity through this critique but only to expose the utter insufficiency of the very notion of 'ethnicity' as an interpretive and analytical rubric for adequately theorising the Roma condition and formulating a rigorously anti-racist intellectual position. Indeed, the customarily positivistic (pseudo-objective) and essentialist sorts of criteria for 'ethnic group' membership – much like those for 'nationhood' or 'Europeanness' – have always tended to contribute only increased incoherence to the task of stipulating what exactly constitutes the integrity of 'Roma' as a *sociopolitical* category, and thereby has served to undermine the prospect of adequately identifying and naming the Roma condition. Here, it is instructive to contemplate the remark of one of the ethnographic interlocutors in the research of Ioana Vrăbiescu (2016, p. 199): 'Only after I was evicted, thrown out into the street with my baby, did I realize that I am Roma.'

What finally constitutes 'Roma' (or its numerous equivalents) as a relatively durable and enduring sociopolitical category – in short, as the label for a kind of identifiable 'group' that can now be routinely designated as 'the Roma' (despite what has often been a radical instability of Roma ascription and self-identification) – is precisely the shared

(European) historicity of anti-‘Gypsy’ racial subjugation and the manifold and discrepant forms of Roma anti-racist resistance and self-determination. In other words, much as the people who have come to be known as ‘Roma’ in fact comprise a great multiplicity of distinct communities, with discrepant histories as well as multiple and complex linguistic and cultural characteristics – indeed, whether they themselves do or do not identify as ‘Roma’ – it is only possible to analyse and theorise the substantive shared features of their sociopolitical condition in Europe with recourse to a conceptual framework that can name their historical production and reproduction *as a racial formation*. It ought to be clear but deserves to be explicitly and emphatically re-affirmed that this proposition in no way upholds any anachronistic notion of ‘race’ as a ‘natural’ (quasi-biological, pseudo-objective) fact of genealogy. The pernicious power of racial distinction operates precisely through the *naturalisation* of social and political inequalities as putatively ‘natural’ (quasi-biological) differences derived from common kinship and shared ancestry, but ‘race’ is no fact of nature. Rather, race is a fact of sociopolitical domination – particularly the historically specific hierarchies of social power, wealth, and prestige enforced on a global scale through the violent and oppressive regimes of white supremacy that originated in ‘European’ projects of conquest, dispossession, enslavement, and colonial rule – as well as histories of insubordination, anti-racist resistance, and self-determination. Hence, rather than any simplistic and inevitably over-generalised homogeneity based on either shared ‘culture’ or ‘biology’, what truly constitutes ‘the Roma’ as such – as a distinct and enduring *sociopolitically* constituted ‘group’ – is a shared (European) historicity, which is never exclusively reducible to racialised (anti-‘Gypsy’) subjugation and the anti-racist struggles of minoritised Roma communities, but neither is it ever separable from these. Beyond shared historical experiences, however, the ongoing contemporary sociopolitical processes and struggles of Roma racialisation can only be adequately comprehended by investigating the practices of abjection, marginalisation, and criminalisation to which these particular racialised bodies, persons, and collectivities are subjected within and across the variegated and contradictory space of EU-rope in the twenty-first century, including the variety of forms of government deployed to discipline and subdue Roma mobilities.

### Mobility, free, and unfree

If the Roma have long been subjected to various apparatuses for their production as one or another variety of European ‘problem’, the contemporary sociopolitical and juridical institutionalisation of the EU nevertheless supplies a substantially new framework for the government of ‘the Roma’ as a specifically EU-ropean ‘problem’ (Riedner, Álvarez-Velasco, De Genova, Tazzioli, & van Baar, 2016; Simhandl, 2006; van Baar, 2011a). This is true for minoritised Roma communities across the space of EU-rope. Nonetheless, the production of the Roma as a EU-ropean ‘problem’ has manifested itself with particular force with respect to the cross-border mobilities of Roma *as migrants*.

After all, ‘mobility’ itself has been promoted as a defining feature and a signature achievement of European integration. The ‘free movement’ of people is upheld as one of the EU’s fundamental principles. European Commission directive 2004/38 outlines the principle of a putative ‘right’ of all EU citizens to reside and work in any EU member

state for up to three months without any restrictive conditions. As Claudia Aradau and her colleagues explain:

Mobility is here no longer simply an economic opportunity and a vehicle of economic integration between states. Neither is it limited to individuals enacting rights of free movement. Rather, it creates the conditions for demanding a European polity that is defined by European citizens with a common status and identity. Thus, the individual freedom of movement of different EU citizens is scaled up to a collective conception of mobility as fostering European identity. Claiming European citizenship through free movement integrates the claimant into a project of creating a political Europe. (Aradau et al., 2013, p. 141)

Thus, whether or not one invests the notion of 'European citizenship' with any emancipatory hopes, 'European'-ness is posited as a supranational identity that is literally created through transnational mobility, and a citizenship that purports to be genuinely 'European' truly requires cross-border movement as a condition for its very possibility. In this regard, 'mobility' has become an equivocal figure inseparable from the sociopolitical project of EU-uropean integration itself (Riedner et al., 2016).

Through the criminalising and securitising lens (Nacu, 2012; Project on Ethnic Relations, 1999; Simoni, 2011; van Baar, 2014) of welfare protectionism and ghettoisation (Picker, Greenfields, & Smith, 2015; van Baar, 2012; see also Humphris, 2017; Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2017), however, 'free movement' is configured as a distinctly neoliberal project (see Kóczé, 2017; van Baar, 2017). Following an initial three-month period of unregulated residence, mobile EU citizens are subject to the following conditions: (1) Registration with the relevant (nation-state) authorities; and (2) Whereas those who are formally employed or self-employed are not required to meet any other conditions, individuals not continuously working for wages or a regular salary, (including students and retirees) 'must have sufficient resources for themselves and their family, so as not to be a burden on the host country's social assistance system, and comprehensive sickness insurance cover' (EUR-lex, 2015). Despite the requirement to not be an economic 'burden' to the host state, however, the directive specifies that 'under no circumstances may an expulsion decision be taken on economic grounds' (European Parliament, 2009; cited in Hepworth, 2015, p. 103). Nonetheless, as Kate Hepworth (2015, pp. 104–105) highlights in her study of the predicaments of Roma migrants in Italy, Roma migrants often cross nation-state borders by informal means, such as private minibus services, and therefore are unable to produce any official record of their arrival. This 'irregular' status as mobile EU citizens, coupled with their lack of access to 'acceptable' housing, consequently exposes them to expulsion from their chosen destination countries (see Humphris, 2017; Kóczé, 2017; Solimene, 2017; Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2017). Similarly, in many western European countries, Roma migrants are often only offered jobs informally as day-labour in construction, cleaning, and care work, whether contracted independently or through labour recruitment agencies, and are customarily paid well below the legal minimum wage and supplied no official record of employment (Craig, 2011; Grill, 2015; Oates, 2009; Ryder & Cemlyn, 2014). Thus, in Europe's most glamorous globalised cities, such as London, Paris, Berlin, and Milan, Roma migrants are routinely engaged in onerous, low-paid, often unsafe jobs during the day, while not uncommonly finding themselves homeless by night, often sleeping outdoors or in makeshift camps (Clough-Marinaro & Daniele, 2011; Çağlar & Mehling, 2009; FRA, 2014; Vermeersch, 2011; see also Solimene, 2017).

The hegemonic EU-ropean political ideal of ‘free movement’ thus becomes riddled with ‘a free movement across countries that is defined by social and security excesses and an imperative to contain them ... [reconfiguring] free movement from an opportunity into a series of dangers’ (Aradau et al., 2013, p. 138). The mobility of Europe’s working poor, and particularly of Roma, transmutes the ‘free movement’ of presumably self-governing and ‘responsible’ *individuals* into a ‘problem’ perceived to be always a matter of unruly *collectivities* – (racial) formations of ‘group’ mobility – and thus, is presented as ‘a question of categorising those who can be legitimately mobile and those whose mobility needs to be restricted on grounds of security’ (Aradau et al., 2013, p. 138; see also Solimene, 2017; van Baar, 2017). Hence, the abjection of the ‘undesirable’ mobility of Roma ‘citizens’ reveals a constitutive contradiction within the larger EU-ropean project. Repeatedly and persistently, ‘the Roma’ paradoxically emerge as a ‘problem’ precisely *because* of their EU citizenship and the consequent requirement for EU member states to circumvent or subvert EU law in order to render Roma migrants ‘irregular’ and deportable (Çağlar & Mehling, 2013, p. 173).

Indeed, it is fair to say that Roma people have been perennially (and inordinately) burdened by the pernicious ascription of racialising and criminalising stigma to their mobility. Here, we are reminded of all the notorious constructions of ‘Gypsies’ as ‘nomads’, and the well-worn apparatus of suspicion and derision that has conventionally shadowed this allegedly unsettled condition that seems to ensue from the unsettling but purportedly intrinsic mobility of the Roma themselves. However, contemporary EU-ropean (statist) constructions of Roma ‘nomadism’ not only signal the most entrenched expressions of methodological and political sedentarism (Malkki, 1995), but also have routinely served as the desultory alibis for campaigns of evictions and deportations, and thus, a protracted strategy of state-enforced mobility for the Roma (Clough-Marinario & Daniele, 2011; De Genova, n.d.-b; Fekete, 2014; Hepworth, 2012; Nacu, 2012; see also Humphris, 2017; Kóczé, 2017; Solimene, 2017). Here, of course, it is imperative to also note the productivity of both sporadic pogroms and systematic violence perpetrated by racist mobs or neo-fascist gangs that complement and exacerbate the handiwork of the police (Clark & Rice, 2012; Fekete, 2016; Mirga, 2009). Hence, Roma communities have been widely subjected to statist as well as extra-state strategies of both coercive immobilisation (through segregated ghettoisation and encampment) (see Sardelić, 2017) and forced mobilisation (through various forms of expulsion and displacement) (see Solimene, 2017; van Baar, 2017).

The deportation of EU-national Roma migrants across the internal borders of the EU exposes the operations of hierarchical sociopolitical orders of race, class, and gender within an ostensibly egalitarian and universalistic citizenship regime (see Humphris, 2017; Kóczé, 2017; Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2017). Roma deportability and *evictability* (van Baar, 2016) have consequently been premier features of what Hepworth has incisively characterised as precisely their *abject* (EU-ropean) *citizenship* (2012, 2014, 2015). Moreover, as Liz Fekete incisively argues, in the face of the newly reanimated ‘pan-European racism’ against them, minoritised Roma communities can only encounter ‘Europe’ as something approximating ‘a huge open prison’ (2014, p. 68). Thus, from the vantage point of Roma and other poor migrants, EU-rope is a contradictory space in and across which their putative ‘right’ to ‘free movement’ as ostensible EU-ropean citizens is inextricably ensnared with the disciplinary enforcement of their more fundamental sociopolitical *un-freedom*, even as their autonomous subjectivities and their free mobility remain genuinely

constitutive of a more basic dialectic of Roma/migrant struggle for space and freedom within and across 'Europe'.

In the context of official ideologies dedicated to reaffirming the spectral figure of Roma nomadism (Hepworth, 2015; Sigona, 2010; van Baar, 2011b; see also Kóczé, 2017; Solimene, 2017) and subjecting Roma mobilities to various strategies of securitisation (see van Baar, 2017), it is therefore all the more crucial to nonetheless discern and foreground the autonomous subjective dynamics of Roma mobility as practices of collective self-determination and even resistance to the sociopolitical orders that they desert by migrating (see Solimene, 2017), in some instances even formally seeking asylum as refugees fleeing these regimes of discrimination and violence (see Sardelić, 2017). It is indeed the renewed problematisation of the Roma *as migrants* – their production and representation as a precisely 'European problem' of indisciplined and disruptive mobility – that has emerged in recent years as the premier manifestation of their (re-)racialisation. In the securitising EU-ropcan framework of Roma migrants' emphatically unwelcome mobility, we are concerned therefore to inquire into how indeed their migratory trajectories may be apprehensible nonetheless as veritable *appropriations* of mobility, and thus as autonomous enactments of their elementary freedom of movement.

The combination of requirements and restrictions on 'free movement' imposed by the EU and member states, replete with their specific dynamics of racialisation and abject citizenship for Roma people, taken together with the autonomy of Roma migration, epitomises a kind of cross-border movement within and across the space of 'Europe' that we designate here to be *un/free mobility*. Importantly, the un/free mobility of Roma migrants is neither purely free nor strictly unfree, but rather emerges through the contradictions of autonomy and control as these operate in tandem in a more expansive process of re-bordering EU-ropcan and re-racialising what may be apprehensible as 'citizenship', 'belonging', or 'membership' within the distinct 'national' welfare regimes of the EU's member states (see Humphris, 2017; Vrăbiescu & Kalir, 2017). EU citizenship offers neither a perfect free-for-all of rights to mobility nor a completely restrictive regime of controlled movement. Rather, through the complex modulations of un/free mobility, 'free' and 'unfree' signal the co-existence and co-constitution of discrepant sociopolitical and legal statuses upheld simultaneously within a single but variegated citizenship regime. Hence, the complicity between a EU-ropcan 'right' of free movement with multiple securitised apparatuses dedicated to undermining the freedom of Roma migrants reveals a toxic symbiosis by which 'migrant' workers, including mobile EU citizens, are systematically stripped of employment 'rights' and social welfare entitlements achieved historically through centuries of labour struggle.

The abject sociopolitical condition of Roma migrants, so exquisitely shaped by this delicate balance of free/unfree movement, has been evidently produced through their racialisation as 'Europeans' with a difference. In this respect, however, the Roma predicament – and above all, their differential (subordinate) *inclusion* as un/free labour within the larger neoliberal sociopolitical regime of the EU – signals a more fundamental and far-reaching erosion of citizenship in Europe, more generally. The social formations of un/free mobility epitomised by Roma migrants instructively elucidate analogous mobilities among other 'groups' or categories of migrants within and across the space of 'Europe', and the criminalisation and policing of Roma comes to serve as an experimental laboratory for the policing of other subordinate racial 'minorities' and other impoverished citizens (as well as

non-citizen migrants). Traversing the nested and contradictory regimes of citizenship and migrant legality and illegality, these formations of un/free mobility are differentially subjected to the invidious juridical frameworks which produce the unstable grounds for unequal living and working conditions, and thus substantiate and sustain differences and divisions through which various categories of migrants may be manipulated against one another as well as non-migrant ('native') citizens (Fox, 2013; Fox, Moroşanu, & Szilassy, 2012; Grill, 2012a, 2012b). The fragmentations of un/free mobility and differential citizenship, then, supply some of the decisive conditions of possibility for labour subordination, precarity, and social marginalisation as well as the often fragmentary forms of resistance. Yet, within and across these agonistic differences and antagonistic divisions, there nonetheless arise new possibilities for unforeseen formations of affinity, affect, identification, coalescence, and community.

This special issue reflects the cutting-edge work of scholars whose research on Roma mobilities in the space of the EU makes an important contribution toward placing the marginalisation of the Roma at the veritable centre not only of 'minority' questions in racial and ethnic studies, in general, but also at the very heart of migration and mobility studies in the European context. Research related to the historical and sociopolitical particularities of minoritised Roma communities is indispensable for migration and border studies in the European context as well as for the critical study of race and ethnicity in any context, yet there can be no adequate Roma-focused research that is not also thoroughly engaged in the debates in these other fields. The persistent and counter-productive re-entrenchment of the 'splendid isolation' of Roma studies is plainly an intellectual and, more importantly, a political dead-end. Together with other prominent examples of racially subordinate identities, such as Black, Muslim, 'refugee', 'migrant', 'asylum-seeker', 'foreign', and 'of migrant background', among others, the Roma are politically imagined as a permanent figure of alterity for 'Europe' – an iconic European Other – and thus charged with carrying the ideological and social burden of sustaining and re-stabilising a hegemonic 'European' identity that can remain meaningful, relevant, and valuable to its presumptive (self-)authorised bearers. Furthermore, to the extent that the question of 'Europe' has itself become inextricable from the always tacitly racialised questions of migration, this special issue situates the experiences and perspectives of 'the Roma' – as migrants – as a decisive critical lever with which to pry open what we may call the 'European' Question (De Genova, 2016). In short, there can be no truly critical inquiry under the titular heading of 'European studies' that does not recognise the historical predicament and enduring sociopolitical condition of minoritised Roma communities to be central and constitutive of any and all things 'European'.

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